

# Bible Studies for Life: August 22

*Serve Even When Discouraged • 1 Kings 19:1-5a; 11-18*

*By Clay Anthony*



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I enjoy experiences that end well: a book that ties up all the loose ends, a movie that does not need a sequel, or a meal that leaves no room for desert. There is a part of me that does not enjoy wondering what happens next. It seems there is always something else occurring in the Elijah's life that we did not expect. The door on his story never seems to quite close.

Elijah has shown himself to be a great prophet of God, standing in the face of evil leaders and staring down false gods. His faith in the One true God has proven victorious in a battle against several hundred followers of Baal.

The end of chapter eighteen shows God's prophet having all the fake prophets dealt with swiftly by the sword. This is a great place to roll the credits, for the story has ended with the hero prevailing over evil.

Then chapter nineteen begins and more questions arise. All of a sudden, God's champion is seen running for his life and begging to die. Where did his faith go? Does he not recall what just happened with the fire from heaven? If we are to be

encouraged in our faith by Elijah, what are we to make of his running and hiding? What can we learn from a story that does not end well?

**Never give up (vv. 1-5a).** Elijah had a right to be afraid (v. 3). He was dealing with an unstable queen. God is ultimately in control but Jezebel had proven that she could do great harm to God's people. Yes, Elijah had seen God move in a mighty way but now a very real threat against his life was upon him and he reacted as anyone would – he fled.

He might have reasoned that his work was done. He had represented God well and the queen would enact her revenge. If he were to die, at least it be from God's hand and not hers (v. 4).

Here is a man who had worked for God and fought a very good fight. Here was a man of such faith that his memory saturates the New Testament (Matt 11:14; Mark 6:15; Romans 11:2).

Yet, he is in a position of frailty. As he discovers, giving up is never an option for a God-follower.

**Never let go (vv. 11-14).** It has been rightly said that we must bring to God what is in us, not what *ought* to be in us. This famous scene is full of devices such as wind, earthquakes, and fire that God employs to get out of Elijah what is in his heart.

He is afraid for his life and hiding. He has lost hope and just desires to give up. With one question, God reminds this broken man that his job is not complete (v. 13b). Note the fact that through wind, earthquake, and fire, Elijah stays hidden but when he hears a small voice he arises and follows it.

He rightly hides from the forces of nature but covers up at the sound of the voice as well (v. 13). Read over the times when men and women were found in God's presence and how they

acted. This prophet knew God well enough to know that even His voice was mightier than any force of nature. That voice is something to hold on to.

**Continue with your call (vv. 15-18).** What a feeling to know that God is not finished with you yet. Elijah was right to fear for his life but right more so in trusting that what was left of his life belonged to God. If Jezebel was to cut his life short, then it would be best to spend the remainder of that life in service to God.

We know how the story finally does end. Elijah does indeed pass his ministry on to the next prophet (v. 16). We know Elijah did not lose his life to an evil queen or anyone else (2 Kings 2:11). We know that he was called to spread the warnings of God far and wide and that call had not changed because of an evil leader.

What we thought was the rest of the story was not the best of the story. God has the last word for our lives, and it's always an ending which we cannot fathom. Brothers and sisters, hang on!

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