

He had reached the pinnacle of personal power and financial success. By his own ingenuity and personal magnetism, he took a failing mediocre investment firm and transformed it into a multi billion dollar Fortune 500 corporate giant. The Texas based company became, overnight, the financial envy of the Corporate World. It had a staggering revenue stream of over a hundred billion dollars! He himself had an estimated net worth of 400 million dollars! But something went wrong. Greed got the better of Ken Lay. Overnight his company – Enron - lay in financial ruin. And he himself was tried, convicted of fraud and was awaiting sentencing when he was found dead in his home - allegedly of a massive heart attack. He was only 64 years old. How quickly one's life can careen out of control. How easy to have a reversal of one's fortunes.

The prophet Elijah had a slightly similar experience as Ken Lay's in the sense that one minute he is basking in the glow and the thrill of victory over the prophets of Baal! He had won a decisive victory over the forces of evil! He is ecstatic! "On cloud nine" as we say. Then suddenly and somewhat unexpectedly his world is turned upside down! His life is threatened by none other than his arch enemy, the notorious Queen Jezebel! With a contract on his life, Elijah flees to the safety of the mountain hoping to ride out the storm that has literally thrown his otherwise serene life into a vortex of utter confusion and fear! Step back for a moment and look at your own experience. Do you recall the sweet smell of success that you enjoyed for a long time? A time when you had everything going for you? Good health; a wonderful marriage; a great job; lovely home etc. Perhaps there were many times when you asked yourself the question "I wonder how long this will last?" and then, the very thing you feared came to pass. Your joy turned to sorrow! And you lost heart.

The great prophet Elijah also lost heart. In fact, so depressed was he, he asked God to take his life. At that point he found himself drowning in a sea of despair and depression. And so he waited for the inevitable hour - death. But God had a better plan for his prophet. And dying was not part of that plan. God now challenges Elijah by asking the prophet a rather provocative question: "What are you doing here Elijah?" God's question has nothing to do with geography. But everything to do with Mission! "Here" is not where you belong - this side of fear and apprehension. As St. Paul would later declare, "God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7) "Here" is not where you belong. Rather it is "There" - in the arena - on the Mission field. There among the teeming ranks of the

poor; the disenfranchised; the social outcasts; the homeless; the intelligentsia; rulers and shakers of society; the orphans; the children; the refugees! "What are you doing here?" is a question every one of us needs to ask himself / herself. Am I in the will of God for my life and His kingdom? "What are you doing here?" involves an even deeper issue - the prophets (and by extension, ours) sense of priority. What is more important to him - the saving of his life - or being aggressively engaged in the mission of the Kingdom? Jesus said "he who saves his life will lose it, but he who loses his life for my sake and the gospels will find it".

Here is my earnest question: What is your priority as a Christian? Is it that of sitting in a comfortable pew at a time that is convenient for you? Is your top priority that of coming to "enjoy" a worship service and then head out the door once the ritual ends? Or is your top priority that of seeking the lost? Is it that of being a faithful steward of the mysteries of God and of the financial resources God has placed at your disposal for His work?

"What are you doing here?" The question is brutally direct. Sort of "in your face". Wherever "here" is, the question implies that you are at the wrong location, not spatially, but in your perception as a Christian. It says you are not at ground zero - where the action is. It says you are AWOL (absent without leave)! God refused to allow Elijah to use his pity party as an escape hatch. Neither will he allow you. Why? Because there is work to be done and God "ain't finished with you yet." As in Elijah's case - there is unfinished business to attend to. V15 of 1 Kings 19 says this: "The Lord said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat to succeed you as prophet." Just so Elijah heard the question, God asked it twice: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Could it be that God is asking this very question of you? "What are you doing here" at this rudimentary stage in your spiritual development? "What are you doing "here" at such a low level of receptivity to the claims of Christ on your life? Someone said that God has yet more truths to reveal to us but cannot because we are often not at the "place" (spiritually speaking) God wants us to be. Many of us are always in the process of becoming but never arriving (maturing).

Paul expresses the condition more succinctly in his letter to the Corinthians; "Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly - mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you

are not yet ready for it. Indeed you are still not ready....." 1 Corinthians 3: 1-3.

As in the case of Elijah (and to a lesser degree, Ken Lay) life has its challenging moments; those unexpected events that cut the ground from under our feet. But if, like Elijah, we can be persuaded to be in the right place - the place where God wants us - we can be confident that God will see us through. As William Cowper assures us:

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head"

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