

P546

Grace Notes Program

THEME: What do we HOPE in? – Part 5

SONGS: ALL I'LL EVER NEED

GOD ON THE MOUNTAIN

INTRO: Depression – most of us have faced it. But what is it and why does it occur? A psychologist has described depression this way: a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness that leads to sadness. John W. Stott, a biblical expositor, said that a Christian's two chief occupational hazards are depression and discouragement. Today on Grace Notes, Barbara Sandbek will begin to explore the effect depression had on some of the Biblical greats and offer suggestions on how to deal with it. But first, let's listen to a song with a message of hope, based on King David's writing in Psalm 139:1-5....

“ O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord. *You hem me in--behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me.*

**** ALL I'LL EVER NEED ****

Sometimes when I see a well-known Christian in their ministry, I think they must never experience depression or they wouldn't be doing what they're doing. But Scripture shows us that even the Biblical greats who achieved much for the Lord fell prey to depression and even suicidal tendencies at times. It's important to identify the reasons for their depression so WE don't succumb to it.

There are several stages one goes through before depression. It often starts with disappointment. Disappointment leads to doubt, which leads to discouragement, which then can lead to depression - if we yield to it.

Someone once said the best way to beat this temptation is to HALT it before it begins. So don't allow yourself to get too

H-hungry

A-angry

L-lonely OR

T-tired.

The Prophet Elijah fits all of these. After he prophesied the famine, he went into hiding from King Ahab for three years. He took his life in his hands when he returned to Samaria to face that angry King who'd been killing off all the prophets. He courageously orchestrated a contest where he matched God's power against the 450 prophets of Baal. God showed His might and proved Baal to be totally inferior. The end result was that God enabled Elijah to destroy all the prophets of Baal in one fail swoop. Naturally, Ahab was angry, but his evil wife, Jezebel, was even angrier - and she threatened to kill Elijah!

He was afraid and ran like a scared rabbit, for his life - a distance of about 100 miles! Well, if he wasn't tired after the exhausting day's events, he surely must have been tired by then. To top it off, he left his servant in Beersheba and traveled another day's journey into the desert.

Was Elijah disappointed? You bet. 'Disappointment' is defined as 'failure of expectation or hope' or 'thwarted in attaining our goal'. Disappointments usually stem from WRONG expectations or improper goals.

I imagine Elijah didn't EXPECT a further challenge from Jezebel after he'd done his job so dutifully. Maybe he figured everyone would now accept him as their prophet and believe in Jehovah God. Elijah should not have made his desire, a goal because it involved other peoples' wills.

It's important to expect NOTHING out of people or situations, and expect God to do the right thing. His ways are not our ways, though, so if we're disappointed, we need to ask why? Is it because we didn't get OUR way, our pride was hurt, or do we just not trust God?

Did Elijah doubt? He must have or he wouldn't have been afraid. Perfect love casts out fear. If he truly believed God loved him and was out for his ultimate good, he wouldn't have been frightened. His faith would have sustained him through Jezebel's threat.

Was Elijah discouraged? Of course. Did he give in to depression? Yes. Listen to 1 Kings 19:4. It says 'He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might DIE. "I have had enough, Lord", he said. "Take my life: I am no better than my ancestors."' Now that's real depression.

Elijah is the victim of too great confidence - in himself. Notice all the 'I's' in his prayer. Sounds like he was EXPECTING that the outcome was his responsibility rather than God's. This is an important point. If we've obeyed the Lord, then He is

responsible for the outcome. We shouldn't feel like we've failed if things turn out different than we expected.

Why did Elijah say he was no better than his ancestors? One commentary said that most of them had been martyrs and that he felt guilty because he didn't allow himself to be. Whatever the reason, he had to have felt guilt at this point. His flight minimized the effect God's powerful display could have had on the people.

God didn't chide Elijah for his wrong actions or words, though. Instead, in His great mercy, He provided refreshing for Elijah so he could think clearer. It says in verse 5 that after his prayer, Elijah laid down under the tree, and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said 'Get up and eat'. He looked around and there by his head was a cake of bread over hot coals and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. The angel of the Lord came back a SECOND time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is TOO MUCH for you." So he got up and ate and drank. STRENGTHENED by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.

Elijah did do one thing right in all of this. He turned to God in his time of depression. Sure he asked for the wrong thing, but at least he kept the communication lines open. Often, we close the door on God when we're depressed - to our detriment. The most important thing we can do is to tell it like it is - but to our Heavenly Father!

Elijah went from a spiritual mountain-top high, to a desolate valley low. But the entire time, even in his depression, God was there for him, as He is and will be for us, too.

***** GOD ON THE MOUNTAIN *****

Join us on our next program. Until then, let your grace notes be a song of praise!