

J.J.

GOD'S INTENSIVE TRAINING COURSE
1 Kings 17:1-24

INTRODUCTION :

I prepared another sermon for this day continuing with our study of Ephesians but after Pacquiao's loss last night, I think it's good to preach this again. I preached this last Summer Camp (so let me remind you to join the camp again this coming summer)

Some of you are disappointed because as Martin Luther King Jr. said :

Quote : There can be no deep disappointment where there is no deep love.

But as Christians, we are called to be soldiers

2 Timothy 2:3 Share in the suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

We fall down but the most important thing is when you bounce back.

As John Maxwell said in his book **Failing Forward :**

When you fall down, make sure you pick up the lesson on your way up.

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And one of a good characteristic of a soldier of Christ is that he remains strong and steadfast in the Lord.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power

specially during the times when the trials are like

Ephesians 6:16flaming arrows

which are fired by the evil one.

Illustration : Interestingly enough, the Roman armour was designed to protect the front of the warrior, not the back. Apparently the assumption was that when the enemies were near, the soldiers were moving towards them, not running away.

But again, the strength is in the Lord and not coming from our own selves.

Remember when Joshua was asked by God to lead his people to the Promised Land, His number one command to Joshua is to be strong and courageous...and he emphasized it three times

Joshua 1:6 Be strong and courageous....

7 Be strong and very courageous

9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

That is the reason we can be strong, the Lord our God is with us.

Remember, God is not interested in making squash (kalabasa) Christians, he is interested in making "Oak" Christians or in the Philippines "Narra" Christians.

The truth is sometimes God will bring us through a Spiritual Boot Camp in order for us to be used mightily.

And that's why sometimes, we will undergo intensive training :

Psalm 144:1 Of David. Praise be to the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle

Read :

1 Kings 17:1 Now Elijah the Tishbite from Tishbe in Gilead said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, whom I serve, there will be neither Jew nor rain the next few years except at my word."

2 Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah. 3 Leave here, turn eastward and hid in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. 4 You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there.

8 Then the word of the Lord came to him : Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food.

17 Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse and finally stopped breathing.

20 Then he cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her to die?"

Background :

- Elijah was sent by God to Israel in a critical role when the northern kingdom of Israel has already fallen in a state of decay because they have intermarried with Gentile people.
- Elijah's name means "my God is the Lord." Later on, in his famous showdown against the 450 prophets of Baal in Mount Carmel where he eventually showed them that the God of Israel is the true God ,the people cried out "The Lord – he is God! The Lord – he is God!" (1 Kings 18:39)

As a refresher, here's what happened :

Elijah confronted King Ahab and the people of Israel :

1 Kings 18:21 Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." But the people said nothing.

And here was his challenge : He asked the people to set up two altars and two bull and put wood on it. But no one will set a fire. They need to call on their own god, and the God who answers by fire – He is God (1 Kings 18:22-24)

But before God can use Elijah mightily in Chapter 18, he had to go through Spiritual Boot Camp in Chapter 17

Illustration : I was watching a documentary on how they train and recruit Navy seals, about 100 people were chosen but at the end of the training like undergoing overnight at the beach in sea water holding on to one another, waking up early in the morning...it's all about endurance....only around 10 to 15 remain.

Here's God's Boot Camp (Intensive Spiritual Training)

1. SOLITUDE 101

a.) God will teach you to rely solely on Him.

1 Kings 17:2 Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: 3 Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. 4 You will drink from the brook and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there.

You see this, it's the ravens that are going to feed Elijah.

Illustration : Every January 5, our family celebrates "God-dependence Day" instead of Independence Day. We commemorate that exact time when we were driven from the home we were staying because we stood for righteousness and at 4:30 in the morning, we were inside our car, we didn't know where to go. I had no job, I was a full time pastor with a wife and two kids in tow. But during that time, God showed that He is faithful and he can be relied on solely.

Lesson : Sometimes, God puts you in a corner where you can't do anything. It is during those times that God will show that He is more than enough.

And look how God provided for Elijah :

5 So he did what the Lord has told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

- **To rely solely on God is to rely on Him everyday.**

See this, *he did what the Lord has told him.*

That's why our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us not to worry.

Matthew 6:33 Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you as well.

But look, *he drank from the brook*

Look at what happened to the brook.

7 Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land 8 then the word of the Lord came to him.

Application : God will sometimes really put you in a spot where even the thing that you were relying on or hoping for is taken away from you.

E.g. your job, your career, and etc.

- **To rely solely on God is to rely on Him step-by –step.**

Note that his source of water is the brook and now it dried up but then the word of the Lord came to Elijah once again.

Quote : The Christian life is a walk.

It means we need to live our life step-by-step with God.

We don't walk ahead of him – that's being presumptuous which will cause anxiety or disappointment

We don't walk behind him – that shows our lack of faith.

Faith is walking with the Lord side by side, step by step. YOU TRUST HIM AND THANK HIM AT THE MOMENT YOU ARE IN RIGHT NOW. Let tomorrow take care of itself.

God teaching you to rely solely on Him is part of God's intensive training course

2. HUMILITY 201

1 Kings 17: 9 Go at once to Zarepath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food. 10 So he went to Zarephath, When he came to the town gate, a widow was gathering sticks. He called her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink? 11 As he was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please a piece of bread."

Background : During that time, to become a widow is one of the most unfortunate things that could happen to a woman. You are treated as nothing. Remember the story of Ruth, where Naomi was widowed and she said to Ruth *"It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has gone out against me."* Ruth 1: 13

Women are treated as property and men are the ones who are supposed to provide for them. And if you are a widow with no sons or your son is still small, no male will take care of you unless you remarry again.

HERE'S THE LESSON IN HUMILITY IN ELIJAH'S PART In the case of Elijah, this is even a Gentile widow and yet God has asked him to ask for help from a widow.

Lesson : As people, we don't like asking for help. It takes humility to ask for help specially for a male person in the Eastern culture and ask for help from a woman.

Application : Sometimes, God will put you in a corner where you have no other recourse because he's teaching us to be humble.

Illustration : Before the dawn of GPS, when travelling, people rely solely on maps. And men are known that when they are lost on the road, they'd rather keep on driving rather than stop and ask for help.

It takes humility to ask for help. Why? It's because in our nature, we don't want to show our self as helpless or powerless and we don't want another person to see that or have that power over us.

Part of us growing spiritually rapidly is to humble ourselves in the Lord.

Quote : Lord teach me to humble myself rather than you humbling me – Max Lucado

That's why prayer is such an important part of our growth.

Why? Because prayer is an act of humility. It shows that we depend on God.

That's why Jesus Christ said,

Matthew 7:7 Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

Important : You see the progression here? Ask, seek and knock. The problem with us Christians, when we ask and it's not given, we easily give up...God is asking us to seek and knock.

Illustration : 1. Parable of the persistent widow. (Luke 18:1-8)

Luke 18:4 "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care what people think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me

6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?

And God will sometimes put you in a state of helplessness, so we will learn humility.

Illustration : Story of the Canaanite Woman (Matt 15:21-28)

Matthew 15: 21 1 Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22 A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly."

23 Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

25 The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

27 "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."

28 Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment

You have to remember, here is the situation of the widow when Elijah asked for help.

12 "As surely as the Lord your God lives" she replied, "I don't have any bread –only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it – and die."

But Elijah encouraged her and she eventually helped Elijah and look what happened.

15 She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. 16 For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken to Elijah.

Lesson : When you ask for help because you are truly in need, you are giving a chance for others to be blessed.

What a lesson in humbling ourselves and following God's Word.

It looks like the situation is hopeless simply because God is asking Elijah to ask help from a woman who is as desperate as he is.

God teaching you humility is part of God's intensive training.

3. Disappointment 301

17 Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. 18 She said to Elijah, "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"

Here is Elijah seeing the power of God and enjoying the provisions of God when suddenly a tragedy in the house where he is staying happened.

If you read again the two verses we just read, *Elijah went from hero to zero. His presence has been viewed from a man who brought blessings to a man who brings tragedy.*

That's truly disappointing in the part of Elijah. And what happens when you get disappointed, you get discouraged.

Nothing can get you more discouraged than disappointments in life. When things don't go your way, when what you're hoping for doesn't happen, or when people you look up to don't live up to their part of the bargain.

Story : It was advertised that the devil was going to put his tools up for sale. One the date of the sale the tools were placed for public inspection, each being marked with its sale price. There were a treacherous lot of implements (tools). The tools of the devil that were up for sale were "hatred, envy, jealousy, doubt, lying, pride and so on". But laid apart from the rest was a harmless looking tool, well worn and looks like it has been used a lot by the devil and the devil priced it very high.

Asked one of the purchasers, "What's the name of the tool?"

"Oh" said the devil who was selling it, "that's Discouragement"

The purchaser asked, "Why is it priced too high."

"Because it's more useful to me than the others. I can pry open and get inside a person's heart with that one, when I cannot get near him with other tools. Now once I get inside, I can make him do what I choose. It's a badly worn tool because I use it on almost everyone since few people know it belongs to me."

The devil's price for Discouragement was so high, he never sold it. It's still his major tool, and he still uses it on God's people today - John Lawrence (Down to Earth)

But remember, God allows disappointments in life not to discourage us (that's the tool of the devil when they see disappointments in our life).

- **Disappointments will make our relationship with God more personal and more intense.**

Remember, the most important thing with God is not what we do for Him but our relationship with Him.

Look at how Elijah now cries out to God personally and intensely.

19 "Give me your son" Elijah replied..... 20 Then he cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?

21 Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this boy's life return to him!"

Isn't this what happens when we encounter disappointments, our prayers become more real and intense?

God allowing disappointments in our life is part of his intensive training.

Summary : We will grow spiritually by reading His Word everyday, by attending church and by praying BUT if God wants us to GROW SPIRITUALLY RAPIDLY, He will teach us solitude (to rely solely on Him), and humility and will allow disappointments in our life.

INTENSE SPIRITUAL GROWTH HAPPENS THROUGH SOLITUDE, HUMILITY AND DISAPPOINTMENTS.

CONCLUSION :

Here's a result after God's intensive training :

22 The Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him and he lived. 23 Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!" 24 Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth."

What is the result?

YOUR LIFE BECOMES A POWERFUL TESTIMONY FOR GOD.

Story : You remember the story I showed you regarding this pastor's daughter. While they were holding Bible study in another house, robbers came in tied up all their children and the 7 robbers raped her 15 year old daughter one after other in the different parts of the house. It's a tragedy but they turned their tragedy into a testimony. And just like Elijah, after they were put into God's intensive training, they are used mightily by God for His kingdom and for His glory.

A SEEMING TRAGEDY IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME A TESTIMONY AND FOR US TO BE USED MIGHTILY

Remember, you are a soldier of Christ! Yes, you will go through some intensive training but we need that in order for us to become mighty warriors of God to advance His kingdom to show His glory!

S.G.D.