From Victory to Despair

I. Introduction
   a. The meeting on Mt. Carmel (1 King 18:21, 38-39)
      i. An amazing demonstration of the power of God
      ii. An apparent overwhelming victory over the forces of evil
   b. Less than two days later (19:4)
      i. He appears totally defeated
      ii. What happened?
   c. The victory didn’t last (19:1-4)
      i. No change in the leader’s attitudes
      ii. More threats and living on the run
   d. After a mountain-top experience, Elijah enters a deep valley
      i. He goes from exaltation to exhaustion
      ii. From delight to despair
      iii. From victory to defeat
      iv. From triumph to hopelessness
   e. In our modern language, we would say that Elijah suffered a time of depression
      i. So did Ahab - 1 Kings 21:1-16 –
         1. Causes
            a. Wanted a vineyard, but couldn’t get it -
         2. Reaction
            a. Went to bed,
            b. Turned his head to the wall,
            c. wouldn’t eat –
         3. Solution
            a. His wife got what he wanted for him
            b. Then he was happy
      ii. So did Job –
         1. Causes
            a. lost his health, wealth, family, friends, reputation
         2. Reaction
            a. Remained faithful
            b. Cried
            c. Wanted to die
            d. Felt that life was unfair
         3. Solution
            a. God told him: Stand up and answer me: Job 38:3; 40:7
            b. Job realized: God has all power, I cannot understand His purposes Job 42:1-6
      iii. So did Jonah
         1. Causes
            a. God didn’t destroy Ninevah
         2. Reaction
a. It is better to die than to live

3. Solution
   a. God gave him a shade plant and took it away, then rebuked him

iv. So did Timothy –
   1. Causes
      a. Difficulties
      b. Disappointments
      c. Opposition
   2. Reaction
      a. Fear,
      b. Reticence
   3. Solution
      a. 2 Tim. 1:6-7, 2 Tim 4:5 – Stir up the gift that is in you; fulfill your work

II. KEY THOUGHT: Elijah’s depression and God’s response to it can give us encouragement and instruction for when enter life’s darker times

III. Elijah’s depression
   a. The causes
      i. Disappointment
      ii. Loss & Grief
      iii. External circumstances
   b. The cycle
      i. Thoughts
      ii. Actions
      iii. A downward spiral that reinforces itself
   iv. Elijah
      1. Thought
   c. The Symptoms of Depression
      i. Desire to be alone
      ii. Despair
      iii. Lack of self-worth
      iv. Desire to die
      v. Desire to sleep
      vi. Disinterest in food
      vii. Feelings of failure, grief and loss
      viii. Feelings of loneliness => Yet he isolated himself
      ix. Underestimation of good circumstances
      x. Overestimation of evil circumstances
      xi. Preoccupation with the negative

IV. God’s response
   a. What it was not
      i. Cheer up!
      ii. You shouldn’t feel this way
      iii. If you were pleasing to God you wouldn’t be in this circumstance
   iv. Rom 12:15; Prov. 25:20
b. What it was
   i. Providing for Elijah’s needs
      1. Providential care
      2. Arise and eat (twice)
      3. Did not provide his wants
         a. He wanted to die
         b. God elected not to kill him now
         c. Or ever to allow him to die
   ii. Personal contact
      1. Demonstration of impersonal Divine power (three times)
         a. God can do anything
         b. Anything we can imagine
         c. And much more
      2. Demonstration of personal Divine presence
         a. God is doing something
         b. He is communing with us and holding us in His care
   iii. Persistence
      1. What are you doing here? (twice)
         a. You! – Elijah
         b. Here! – In a cave in isolation
   iv. Focus on actions rather than feelings
      1. Tasks to perform/Purpose to fulfill
      2. Correction of false perceptions/beliefs
         a. He didn’t answer according to his folly when he
            wanted to die
         b. Now he gives correction
      3. God always has something for us to do
         a. Do that
         b. Even if we don’t feel like it

V. Conclusion
   a. Those who were depressed
      i. Elijah
         1. Cause
            a. Disappointment, Fear
         2. Reaction
            a. Classic symptoms of depression
         3. Solution
            a. Why are you here?
            b. Stand up
            c. You have a job to do
   b. Satan loves depression
      i. It is a natural reaction to loss and sorrow
      ii. But Satan can use it to
         1. Enslave people to sin
         2. Immobilize with guilt and sorrow
         3. Destroy lives and souls
4. Deactivate Christian

c. God has a solution
   i. To depression – 2 Tim 1:6-7
      1. We have the gift of being able to act independently of negative thoughts and feelings
      2. We have hope, power, and love through Jesus
   ii. To Sin
      1. Forgiveness through the blood of Jesus
      2. Rom. 8:31-35

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