

KJM

Text: - I Kings 19: 5.

Introduction: - Elijah was one of the greatest of O.T. prophets. We marvel at his daring courage in his encounters with Ahab and the prophets of Baal. In his contest with the prophets of Baal he proved that Jehovah is a god that answereth by fire.

While we marvel at his courage in the victory which he obtained in the contest with the prophets of Baal, we are likewise amazed at the attitude of discouragement and seeming defeat, manifested under a juniper tree only a short time afterward. The despondency of the prophet is described in the Scriptures in these words: "But he himself went a days journey into the wilderness and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, it is enough; now, Oh Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers".

Following the great victory on Mt. Carmel, in the contest with the prophets of Baal, Elijah was threatened by Jezebel. While the prophet met Ahab and the prophets of Baal in triumphant victory, he beat a retreat at the threat on his life by the wicked queen, Jezebel. A bad woman is one of the severest tests that can cross a man's pathway.

He beat a retreat. Into the wilderness he went, away from Jezebel. His environment under the juniper tree was one of desolation and his fatigue was such as to encourage despair. Do you ever feel like running away when the going is hard? Were you ever discouraged, and felt that it was of no use to keep on in the Christian way?

I.

There were a number of things which contributed to the despair of the prophet, Elijah. A tired and exhausted body is a fertile soil for invitation and discouragement.

The prophet needed both rest and

of hunger. Attention to our physical welfare is a necessary part of rendering our best for God. The apostle John manifested a concern for the physical welfare of the well beloved Gaius. He says, "The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth". (III John 1: 2.)

## II.

Loneliness was another contributing factor to Elijah's despair. His servant had been left a day's journey behind. He had no one present to sympathize and share his perils with him. We need at all times the mutual encouragement of others. Jesus sent his disciples out two by two that they might have a mutual fellowship and encouragement, in the presence of disappointments and discouraging situations.

Self pity was another element that contributed to the discouragement of the prophet. He felt that he alone was left as a prophet of God. He labored under the opinion that all the prophets had been slain but himself and that further effort on his part would be useless, and that it would be better for him to die than to live. It is an old and shrewd strategy of Satan to inflict discouragement upon the people of God. A first step toward final defeat is discouragement. The Scriptures tell us that David encouraged himself in the Lord. By such encouragement he avoided ultimate and final defeat.

Each of success was another factor contributing to his discouragement. He had hoped and no doubt had anticipated that the victory on Mt. Carmel would turn the entire nation back to God. He prayed, "Hear me, O Lord, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back again". Many of the successes which we anticipate fail to come. Many of our plans are crushed and our hopes go glimmering, never to be realized. One of the most discouraging thoughts that can come to a man, is

...for the promotion of this world.  
but when such effort he sees only failure as the  
outcome of his labors. He gives exhortation to his  
disciples with the prayer, "For I am not better than  
my Father."

### III.

The visitation of the angel of the Lord to Elijah  
reveals the fact that the watchful care of the  
Lord is around his children even in times when  
outward circumstances lend themselves to discour-  
agement and despair. The apostle Peter will at-  
tention to the watchful care of the Lord for his  
children in these words, "For the eyes of the  
Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are  
open unto their prayers."

The ministering angel of the Lord first minist-  
ered to the physical needs of the prophet by  
bringing him cakes for him and giving him a room  
where he could sleep and rest. An adequate minister  
to our physical needs may bear a vital relation-  
ship to our highest spiritual welfare. Suffering  
ministers to our physical depletion and then  
leads to discouragement and despair.

After his physical recuperation Elijah was  
surprised by the presence of the Lord. He was  
so certain that there were at least 1000 people  
who had not loved the Lord to death. The situation  
was not as bad as he had imagined. The  
illuminating this must have been to Elijah.

Conclusion - Satan is a great deceiver and always  
tries to make discouraging situations look worse  
than they are. The grounds for despair in the  
Christian life are never valid. The presence of  
the Lord is sufficient for our needs, whatever  
they may be. The Lord has invited us to cast all  
of our burdens on him. The loads which we carry  
are too heavy for us, but the Lord can help us  
carry them, yes, can carry them for us. The apostle  
Peter gives this exhortation, "Humble yourselves  
therefore under the hand of God, that he may exalt  
you in due time, casting all your care upon him."