

Stronger

Empowering your future – part 1

Opening Text: 1 Kings 18:46, 19:1-15

Introduction

The times we are living in require us to be strong and very courageous.

Following last week's message about '*Living your assignment*', I would like to continue talking today about Elijah. He is such a great example of a strong man of God, a powerful prophet of the Old Testament. His boldness and courage are absolutely inspiring!

In the New Testament, James uses Elijah as an example to encourage believers to step into the level of power Elijah walked in (5:17-18) – even though "***Elijah was a man with the same nature as ours***" (v.17).

Indeed, Elijah had the same nature as ours and the Bible does not hide the fact that, like most of us, he had his highs and his lows. He was victorious, but at one stage he also felt tired and depleted and tempted to give up. However, God strengthened him – and God will strengthen us!

Strong one chapter but weak the next

In chapter 18, Elijah runs in victory but in chapter 19, he runs for his life and running on empty. He went from a *power-peak* to a *power leak*.

- What happened to his strength?
- How did he get so depleted and worn out?

His strength was uncommon and supernatural. However, his weakness and how he got there is not that uncommon. After all he was a man with the same nature as ours. Where was the '*power leak*' in his life?

Identifying what depletes our lives

If we want to grow stronger in God, we need to understand where the "kryptonite" is - what enemies fight to drain you and how they work to make you weak. Here's a few lessons from Elijah's story:

1. The dangers of isolation

Twice Elijah said, "***I alone am left***" (verses 10 and 14).

I believe that isolation made Elijah vulnerable. The idea that he was alone in the fight against Ahab and Jezebel, set him up for the discouragement he faced later on.

God had to tell him about the other 7000 he knew nothing about. Our limited perspective rarely allows us to see how much God is in control of every situation.

In Acts 4, when the pharisees threatened Peter with jail if he spoke in the name of Jesus, Peter did not cave in. No. He went right into the company of other believers:

Acts 4:23 - *And being let go, they went to their own companions ...*

We were created for community - to be together. We are stronger together but vulnerable alone. That is why every believer needs a local church.

2. The messengers we allow to access our lives

Verse 2 - *Then Jezebel sent a **messenger** to Elijah, saying, “So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.”*

- a) Jezebel found access into Elijah’s life. She sent him a messenger. The enemy has his messengers, his ‘envoys’: envoys of discouragement and of fear - people and sometimes literal demons, whose sole assignment is to wear you out to the point of exhaustion.

In **2 Corinthians 12:7**, Paul wrote about “*a messenger from satan*” sent to buffet him. That was a literal demonic entity. We have to be careful who we allow access into our lives and the voices we listen to, if we want to be strong and grow in the strength of God

- b) In this passage we read about Jezebel’s ‘messenger’, but we also read about a *messenger of God*, an angel (‘angel’ in the Greek literally means messenger). God also has His envoys, his messengers.

The messenger of God came to Elijah twice to minister to him and to feed him.

Verses 7-8 - *7 And the angel of the Lord came back the second time, and touched him, and said, “Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.” 8 So he arose and ate and drank; and he went in the **strength** of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.*

Two messengers: one sent to weaken, one sent to strengthen. We have to discern who we allow access into our lives. When the enemy comes with his messengers from hell say, ‘*access denied!*’

3. The messages we feed on

Messengers bring messages.

Verses 2-3 - *2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” 3 And **when he saw that** he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.*

When he saw that – the messenger spoke but Elijah saw. Words carry pictures. Elijah saw what this man was saying. His words created a vision of calamity and death.

Visions (good or bad) make you run – “*when he saw that he ran for his life*”. It was the wrong vision for his life, and he ran in the wrong direction.

If we want to be strong in God, we need to pay attention to

- **Whether we are isolated or connected**
- **The messengers we allow**
- **The messages we feed on**
- **The visions we carry and**
- **The direction we run**

a) Twice the Lord said to him “*what are you doing here?*”

Sometimes we get depleted because we are in the wrong place or running in the wrong direction. When that happens, we find that we have no grace for that race.

b) Eventually, the angel sent him in the direction of the mountain of God. That is always where we should run to.

Verse 8 - *So he arose and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.*

Strength to run 40 days and nights! Certainly, there was a grace for that race!

Verse 11 - *“Then He said, “Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake.*

God wanted Elijah to hear His voice. No voice like the voice of God! Nothing satisfies, feeds and strengthens us like the presence of God and His voice!

Verse 12: *and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.*

- The voice that came from the messenger of Jezebel was disturbing, upsetting, it produced anxiety and torment. It left Elijah weakened and vulnerable.
- The voice of God was quiet, peaceful, tranquil, still. There was no anxiety in the voice of God, no urgency and no panic. God is always in control!

In Luke 13, a “messenger” also came to Jesus and said, “*Herod wants to kill you*”. I love how Jesus replied:

Luke 13:32 - *“Go, tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.*

There was no anxiety, no panic and no running for His life. Jesus spoke as someone in control – He was in control of His life, His emotions, where He was and where He was going. He had his own agenda and was in charge of it.

Feed on what God said in His word. As we will see later on in this series, if you want to be strong in God, you have to be strong in His Word.

1 John 2:14 - *I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because **you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.***

That is the reason for this series. The more Word you receive in this area, the stronger you will become!

Conclusion

If we want to be strong in God, we need to pay attention to

- 1. Whether we are isolated or connected**
- 2. The messengers we allow into our lives**
- 3. The messages we feed on**
- 4. The visions we carry**
- 5. The direction we run**
- 6. Letting the Word abide**