



BARNES *on the Bay*

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HOW TO STAY UP IN A DOWN WORLD First, Don't Be Fearful in Yourself

Discouragement seems a constant threat, and it's often difficult to keep ourselves emotionally and spiritually up when so many things in life work to bring us down. In addition, our adversary, the slanderer himself, will often bring discouraging attacks on our lives through one means or another. And in response to such assaults, the Scripture says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). Okay, another one of those things that are easier said than done!

For the next few weeks, we will observe how to face the discouraging moments we all encounter from time to time. There is definitely a helpful process to follow when such times happen. And the means of this aid is observable from principles we find in the life of Elijah, the Old Testament prophet. Our focus will be on an event representing the most daunting period of Elijah's life, the time when he faced the threats of Jezebel.



SCRIPTURAL MEDITATION: 1Kings 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)

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT: "Don't Be Fearful in Yourself!"

The words in the Scripture text, "And when he saw that," show the point at which fear clutched Elijah's life. Fear impacted him when he listened to and thought about the threats of Jezebel. It's not merely that the sound waves came to his ear. Instead, the problem was how Elijah allowed these words to affect him once

he heard them. The power of Jezebel's words had fearful overtones for Elijah as he permitted them to.

How much did her words affect Elijah before the news was delivered to him? None, of course! Because he took to heart the words—albeit very serious! —the threats began to influence him, tearing down his confidence in God. He allowed her words to get to him, resulting in fear.

Now we all have fears of one kind or another, and in some way, we are responsible for how we allow those fears to control us. Concerning myself, let me say that I don't have a great fondness for heights. I will sometimes watch a television program with two people who are fighting along the side of a cliff. The camera will show the gorge and the depths below as the fighters roll and tumble along the edge. Debbie will look at me and say, "Your feet are tingling, aren't they?" "YES!!!" I am safe on my easy chair but feeling the anxiety of actors who are not on a real precipice, who are in a fictitious story, and not in any real danger. I don't even know where this fear originates; I used to climb on things as a child and young adult (and never got hurt). But things have changed.

But there is something essential to consider when facing fears. Feeling such panic is not as important as not letting it stop you. As in my example above, if Debbie were slipping off a cliff, my fears would not stop me from endangering myself for her safety. The importance is not the absence of fear but instead not allowing fears to stop us from what is needed.

In the case of Elijah, he allowed the terror of Jezebel's words to lower his shield of faith and trust in God. In earlier ministry events, he faced personal danger, but he weathered these without incident. However, in this case, fear controlled him and wielded power over him instead of confidence in God's protection.

Let's take to heart that fears will often enter our lives; even so, how we manage them is a matter of faith and trust in God. Anxiety is controlled within yourself as you are surrendered to the Lord's care for you. Faith in God is a barrier that protects you from devilish threats. Don't listen to the devil's discouraging attacks, and you will stop the fear that wells up inside of you. Recognize that fears may come, but they can be overcome by trust in the Lord. Trust in the Lord, and don't be fearful within yourself. Don't trust your feelings but maintain confidence in the God who cares for you.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE:

"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).