

Overcoming Discouragement

Have you ever wondered if this Christian life is worth it? Is all the preaching, teaching, and living worth the time and effort? We may think, I am working hard for Jesus but we haven't had any baptisms lately. I don't remember the last time someone responded to the invitation after a lesson. We haven't had many visitors in a while. It can be discouraging.

Elijah had a similar feeling. All of the people around him were chasing after other gods. They were all doing evil in the sight of the Lord. Even the king was leading them in that direction. In fact, he seemed to be leading the charge against the Almighty God.

At the end of a three and a half year drought, Elijah had a contest to show who was the true and living God. The prophets of Baal brought nothing from god on their altar. Elijah brought fire upon a soaking wet altar from God. Those prophets were killed and instead of turning the hearts of Israel to God, the queen sought Elijah's life.

Elijah said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." (1Kings 19:14)

It is easy to understand this feeling. After all the work we do, still no one wants to follow God. But there is always a remnant. God says, "Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him." (1 Kings 18:19). Jesus says the gates of Hades will not prevail over His kingdom (Mt 16:18). This word not, I believe carries the idea of "never." God's kingdom will never be overcome!

John the Baptist also thought that he work was in vain. He baptized many and turned many heart toward God. But when we was put in prison and knew death was eminent, he wondered if he did the right thing. Was this Jesus the messiah?

Jesus' response was brilliant. The deaf hear, the lame walk, the blind receive sight (Mat 11:5). He wanted John to remember what power he had seen. When we think our work is in vain, let us remember what power we have seen. We have seen and are seeing changing lives. We see God's power all around us. If our lives are changing because of Jesus and we are changing others' lives through Jesus, then we are for sure on the right path! Let us not lose heart!

--Alex Swango