

---

# ARE YOU A PUSILLANIMOUS CHRISTIAN?

1 KING 19:1-4

ADEOYE, EMMANUEL (EVANG.)

*And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup> 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." <sup>3</sup> 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. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!" **1 Kings 19:1-4***

When the torrential rain began to fall, Jezebel was in Jezreel and may have thought that Baal the storm god had triumphed on Mount Carmel. However, when Ahab arrived home, he told her a much different story. Ahab was a weak man, but he should

have stood with Elijah and honored the Lord who had so dramatically demonstrated His power.

But Ahab had to live with Queen Jezebel and without her support, he knew he was nothing. If ever there was a strong-willed ruler with a gift for doing evil, it was Jezebel. Neither Ahab nor Jezebel accepted the clear evidence given on Mount Carmel that Jehovah was the only true and living God.

Instead of repenting and calling the nation back to serving the Lord, Jezebel declared war on Jehovah and His faithful servant Elijah, and Ahab allowed her to do it. Why did Jezebel send a letter to Elijah when she could have sent soldiers and had him killed? He was in Jezreel and the deed could have been easily accomplished on such a wild and stormy night.

Jezebel wasn't only an evil woman; she was also a shrewd strategist who knew how to make the most of Baal's defeat on Mount Carmel. Ahab was a quitter, but not his wife! Elijah was now a very popular man. Like Moses, he had brought fire from heaven, and like Moses, he had slain the idolaters.

If Jezebel transformed the prophet into a martyr, he might influence people more by his death than by his life. No, the people were waiting for Elijah to tell them what to do, so why not *remove him from the scene of his victory*? If Elijah disappeared, the people would wonder what had happened, and they would be prone to drift back into worshiping Baal and letting Ahab and Jezebel have their way.

Furthermore, whether from Baal or Jehovah, the rains had returned and there was work to do! Jezebel may have suspected that Elijah was a candidate for a physical and emotional breakdown after his demanding day on Mount Carmel, and she was right. He was as human as we are, and as the ancient church fathers used to say to their disciples, For three years, Elijah had not made a move without hearing and obeying the Lord's instructions (**17:2-3,8-9; 18:1**), but now he was running ahead of the Lord in order to save his own life. When God's servants get out of God's will, they're liable to do

all sorts of foolish things *and fail in their strongest points*.

When Abraham fled to Egypt, he failed in his faith, which was his greatest strength (**Gen 12:10ff**). David's greatest strength was his integrity, and that's where he failed when he started lying and scheming during the Bathsheba episode (**2 Sam 11-12**). Moses was the meekest of men (**Num 12:3**), yet he lost his temper and forfeited the privilege of entering the Promised Land (**Num 20:1-13**).

Peter was a courageous man, yet his courage failed and he denied Christ (**Mark 14:66-72**). Like Peter, Elijah was a bold man, but his courage failed when he heard Jezebel's message against him.

But why flee to Judah, especially when Jehoram, king of Judah, was married to Ahab's daughter Athaliah (**2 Kings 8:16-19**). This is the infamous Athaliah who later ruled the land and tried to exterminate all of David's heirs to the throne (**2 Kings 11**). The safest place for any child of God is the place dictated by the will of God, but Elijah didn't stop to seek God's will. He traveled 90 to 100 miles to Beersheba and left his servant there. Did he say, "Stay here until I return?" or did he just set the man free for his own safety. If the enemy came after Elijah, his servant would be safer some-place else.

Furthermore, if the servant didn't know where Elijah was, he couldn't inform Beersheba had a special meaning to the Jews because of its associations with Abraham (**Gen 21:22,33**), Isaac (**26:33**), and Jacob (**46:1**). The "juniper tree"<sup>2</sup> is actually a flowering shrub ("the flowering broom tree") that flourishes in the wilderness and provides shade for flocks and herds and travelers.

The branches are thin and supple like those of the willow and are used to bind bundles. As Elijah sat under its shade, he did a wise thing—he prayed, but he didn't pray a very wise prayer. "I've had enough!" he told the Lord, "so take my life."<sup>3</sup> Then he gave his reason: "I'm no better than my fathers." But God never asked him to be better than anybody else, but only to hear His Word and obey it.

The combination of emotional burnout, weariness, hunger, and a deep sense of failure, plus lack of faith in the Lord, had brought Elijah into deep depression. But there was

also an element of pride involved, and some self-pity, for Elijah was sure that his courageous ministry on Mount Carmel would bring the nation to its knees.

Perhaps he was also hoping that Ahab and Jezebel would repent and turn from Baal to Jehovah. His expectations weren't fulfilled, so he considered himself a failure. But the Lord rarely allows His servants to see all the good they have done, because we walk by faith and not by sight, and Elijah would learn that there were 7,000 people in Israel who had not bowed to Baal and worshiped him. No doubt his own ministry had influenced many of them.

### **LESSONS TO TAKE HOME**

**1. FEAR NOT - 2 TIM 1:7, 1 JOHN 4:18**

**2. DON'T BE DISTRACTED AT FACE VALUE - JER 1:8**

**3. BE COURAGEOUS - JOSHUA 1:6**

### **CONCLUSION**

**HYMN 475**