

## DESPAIR

*Finding the Light of Hope in the Darkest Hour*

ON A RECENT INTERNATIONAL TRIP, I had a layover in a city that turned out to be extremely cold and humid. Already wearied and weakened from extensive traveling, I developed a case of bronchitis that I just couldn't seem to shake, no matter how much rest I got or how many antibiotics I took. Within no time, that persistent respiratory infection turned into a dangerous case of pneumonia, and I found myself flat on my back in a hospital. I felt very weak and somewhat helpless. When the physician came in to tell me that it would be a while before I'd be released from the hospital, I was absolutely disheartened.

That was not where I wanted to be, of course. More than ever I longed to preach the gospel and teach people how to know Christ as their Savior. I was turning eighty and celebrating fifty-five years in the ministry—milestones I had anticipated with great joy and expectancy. Likewise, at In Touch Ministries, we were commemorating our thirty-fifth anniversary of broadcasting the Good News of salvation and were in absolute awe of all the astounding doors of opportunity our awesome God was opening for us to



reach even more lost souls. I had plans to make; speaking engagements to attend; my photo book, *I Love to Tell the Story*, to finish editing; sermons to preach; and new places to see. I could not be sick. There was too much to accomplish. There was too much I knew the Father still wanted me to do to help others know Him. But I couldn't do any of it because I had no energy.

Impatiently, I waited to get better, but it seemed like my condition only deteriorated. Some of the medication actually worsened my ailment, rather than improve it. And from lying on my back with the pneumonia, I began to develop two agonizing pinched nerves in my back, which persisted for months. Eventually, the wear and tear on my body, inability to improve, and pain took its toll. I became downright despondent—dejected to a point of almost sheer despair.

You see, it occurred to me that I might miss out on everything. I thought about disappointing loved ones, friends, and partners in ministry and failing to take hold of important opportunities that we would never be able to regain. Even worse, I considered the devastating possibility that I would no longer be able to carry out my calling. I couldn't help it, of course, but I felt like I was letting

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everyone down—especially God. So much joy, effective service, and fruitfulness was within my reach, but I just could not grasp it. I had absolutely no control over my situation.

I had never experienced those feelings to the profound degree I had them those few days. I understand what it feels



like to be so low that you can barely look up. Still, when you are flat on your back in pain and disheartenment, up is the only way you can look.

I frankly didn't have much energy or desire to pray, but I made myself focus on God, knowing He was my only hope and comfort. I cried out to Him to heal me and free me from the darkness of the emotions I was feeling. And He did. What the Father eventually showed me through that difficult experience was this: *Despair is a spiritual battle that you and I must choose to fight.*

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I often say, "Disappointments are inevitable, but discouragement is a choice." And it is true. But you and I both know that there are devastating times in our lives that stretch everything we know and believe. We are in pain—at times physically, at other times emotionally, and sometimes both. Some of these seasons last much longer than a few days, and the physical strain can take a terrible toll on our emotions. Conversely—when we are continuously despondent and disheartened, our bodies can suffer as well. Frustrations and setbacks bombard us at an alarming rate, undermining our every confidence. Just when we think we will get better, more bad news hits us.

We wonder why God would allow all the agony we are experiencing. We ask, "Why me, Lord? Why now?" At the same time, the enemy is doing his best to make us question whether the Father really loves us—bringing up old sins, faults, and mistakes that have already been forgiven, and insinuating they disqualify



us from the Lord's blessings. What makes it even worse is that joy is just outside our reach—and we have no hope of taking hold of it. The sense of loss, helplessness, futility, and dissatisfaction with ourselves can be absolutely overwhelming.

## THE FREQUENT COMPANION OF OTHER DAMAGED EMOTIONS

Have you ever experienced this? Have you faced the dark depths of despair—wondering if you'll ever climb out? Perhaps you feel this way now as you fight to overcome other damaged emotions.

I address this with you at this point in the book because as you struggle to overcome fear, rejection, bitterness, and guilt, you may be in awe at how your difficulties have *increased*—hitting you right where you hurt. Your emotions may seem like a raw, open wound, and you may feel profoundly discouraged that you do not yet have victory over your damaging emotions.

Most of all, you may be wondering, *Why isn't the Father helping me? I am trying to serve Him. Why has this situation only gotten worse instead of better? Why doesn't He heal me?* You cry out to Him and He comforts you, but the trial does not end and you cannot understand what He is doing. So you question, *Has the Lord failed? Am I so far gone and so intensely damaged that He cannot help me?*

No, my friend, the Father has not failed you. And the fact that He is still working on you is evidence that not only does He



see your great potential, but He also desires to touch the world through you in an astounding way (Heb. 12:4–11).

Believe it or not, what you are experiencing is absolutely normal—and a necessary part of liberating you of the pain you feel. You see, adversity is not only a bridge to a deeper relationship with God; it is also the path to freedom and healing. Like a surgeon who expertly cuts out cancer, He must pierce you right where the concentration of pain is—right where the decay lies within you. So He uses trials as His precise scalpel—making meticulous and skillful incisions into your life that are agonizing, to be sure, but also absolutely necessary in order for you to be fully free of what is destroying you (Jer. 18:3–4).

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Paul expressed this truth in 2 Corinthians 1:8–9 when he wrote, “We do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.” Even the great apostle Paul faced terrible trials that were beyond his power to endure. Yet he saw the value in the trial—“so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead” (v. 9).

*Is there no easier way?* You may wonder, *He is God; why does He allow it to be so painful?* The simple truth is that we learn more in the difficulties of life than in the blessings. Through our



hardships, He removes the thought patterns, habits, attitudes, behaviors, and even the relationships that allow us to depend on anything other than Him. Trials drive us to our knees in prayer, stop us from relying on ourselves, and teach us His all-sufficiency. As I said, when you are flat on your back with no other options, your only choice is to look up.

Yet it is in looking to Him that we ultimately have the greatest hope, joy, peace, and freedom. The prophet Isaiah testifies, “Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. Your ears will hear a word behind you, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right or to the left” (Isa. 30:20–21). When you are able to rely on Him fully, you recognize that regardless of what circumstances you face, your Teacher—your omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and unconditionally loving God—is there to guide you, protect you, and provide for you perfectly.

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## THE CHALLENGE OF CHOICE

The challenge, of course, is that you must make the choice to trust Him. You must look beyond the painful circumstances—all the evidence you can see, feel, smell, hear, and touch—and realize there is a greater unseen reality, which is the presence of the



Living God (2 Cor. 4:16–18). This is not easy, but takes a constant refocus and realignment of your thinking. Everything in your spirit may fight against it, and with good reason. How can you trust one whom you cannot experience with your five senses? Yet to do otherwise is no option at all—the consequences of discouragement are just too great.

### 1. *A Negative Inward Focus*

First, despair generally causes a person to turn inward and dwell on whatever is disheartening him—perhaps a failure, loss, or frustration that undermines all his hopes and dreams. Now the individual may not be expressing this outright, but he knows something is off in his heart. He senses his troubled mood and thinks, *God, what is the matter with me? Why do I feel so sad and overwhelmed?* This silent prayer is repeated frequently until the message takes hold in his inner being—something is wrong; he is both desolate and defeated.

The mind, of course, looks for reasons for his pain and finds them in the individual's faults, limitations, and sins. It grabs hold of everything negative that touches his life, searching for meaning. Whether he struggles with fear, rejection, bitterness, or guilt, he begins reciting the negative messages to himself, which then exacerbates the underlying emotions and deepens his discouragement. He loses all perspective on his situation or how it really compares with the suffering of others.



## 2. A Poor Testimony

Second, remaining in a constant state of despair can undermine your witness. The enemy knows he can do nothing to harm your soul. Jesus promised in John 10:27–29, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and *no one will snatch them out of My hand*. My Father, who has given them to Me, *is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand*” (emphasis added). Once you accept Jesus as your Savior, the evil one has absolutely no way to alter your eternal destiny.

However, the enemy *can* damage your testimony and squelch your effectiveness for the kingdom of God—and so he makes this his goal. After all, “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). The devil realizes if he can prevent you from embracing what the Father fashioned you to be, he can then stop you from discovering what would give your life true significance and meaning.

How does he do so? As we have seen, he may use fear or turn you against yourself with feelings of guilt. He may tempt you to turn away from God through unbelief. He may even entice you to dull your sorrows with illicit substances, sexual exploits, or other destructive behaviors.

Now, the inherent message of Christianity is “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). But if a person is continuously plagued with negative thoughts, guilt, and despondency, then the lost and dying world will not see the liberty that



comes from having your sins forgiven, the comfort and hope that result from being reconciled to the Lord, and the joy of an eternal home in heaven with Him. There will be nothing to recommend Jesus to the unbeliever.

### ***3. Self-Destructive Actions***

Third, you may seek to alleviate your soul in ways that will actually increase your bondage and deepen your desolation. In fact, when you are profoundly discouraged, you may pursue activities to ease your woundedness that do not make sense, even to yourself.

Like those plagued with guilt, you may try to take control of the situation by punishing yourself.

Perhaps you push away your loved ones—and especially God—in order to avoid more rejection or condemnation. It is possible that you could endeavor to establish stability and order in your life through obsessive attention to what you eat, cleaning, or exercise. You may be tempted to seek refuge in earthly comforts such as attaining wealth or engaging in sinful behaviors. You may even throw yourself more deeply into ministry, work, or a hobby in order to hide your hurt, only to become more wounded when they do not lessen your grief and the trials of life disillusion you further.

Friend, many things will promise relief for your hurting soul, but do not be fooled—they will not satisfy the deep longing within you. Only God can heal your suffering. All other pursuits will only result in even more pain, because they will continue to reinforce the false messages you believe about yourself.



Now, before we move forward, I would like to make an important distinction. What we have been discussing is the discouragement and despair that all of us face at one point or another. In fact, because of circumstances beyond their control—such as an abusive relationship, ongoing physical pain, residing in a nation embroiled in war, or what have you—some people may face devastating disheartenment quite often.

However, there comes a point when a person moves beyond a despondent mood to what is known to professional psychologists as *clinical depression*—which may result from a long-term biological condition that is not necessarily related to what is happening in the person's life or the choices he or she makes. At times, such a condition is accompanied by symptoms such as substantial weight gain or loss, insomnia or hypersomnia, cognitive problems, and even hallucinations.

As I indicated in the second chapter, the precious souls who suffer from true chemical imbalances should seek professional help and may sometimes even require medication to help correct what is occurring in them biologically. If this is you, I want you to know the Father loves you and there is hope for you. I strongly encourage you to seek support and find a godly, Christian counselor who can offer the help you need. But in addition to professional assistance, make every effort to employ the principles outlined in this chapter. God is your ultimate source of help and healing, and trusting Him is vital to your recovery.



#### 4. *A Desire to Quit—Permanently*

I say all of this in lieu of the fourth consequence of despair, which is that the person may feel as if there is no use continuing with the burdens he bears, so he walks away from his calling, goals, vocation, and/or even his family. Regardless of the reality of his situation, the only thing he can focus on is the abiding sense that no one cares about him; there is none who appreciate or help him; and he has no reason to fight anymore. He has lost his motivation, his will, and his purpose. Ultimately, a severely dejected person may even come to the conclusion that his only option is suicide.

Sadly, this happens a great deal more often than we may believe. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that more people in the United States die from taking their own lives than from automobile accidents.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, the reasons are as numerous as the people who attempt it.

- As we saw with the Japanese kamikaze pilots of World War II and the terrorists on September 11, 2001, sometimes people take their own lives because of a cause they believe in. Perhaps they are promised rewards or some type of recognition in exchange for their lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, vol. 62, no. 17, May 3, 2013, <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/wk/mm6217.pdf>.



- Sometimes people feel as though they are simply going through the motions in their lives—they cannot find meaning or purpose to sustain them, and therefore believe they have no valid reason to continue on.
- As we just discussed, some people suffer from long-term despondency and biochemical imbalances that drive them to feel as if they have no choices. A future trapped in such despondency can seem so bleak that they long for a way of escape.
- People can also face circumstances that seem hopeless—especially if they feel continuous and unbearable pain, experience a terrible financial reversal, or lose loved ones. With no relief from their burdens in view, they believe suicide is their only way out.
- At times, an elderly couple that has been together a long time will have a love pact—they decide that after thirty, forty, or fifty years of marriage, for example, they do not wish to live without the other. So when one of the spouses becomes ill or debilitated, they take their lives together.
- And then there are those who commit suicide out of retaliation or vengeance toward another person who has harmed or betrayed them.

People have many reasons, but is suicide ever a course of action God approves of? No, it is not. We can look back at the Sixth Commandment in Exodus 20:13 and see that God's Word is clear:



“You shall not murder.” The word used in the Hebrew is *râtsach* and it can apply to killing oneself.

In fact, nowhere does the Bible condone suicide. Why? Because it is a form of escape, an expression of unbelief, an act of utter self-hatred. In essence, the person who takes his or her life is saying, “I don’t believe the Lord can help me with this terrible problem. I don’t think He will answer my prayers or that He even loves me. I doubt all of it—so I will take my life into my own hands.” In doing so, they usurp His authority and become god in His place, feigning to hold the keys of life and death (Rev. 1:18).

Is this ever an attitude that honors the Father? Absolutely not. Friend, there is *always* hope in God, regardless of how difficult and unbearable your circumstances may seem (Lam. 3:19–25). You cannot name one trial that is greater than His power to overcome it. He can lead you to victory no matter what you face.

Therefore, if you ever get to the point where you wonder if life is worth living, please seek help. Your life is important—you are worthwhile. Explain what you are feeling to a trusted pastor, godly counselor, family member, or friend who can support you and walk with you through the dark times you face. If you don’t know whom to turn to, go to a local Bible-believing church, call a Christian Counseling Center, or seek out a Christ-centered ministry. Do not remain silent about your pain. You do not have to—and should not—fight this battle alone.

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Now, before we move on, let me clear up a misconception I frequently hear repeated.

*If you or someone you love has attempted suicide, please be assured that it is not the unpardonable sin.* Some believe it is because the person does not have the opportunity to repent, but nothing in God's Word suggests suicide will not be forgiven.

As we discussed in Chapter 5, the only unpardonable sin is "blasphemy against the Spirit" (Matt. 12:31), which is the outright rejection of Christ as Savior through continued unbelief. Although the Holy Spirit convicts you of your need for salvation, you refuse His promptings and decline Jesus' perfect provision at the cross and through His resurrection. But the person who dies

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"in Christ" (Rom. 3:24), who is "sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13), will be saved, even if he has no opportunity to confess before he dies.

Of course, it is also important for us to understand that even though suicide is not the unpardonable sin, its consequences are still absolutely devastating.

*Not only does suicide bring excruciating and long-term pain to the individual's loved ones; but it also plagues them with questions that can never be answered.* I've spoken to many family members who just cannot understand what happened. Often, they are tortured with thoughts such as, *How did I miss the fact she was hurting so much? Did I say or do something that wounded her? Didn't she realize how*



*much we love her? Why didn't she say anything about how she was feeling? If she had just told me, I would have helped in some way—in any way within my power—to get her through her pain. I just wish there was something I could have done to stop her from destroying herself.*

The agony they endure does not go away because they are always left wondering, *Why? And, Was there anything I could have done differently?*

*Suicide also means that the person forfeits God's plans for their lives.* The Lord may have some very important things for that person to accomplish and may be teaching profound lessons through his adversity.

For example, one of England's great seventeenth-century authors, John Donne, struggled with terrible physical ailments, poverty, and depression. In fact, five of his twelve children died young—two were stillborn and the others perished early in their youth. He experienced losses few people could bear.

However, Donne did not turn his back on God or take his life; rather, he chose to cling to the Lord. In fact, as he struggled with a terrible illness, he wrote Meditation XVII of his *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, and affirmed: "Affliction is a treasure, and scarce any man hath enough of it. No man hath affliction enough that is not matured and ripened by and made fit for God by that affliction. . . . Tribulation is treasure . . . we get nearer and nearer our home, heaven, by it."

Donne understood that his adversity was a bridge to a deeper relationship with the Father. Therefore, he did not give up when



tempted to despair. Rather, he embraced the difficulties for the good they could bring him. And because of his faith, the Church of England still celebrates his life four hundred years later, on March 31 of every year.

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Think of all a person could miss if he decides to take his life. If Joseph had given up at his lowest point, he would not have enjoyed the honor of being Pharaoh's second in command. If Moses had yielded to his despondency, he wouldn't have led the people of Israel out of Egyptian bondage and to the Promised Land. And if David had committed suicide during those terrible moments when he knew Saul was pursuing him, he had no one to count on, and everything seemed utterly against him, he would never have become the great king of Israel and an ancestor to the Messiah, our Lord Jesus.

Likewise, the person who even considers suicide as an option must realize that God's deliverance may be just around the corner and that all his hopes may soon be fulfilled. But if he gives up and yields to the despair, then he will never discover what would have been possible with the Father's help.

So if the suffering soul would just hold on—express his faith and cling to almighty God, certainly his hope will be renewed and rewarded—just as it was for David, Moses, and Joseph.

This is why David testified, "I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the LORD" (Ps. 27:13–14). He understood



that when God is with you, there is no such thing as a truly hopeless situation. The best thing to do is wait to see what He will do, trusting that He will help you.

So let me ask you: Have you ever considered doing harm to yourself? Have you ever lamented, *Life is not worth living. I just want to die.* Whether or not you seriously contemplate taking

your life, I would ask that whenever your thoughts turn dark and dangerous, that you would remember that the Father knows all about your situation and He's committed to helping you overcome it. He loves you just as you are, and He is willing to walk with you step by step through whatever suffering and sorrow you face.

Therefore, take heart—you have almighty God on your side. Invite Him into your life as your Redeemer, Deliverer, Protector, Provider, and Friend. Think about the astounding privilege it is that you can count on Him, and allow it to comfort your aching soul. You can let go of your despair and look forward to the future. You will most likely be absolutely astounded at the plans your heavenly Father has for you.

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## THE DECISION TO TRUST

Of course, you may be tempted to beat yourself up and question if you really know the Lord at all. The enemy's messages play in



your mind, *Christians shouldn't have such dark and discouraged thoughts. What is wrong with me? I must not really have a relationship with God if I am so depressed. All of God's promises are for other people—not for me.*

If at any point those thoughts enter your mind, rebuke the enemy immediately and turn to Scripture. There are few saints in God's Word who did not face some form of despair. Their victory wasn't that they were always cheerful. Rather, they triumphed because they knew Who to turn to whenever discouragement assailed their souls.

- For example, David declared, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God" (Ps. 43:5).
- Likewise, the prophet Habakkuk testified, "Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord GOD is my strength" (Hab. 3:17–19).
- When faced with the onslaught of three overwhelmingly powerful armies, King Jehoshaphat affirmed, "We are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You" (2 Chron. 20:12).



- Even the Lord Jesus faced a time of terrible desperation at Gethsemane and said, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death” (Matt. 26:38). Scripture tells us that He prayed not once, nor twice—but He sought the Father *three times* during that terrible hour. If the perfect, sinless Son of the Living God—God Himself—went repeatedly to the throne of grace for comfort as He faced such devastating emotions, what does that say to us? Not only are those feelings a reality to all of us, but we can and should go often to the Father’s arms for compassion, mercy, and consolation.

Another prime example of this is the great prophet Elijah, who defied and defeated wicked King Ahab and 850 prophets of the false deities Baal and Asherah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:16–40). We know Elijah was a man of extraordinary faith because Scripture recounts how he bravely challenged the 450 prophets of Baal, saying:

“How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him . . . I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal’s prophets are 450 men. Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will



call on the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, He is God" (vv. 21–24).

The false prophets prayed loudly for hours, cutting themselves with swords and spears so their blood would attract Baal's notice. But 1 Kings 18:26 confirms, "There was no voice and no one answered." Impotent and useless, Baal sent no fire.

Elijah was unafraid. He increased the difficulty of the task by soaking the offering with so much water that it filled a large trench. Then he called out to the Great I AM—*Yahweh*, the God of Israel. Again, Scripture tells us, "Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God'" (1 Kings 18:38–39). It was a tremendous display of the Father's power and an astounding spiritual victory for Elijah.

One would think a man of God with so much faith and who had experienced such an overwhelming triumph over his enemies would never reach the point of hopeless despondency or fear defeat. Yet that is exactly what happened. And it wasn't a terrifying army, powerful rulers, natural disasters, or extraordinary losses that caused him to feel utterly hopeless and helpless. It was a threat by a woman, Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab.

She sent a message to him saying, "May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you just as you killed them" (1 Kings 19:2, NLT).

First Kings 19:3–4 (NLT) reports, "Elijah was afraid and fled



for his life . . . He went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. ‘I have had enough, LORD,’ he said. ‘Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died.’”

Elijah—one of the greatest, most courageous and influential prophets Israel had ever known—was absolutely terrified and utterly depressed. Exhausted and overwhelmed by uncertainty, he asked God to kill him. He simply did not want to live anymore.

Yet, God was gracious and tender with the weary prophet, just as He is with you. He understood Elijah’s discouragement and ministered to him in a wonderful way.

### *1. The Father Cared for Elijah’s Physical Needs*

It is amazing how being rundown from hunger, weariness, loneliness, and frustration can affect the emotions. Likewise, there may be other bodily factors that influence how we feel—such as how the pneumonia and pinched nerves I experienced disheartened me. Elijah was probably so exhausted, famished, and isolated that he lost heart and gave in to fear. Yet the Lord sent him help. We’re told, “There was an angel touching him, and he said to him, ‘Arise, eat’” (1 Kings 19:5).

### *2. God Brought Elijah to Safety*

First Kings 19:8 reports, “He arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.” Horeb—also known as Mount Sinai—was



more than two hundred miles from the evil queen's grasp, which must have given Elijah some comfort. But it was also where the Lord had established His covenant with Israel and had given the Ten Commandments to His servant Moses (Ex. 19:16—20:18).

In other words, this was not only a place of physical security for the prophet; it was also a landmark of spiritual significance. Just as the Father had successfully defeated the Egyptians and brought His people faithfully to this mountain, so He could protect Elijah and vanquish Queen Jezebel. Likewise, whenever we are discouraged, it is important to seek out a place of safety, take refuge in the Lord, and remember all the ways He has been faithful in the past.

### *3. God Changed Elijah's Focus*

When Elijah arrived at Horeb, the Father commanded the prophet to stand before Him. First Kings 19:11–13 reports,

Behold, the LORD was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave.

Elijah was so intently centered on his problems with Jezebel that he was missing the obvious: as a servant of the living God, he