

October 10, 2022



BARNES *on the Bay*

Weekly Devotional Newsletter

SCRIPTURAL MEDITATION: 1 Kings 19:1-3, “And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.” (*Emphasis added*)

How to Stay Up in a Down World



DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

We again turn to the story of Elijah facing Jezebel's threats against his life. The Scripture text relates that Elijah “arose, and went for his life.” He not only allowed her words to evoke fear within him, but he also acted on that emotion, running for his survival. We understand how such intimidation triggers Elijah's response because we would likely do the same! However, sympathetic understanding does not justify improper behavior for us or others.

Elijah's reaction is one we would call “fright and flight.” Such is a natural response, as when we might jump and quickly move away from a sudden, loud noise. Undoubtedly, it's a reaction for self-protection. However, a justifiable response can be rendered once knowledge is mixed with the actual threat. In Elijah's case, his reasoning led him to choose personal flight rather than a spiritual fight. He favored self-preservation over divine defense. Personally understandable, but still not acceptable.

Elijah had previously shown complete trust in God's protection when he faced 450 angry and desperate Baal prophets already cutting themselves with stones. In faith and godly trust, Elijah

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had called down fire from Heaven. He had led the people of God and the heathen to know who the true God is. Then he took the lead in the slaying of the Baal prophets. Yet, for the words of this wicked slanderer, Elijah ran scared and for his life.

In trying to understand why Elijah responded as he did, we can be thankful that the Lord is straightforward about the great men and women described in Scripture. Without seeing some of their flaws, we would likely believe that we could never live up to such examples. And because of that, we can learn a great lesson from this prophet's life: "Don't run for yourself!" When you fear circumstances, you must take them to heart and remember that running away is succumbing to the threat, one allowed by God but not sent from Him. But running away does not relieve you from the danger. It might lessen the immediate risk, but that which causes the fear still looms on the horizon to keep you from returning. You will never be able to return to where you were without facing the same influence that drove you away.

God doesn't need you to run from His prepared, albeit challenging, pathway in life. Instead, He would have you stand firm and represent Him well where you are! Don't run away from God's will for you just because the way is hard. Jonah is another example as he ran from the place of God's calling for his life. Jonah was alone in the fish's belly for three days when he finally realized there was help coming nowhere else than from God Himself. And the Lord's answer for Jonah was to return to where he was before his escape regardless of difficult and uncomfortable service. The same was true for Elijah as well.

Through the rest of the story about Elijah, God will direct his return to once again complete what faithful prophets were always to do. The threats of Jezebel did not change God's will for Elijah because he was to continue being loyal to his calling. May the Lord help us realize that our safest place is in the center of God's will, not being affected by outward circumstances. Our Heavenly Father is the master of our lives at present and for our future. To run elsewhere is to run away from our protector. "Don't Run for Yourself!"

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE:

As events take place throughout the week, try not to be affected by the pressures that might come. Your faith in God will be the foundational security of His care for you. Challenges and threats might arrive soon; even so, the Rock on which you stand will never move, and neither will you as you stand steadfast there.

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock" (Matthew 7:24-25).