

October 24, 2022



BARNES *on the Bay*

Weekly Devotional Newsletter

SCRIPTURAL MEDITATION: 1 Kings 19:1-4

“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. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.”
(*Emphasis added*)



DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

After running for his life and isolating himself in despair, Elijah places himself under a juniper tree to contemplate how bad things have become for him. He is positioning himself to entertain feelings of self-pity and just how unjustified his circumstances are. We can tell that such is true because of how Elijah gives up on his ministry, himself, and God. The result is that he will want to die because he sees no more value in his life. As he reflects on it all, he compares himself with others—his fathers—who have gone on before him. But this is more than personal pity. All

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orchestrated by God, Elijah's circumstances are pressing down on his mind. He cannot help but think about it incessantly. This is what we call brooding. It is a depressed state where one continues to reflect on a difficulty. And undoubtedly, this is where Elijah is.

It certainly can happen to me. In the past, I have been affected by this most when I'm ready for sleep, especially when exhausted. Trying to sleep, I can reflect on some problem, one I had successfully pushed away during the busyness of the day. Yet now, in the quietness of the night, my thoughts begin to race, replaying the problem with varying scenarios of the event. When I allow such to happen, I will lie there agonizing over something already past, outside my control. And for all that miserable thinking, I'm left unable to sleep. More than once, my brooding has caused me to get out of bed when I should be resting.

Do you sometimes find yourself there too? Regardless of the time of day it happens, do you find yourself reflecting on difficulties that press upon you, troubles which seem to have no soon remedy? Are there pressures you face where you mentally rehearse again and again? But for all the effort, don't these thoughts seemingly drag you down further and further emotionally and spiritually?

Thinking through problems is a good thing when a constructive solution is sought from God through faith. However, stewing or fretting over difficulties is not because such will result in a lack of trust in the Lord's guidance and help. In the case of Elijah, he was not seeking God's help for victory over his struggles. Instead, the prophet only asked for God's aid in surrender. Such is the difference between confidence during circumstances because of God or distrust in God because of circumstances.

What is the answer? Faith! This is a simple trust in your loving Heavenly Father, the indwelling Spirit of Christ, and the comforting Holy Spirit. The mind does not have to reason out every scenario related to our life problems. Remember, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

The Psalmist said, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:3-4). God's strength during our difficulties is our trust in Him.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE:

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:8-9).