



The strengthened parent and teacher

And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.

1 Kings 19:8

You know the history surrounding our text. In the previous chapter, God answered Elijah's prayer with fire from heaven. The impact on the king and people of Israel was great. *"And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God"* (1 Kings 18:39). The prophets of Baal were all killed. God answered Elijah's prayer again and, after three and a half years of drought, rain poured from the sky. Elijah was so encouraged in God and strengthened by Him that he ran the full distance from Carmel to Jezreel in front of King Ahab's chariot.

But now, a few verses later in the next chapter, we observe Elijah fearful, discouraged, despondent, and depressed. He runs for his life. He is alone in the wilderness.

"And he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

(1 Kings 19:4b)

Why so depressed now when yesterday he had been so encouraged? Why so fearful today when he had been so brave yesterday? After receiving a message from Queen Jezebel that she will have him killed within twenty-four hours, he sees that nothing is going to change. Baal worship will continue. He assumes that all is lost. There is no point in continuing. He concludes that if the nation of Israel would not repent and return to God after witnessing this spectacular fire and rain from heaven, then his work will have no better results than that of his fathers, the prophets who had gone before him. All his efforts will be in vain. There was no point in continuing.

Dear parents and teachers, can you relate with this? Parents, maybe you know of times when your child heard the voice and saw the hand of God and it made a deep impression on him. Your child bowed his knees and confessed that the Lord is God. And now? All that seems to have had no effect anymore. Your teenage child is more hardened than ever. He wants to put to death all mention of sin or God or repentance. There is no use saying anything anymore. Teachers, maybe the Lord remarkably spared one of the high school students in a traffic accident, or a student was confirmed to have a terminal illness. And the next day, the impressions seem to have totally disappeared. Mocking, hardness of heart, and resistance to God and His Word are all you observe. And you conclude with Elijah that all is lost. If this will not change the students, then nothing will. There is no point in continuing.

But this history changes with the word "behold." Behold what God will do!

"And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat."

(1 Kings 19:5)

This is repeated, and we read that he *"went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights."*

I would like to focus on three encouraging lessons with you from this history. The lessons come from three divine miracles:

1. When Elijah gave up on God and saw no hope, God did not give up on Elijah. In this doubting, despondent, and disobedient condition, God feeds Elijah: a miracle of God's grace.
2. This food strengthens and sustains him for forty days and nights: a miracle of God's power.
3. Elijah is instructed by God to continue with his prophetic work – to anoint Hazael as king over Syria, Jehu as king of Israel, and Elisha as prophet (1 Kings 19:15-16): a miracle of God's perseverance.

God still performs miracles of grace, power, and perseverance. People cannot imagine themselves receiving a message that they have cancer, or that a loved one has been in a serious accident, or that a dear husband or wife must be buried. Their hearts cry out, "I will never be able to make it through something like that!" But what happens? When they are actually called to experience these things, God feeds them with "food" sufficient to carry them through. Forty, as you know, is a number of fullness in the Bible. God provides strength sufficient to bring them through.

As a parent or teacher, maybe you can identify with Elijah here. He felt all alone. He thought that he was the only one left who feared God and that all was hopeless. But be encouraged. God performs miracles yet today! The Lord measures and provides miraculous grace and power and perseverance as needed. We do not see this ahead of time, because it is not given ahead of time. It is divinely and miraculously given when it is needed. And afterwards, the same people who thought that they could never go through such trials are amazed and testify of God's miraculous dealings.

So, dear parents and teachers, the God of Elijah still lives! He will strengthen you by His grace, power, and perseverance so that you will continue on. Even when all looks discouraging, continue to do your duty. Pray and work. Trust in this same God of miracles. He will persevere with His work – and His work includes bringing back prodigal sons and daughters and students.

"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait I say, on the LORD."

(Ps. 27:14)

One day, dear child of God, you will look back over your "forty years" in the wilderness of this world, and testify that you also, by the miraculous grace, power, and perseverance of God, *"did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God."*

Are you a strengthened parent, a persevering teacher?

James W Beeke

© 2016
www.christianstudylibrary.org