

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Kings: The Kings Of Israel And Judah From Solomon To The Babylonian Captivity

II. The Divided Kingdom, 1 Kings 12:1-22:53

Q. Recovering From Burnout By God's Correcting Our Viewpoint (1 Kings 19:5-18)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Last Sunday's message on *avoiding* burnout, the state of physical or emotional exhaustion due to stress, produced significant feedback: several people after the service told me that either they were heading into burnout or that they knew a friend who had already succumbed to it. We thus need insight on *recovering* from burnout.

However, *recovering* from burnout is **itself** a challenge: one website that seeks to help pastors overcome the widespread problem of pastoral burnout hosts the article, "Spiritual Principles for Overcoming Burnout" that suggests one "forgive yourself and others." However, Luke 17:3 teaches that one can forgive another only if the wrongdoer repents, so what is a burnout victim to do if the one who wronged him does not repent? Other suggestions include focusing on "hope" or "peace" or even "purity," topics burnout victims often view as being either irrelevant to the stressful issues they face or goals they find unreachable in light of their stress. Another suggestion is to "(e)nhance the spiritual disciplines," what Bible-trained believers resist since this suggestion is a call to practice errant legalism!

Frankly, as a past burnout victim myself, I view such suggestions as well-meaning but counterproductive!

Need: *So, we ask, "If one has ALREADY SUCCUMBED to burnout, HOW does he RECOVER from it?!"*

- I. We recall from our last message that when Jezebel threatened his life, Elijah fled from her and ended up sitting under a shrub in the desert in burnout, illogically asking God to take his life, 1 Kings 19:1-4.
- II. Significantly, Elijah's RECOVERY was GOD'S WORK ALONE, and it involved handling the CAUSE of the burnout -- CORRECTING Elijah's ERRANT VIEWPOINT to ALIGN him with SCRIPTURE:
 - A. First, God graciously ministered to Elijah's depleted **physical** reserves, 1 Kings 19:5-6:
 1. The Lord provided a desert "broom tree" that grows up to twelve feet tall to give Elijah shade so he could sleep partly shielded by it from the desert sun, 1 Kings 19:5a NIV; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 528.
 2. God sent an angel to provide Elijah food and drink in his state of physical fatigue, 1 Kings 19:5b-6.
 - B. Second, God graciously ministered to Elijah's depleted **emotional** reserves, 1 Kings 19:7-9a:
 1. The Lord knew Elijah would end up at Mount Sinai 200 miles away, what normally takes 14 days to travel on foot, but that he would take 40 days and 40 nights to get there due to his alternately hiding and wandering in his despondent condition, 1 Kings 19:8; Ibid.
 2. God thus had His angel reawaken Elijah so he might eat more food prepared by the Lord so he could arrive safely at Mount Sinai in spite of his despondent condition, 1 Kings 19:7.
 3. Once Elijah arrived at Mount Sinai, God knew he would need a cave for hiding in his state, so He had long before formed that cave in the Genesis Flood by opening up a fountain of the deep there, 1 Kings 19:9a; Genesis 7:11! (Mike Matthews, "Underground and Upside Down," Answers, May-June, 2018, p. 69-76. This article claims that recent finds have caused scientists to rethink how caves were formed, that they were not made over long periods of time, but by "acidic waters, rising from deep in the earth" that "cut many vast caverns in as little as hours" in the Genesis Flood, Ibid., p. 74.)
 - C. Third, God graciously ministered to Elijah's depleted **spiritual** reserves, the **root** of his burnout condition, by **correcting** Elijah's **errant viewpoint** to align him with **Scripture**, 1 Kings 19:9b-18:
 1. The Lord made Elijah face the futility of his flight to Mount Sinai by asking him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9b NIV) That question left Elijah facing the futility of having run down to Mount Sinai because doing so had done nothing to solve the problems he had left back up in Israel!
 2. God then **corrected** Elijah's **errant viewpoint** to align him with **Scripture**, 1 Kings 19:10-18:
 - a. Elijah had fled from Jezebel's threat that she would kill him as backed by her pagan gods, 1 Kings 19:2. For him to react to her threat by fleeing in burnout, Elijah had to have succumbed in his own viewpoint to Jezebel's exaltation of her power as the king's wife over Elijah's power as a mere subject, 1 Kings 19:3-4.
 - b. Elijah ended up at Mount Sinai where Moses in Israel's past Exodus had ministered amid God's use of wind (at the Red Sea, Ex. 14:21), fire (at Sinai, Ex. 19:18a) and an earthquake (at Sinai, Ex. 19:18b). Elijah hoped to see God again use such outwardly impressive expressions of His raw power to impress **especially Jezebel** to submit to God as had Israel in Moses' ministry at Mount Sinai, Exodus 20:19-20.

- c. However, *God had since then heeded Israel's request that He no longer speak to them in terrifying displays of raw power, but instead use just a human prophet as His spokesman, Deuteronomy 18:15-19.*
 - d. To *remind Elijah* of this **Biblical modification** of God's actions with Israel, God sent a great wind, a great earthquake and a fire without revealing Himself in any of these expressions of raw power, but only in a still, small voice that followed, typifying a human prophet's ministry of God's Word, 1 Kings 19:10-12.
 - e. Elijah did not accept this reminder of God's **Biblical modification** of His actions, for he *again* voiced dismay at possibly being soon slain by Ahab and Jezebel regardless of his devotion to God, v. 13-14.
 - f. Since Elijah was not properly aligned with God's program, the Lord made changes to keep His agenda moving forward: He told Elijah to go north to Damascus and anoint Hazael king over Aram (KJV, ESV Syria), then south to anoint Jehu king over Israel and also to anoint Elisha as prophet in his own place. These three men, Hazael, Jehu and Elisha, would eradicate Baal worship in Israel, 1 Kings 19:15-17 NIV; *Ibid.*, Ryrie Study Bible, 1978, fn. to 1 Kings 19:15-17.
 - g. However, as **evidence** that God's **Biblical modification** of action was **EFFECTIVE**, He told Elijah that regardless of Ahab and Jezebel's promotion of Baal worship, God **still** had 7,000 people in Israel who had not bowed before nor kissed emblems of Baal in worship, 1 Kings 19:18; *Ibid.*, B. K. C., O. T., p. 529!
3. God thus **COUNTERED** the **human effort** of **Jezebel's viewpoint** and **Elijah's similar human effort viewpoint** gained by **succumbing** to **Jezebel's viewpoint -- COUNTERING** with **GOD'S BIBLICAL, Deuteronomy 18:15-19 program** where He **STILL EFFECTIVELY disciplined men's HEARTS!**

Lesson: *God HIMSELF undertook Elijah's recovery from burnout: He met his physical and emotional needs produced by the burnout, and then corrected the spiritual cause of Elijah's burnout -- an unbiblical viewpoint that extolled showy externals akin to Jezebel's externalism instead of God's quiet but Biblical work in men's hearts!*

Application: *If we already suffer burnout, (1) may we trust in Christ for salvation, John 3:16. (2) Then, may we (a) rely on God to meet our physical and emotional needs (cf. Psalm 23:1-6) and (b) heed His Biblical guidelines (c) that counter errant, showy externalism and support a life of heeding God's Word as He disciplines in our hearts!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

(1) Elijah's restoration from burnout reminds me of my own restoration from burnout. Elijah had succumbed to Jezebel's false, human viewpoint of valuing externalism, and externalism was being pushed on me in my ministry by other well-intentioned believers and even fellow evangelical leaders! What I was expected to be and do, though it appealed to others in terms of external showmanship, seemed overwhelming and unnatural, so, I eventually imploded.

While in this perilous state, I took another look at Paul's pastoral epistles. I knew the Christian Church had functioned well for many generations using just Scripture as its guide, so I thought that I wouldn't be hurting myself to rely just on Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus as to how to function and even how to think in the pastorate.

1 Timothy 3:15 absolutely arrested my attention! It claimed that the pillar and ground of the church was the **truth!** It was **not** externalistic focuses like increasing the membership, **not** financial donations, **not** building up the church program, **not** involvement in "social justice" issues, **not** global warming, etc., but God's Scriptural **truth!**

I decided to focus on the **truth** as my ultimate concern in ministry. Every issue that rose, every suggestion that came my way, had to be run through the Word of God for evaluation. Remarkably, as in Elijah's case, this approach to ministry coincided with an end to my burnout, so I've never looked back! I don't dare!!

(2) This move has also affected this Church's direction: in recent years, I have learned from Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon's book, The Seduction of Christianity, 1988, pp. 1985 and Brannon Howse's work, Religious Trojan Horse, 2012, pp. 485 that many evangelicals are moving away from the fundamentals of the faith by integrating Christianity with pagan ideologies and even Marxism, producing so much of the doctrinal meltdown that you and I now witness. Actually, with my time occupied with Bible exposition, for years I was not aware of all the problems that were increasing in evangelical circles, but I really did not need to know it, either: with a focus on Bible **truth**, we have **avoided** a lot of problems and also seen God's flock **edified** and **discipled** with **Bible exposition!**

Royal Canadian Mounted Police, otherwise called "mounties," used to be taught to detect counterfeit money by sitting at tables for a week and all day long handling only true Canadian money. By becoming thoroughly familiar with the **RIGHT** kind of bills, they could **immediately** detect a **counterfeit** one once they came across it in the field. So it is with us: as we constantly expose ourselves to Scripture, God builds in us an automatic aversion to counterfeit beliefs and ideologies. Thus, we need to keep on expounding Scripture both to "feed" God's flock and to protect it!

May we trust in Christ for salvation. May we APPLY Scripture to recover from and avoid burnout.