

Dumping It All On God

☛ “I tried and failed!” (vv.9,10)

☛ God’s Word whispers on. (vv.11,12)

☛ “I can’t go on!” (vv.13,14)

☛ God has a plan. (vv.15-18)

In the name of Jesus, God’s gentle Good News, dear hearts won over by God:

The first and last time I ever played *Stratego* with my son was when he was in the fifth grade. Over half of his men were in the captured pile at my fingertips. I needed only one more move to finish him off, when Joel said, “Dad, you lost.” “What?” I asked in disbelief. “All your bombardiers are gone, so you can’t get at my flag.” Then he explained how he had divided his forces in two and sent the first as cannon fodder while protecting his flag with the other. All I could say was, “Time for bed.” After he left the room I carefully studied the board to learn his strategy for next time. The next day I tried to pick his brain while driving home from school. But when he proceeded to recap every move I made and which pieces I lost each time, I decided then and there we would find another game to play besides *Stratego*.

Seems to me that’s how many religious people try to live their lives with God. For them it’s all a matter of strategy. And when things don’t go their way, it’s just natural to say, “That’s it! I’m done!” – if not with God, at least with that group of Christians, or praying and worshiping. Believe it or not, **Dumping It All On God** is just the opposite. Listen to God’s answer when Elijah complains,

☛ “I tried and failed!” (vv.9,10)

Take your worst nightmare and you’ll never have one like real life Elijah. He was running for his life from a woman whose name is still synonymous with evil cruelty and perversion. She was the daughter of the King of Sidon who introduced a fertility cult called Baal worship into the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Her husband King Ahab went along for the ride and became the most disgusting of the nineteen evil kings up north in the divided kingdom. Ahab sold his soul to doing evil and brought God’s judgment down in the form of three years of drought. Think about that. No refrigerators or canned goods, no Cubs or Rainbows, a hand-to-mouth existence from one harvest to the next. A year of no rain was dangerous, three years a disaster. Yet when the Lord’s prophet Elijah declared that the LORD God who is the master of His creation and would send rain once again, the evil duo was not impressed.

But Elijah wasn’t ready to admit defeat yet. The big showdown came when he stood alone against nearly 1000 false prophets of this evil queen’s religion of sexual orgies, cruelty and evil. Her god Baal and his consort Ashteroth could not send fire from heaven on the sacrifice no matter how long and hard her prophets danced and cut themselves. God does not allow such power to the devil behind the idols.

Who could help being impressed when Elijah’s simple prayer was answered with fire from the LORD that consumed the sacrifice, the altar, and the trench full of water with which he had drenched the animal three times? But after Elijah ordered the slaughter of all her prophets, evil queen Jezebel had one answer for him: **“May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.”** (1 Kings 19:1) Instead of opposing the wicked government, Elijah ran for his life. Really, dear friends, what else could he do?

☛ God’s Word whispers on. (vv.11,12)

By the time we catch up with him in this text, he has traveled hundreds of miles on foot all the way to Horeb, the mountain of the LORD, otherwise known as Mount Sinai. Half way there he had

already asked to die: ***“I have had enough, LORD....Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”*** (19:4) Instead, God fed him twice and enabled Elijah to travel forty days and forty nights ***“strengthened by that food.”*** He stayed in a cave until the LORD called him out: ***“What are you doing here, Elijah?”***

God asks us the same question when we get so tired and even burned out that we want to give up on God’s work. Maybe no one is trying to kill us, but it’s depressing when there are so many needs with so few hands willing to help. Our biggest mistake then is to complain to friends and family. Maybe this seems wrong, but Elijah was actually right, **Dumping It All On God:** ***“I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken 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.”***

God actually commands us to pour out our hearts to God. Remember the famous hymn: “I Know that My Redeemer Lives”? “He lives to hear my soul’s complaint.” That’s when He can teach us something strange especially to pastors and church leaders. We expect to find God in full parking lots, packed seats in auditoriums with excited worshipers, and memberships growing by leaps and bounds. Yet God is not in the powerful wind, earth shattering quakes and spectacular fire. When we’re humbly **Dumping It All On God**, we hear Him come in the ***gentle whisper, the still, small voice*** of the Gospel.

☛ **“I can’t go on!” (vv.13,14)**

Can you tell Elijah is angry? After the ***gentle whisper*** God asks again why he’s there, and Elijah’s answer pours out like a digital sound file that didn’t change one byte since the last time: ***“I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken 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.”*** Translation: **“I can’t go on!”**

I’ll gladly admit to you, dear friends, I’m really impressed with God here. If I were God and someone kept complaining to me like that – actually I must confess my great impatience at far, far less from my fellow sinners. We always want people to hear us, but Elijah seems as if he hasn’t heard a thing from God. But see this divine patience and kindly compassion. God doesn’t blow up. Instead, He helps.

✝ **God has a plan. (vv.15-18)**

By going back, Elijah was accepting this assignment. But what impresses me is that God did not make him personally carry it out. According to the Biblical record, all Elijah actually did was to anoint his successor Elisha. The anointing of Hazael as the next King of Aram was done by Elisha after God took Elijah to heaven in the whirlwind fiery chariot. And Jehu’s anointing was actually performed by another man whom Elisha deputized for the task.

Do you see? God wants us to despair of our own strength just as He led Elijah to do. We cannot make our own hearts right with God, so how could we convert all the evil Jezebel’s and Ahab’s of the world? But when it’s time to run, let’s run to God. Let’s see Him for our broad shouldered, powerful loving heavenly Father. When we answer, “Yes, Father,” He takes our load on Himself.

God has a plan, a plan to save us not from only earthly frustration but from eternal destruction in hell. What Elijah could not see were the 7,000 souls of believers whom God was preserving as His faithful remnant. They trusted in the big plan for God to send His Son Jesus to be our Savior from sin, death and hell. And ***“when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”*** (Galatians 4:4-5 NIV) Jesus calls us from our dark, dank caves to His free gifts and eternal rewards of grace. The Good News of sins forgiven is all we need to help us put one foot in front of the other until He takes us home to heaven. It’s called the patient endurance of the saints. And it’s God’s strategy to trump burnout of all kinds every time. Just quit looking at your sick, sorry self, and focus your eyes on Jesus. For as Isaiah says in his prophecy: ***“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.”*** I give up, Lord! I give up my strategy. Yours alone is my delight, my power, my hope and joy in Jesus. Amen.