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IT'S ENOUGH

Mario Dučić, CEO **Pulpit Series** is sent out monthly free of charge. If you would like to be added to our mailing list and receive these messages on a regular basis please send your request to: ceo@cce.hr
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„But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!"
(1 Kings 19.4)

How many times have we said to our Lord, friends or to ourselves: "It is enough! I do not want to nor will I do anything more for the Lord. It is simply not worth it. I cannot fight anymore against the sin that pursues me and the troubles I bear!"

We feel this way and speak these things despite battles and victories we experience. Once filled with joy and

desire to serve, we now stumble and have no strength to go forward to the end of our mission; we even think it would be better to die "than to live like this!" Some believers would say that this condition is impossible for those who are mature in the Lord. But is it possible?

Elijah, God's prophet, was mature in the Lord and stood firm on the truth yet he found himself discouraged and in despair immediately after his two victories; first, he

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defeated Baal's prophets and then prayed for rain following a great famine.

When I read this I identified with his reaction. I have often felt the same way after large spiritual events that required much physical and emotional effort. There was a jingle often played Mondays on a radio station I used to listen to: "Why I do not like Monday". Before I was converted I did not know why Monday was a day hated by so many.

I have experienced that the day before or after a spiritual event or experience can be depressing. I often can hardly move physically, I am emotionally empty and am not very capable of talking about spiritual things; I'd rather go away somewhere alone with my wife and do something that has nothing to do with church. In such moments all sorts of thoughts enter into my mind; for example, to give up pastoral work, begin a new career, and only show up on Sundays. Have you ever felt that way?

★ **In Christian literature many write only about victory or the success of God's people but very little write about their falls, depressions or actual life problems.**

Charles H. Spurgeon once said: "Before any big achievements it is usual to be somewhat depressed. Every intellectual work has its weight and depression. A lot of learning tires the body. Our job (the pastoral ministry) includes more than intellectual work; it also includes the work of the heart – the work of the deepest part of the soul. We feel after the day of the Lord (Sunday) as if the life in us has been fully washed up.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology has issued a study according to which a man is physically and emotionally more tired after he/she speaks; one hour of speaking is equal to the physical work of digging with a shovel for 13.5 hours.

But, it is normal to feel like this. We should not neglect these days or think that we are less worthy or less spiritual. In Christian literature many write only about victory or the success of God's people but very little write about their falls, depressions or actual life problems.

In the Bible, many anointed people wanted to run from their call or felt desperate in times of troubles despite their many victories.

When we look at Moses, for example, we see that he wanted to give up on his people several times; once he asked the Lord to kill him: *"I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is*

too heavy for me. If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now—if I have found favor in Your sight—and do not let me see my wretchedness!” (Numbers 11.14-15)

We know that Job felt the same way. Due to his many troubles and losses he cursed the day he was born. His statements were very pessimistic, spoken in despair, as the following: *“Why is light given to him who is in misery And life to the bitter of soul, Who long for death, but it does not come, And search for it more than hidden treasures;?” (Job 3.21-21)*

Or Jonah after his victory in Nineva wished to die. In his anger he prayed this: *“Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!” (Jonah 4.3)*

► 1. „IT IS ENOUGH“ MAY BE THE WORDS OF DEDICATED BELIEVERS

Let us go back to Elijah and the circumstances that brought him to his desperate condition and his prayers as he turned to the Lord. In **chapter 19** we read: *“He sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die”* (verse 4), yet in **chapter 18** we read about his victorious spiritual experiences: the defeat of the prophets of Baal and miraculous ending of the drought as an answer to his prayer. What events led to such desperate statements?

We know that Jezebel was angry due to death of her prophets, as they prophesied what she wanted to hear, a glorious future full of power and glory. The job of these prophets was to glorify the king and the queen in order to secure the continuation of their kingdom. After Elijah caught and executed them by the creek Kishon Jezebel understood that her supporters were eliminated and that her pride and authority were ruined. The money she had invested in these prophets was spent in vain.

Elijah was a constant thorn to her as he always was prophesizing judgment over Israel. As she could not control him, as she could the other prophets, she made a covenant to kill him and said: *“So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.”. (1 Kings 19.2)* As long as he had his eye on everything Jezebel could not continue with her self-willed evil activities and plans.

★ **Despair and discouragement often take place in the lives of dedicated believers after large spiritual events that require much physical and emotional energy.**



Nowadays, Pentecostals and Charismatics call such character in women “the spirit of Jezebel”. I will not get into the terminology but one thing is for sure – there are many women who succeed by manipulation and are surrounded by weak men who are afraid of them and their reactions and who are often bound by immorality. Of course, everything goes well until they face someone who seeks to restrain them; those that can restrain them are a threat and these women will do anything to discredit and destroy them.

Apart from the execution of the false prophets Elijah, also by prayer, “called for rain” and the Lord did a miracle. The Scripture says that *“Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain.” (1 Kings 18. 45)*. After these events I believe Elijah felt exhausted and somewhat in despair and said: *“It is enough! Now, LORD!” (1 Kings 19.4)*

Despair and discouragement often take place in the lives of dedicated believers after large spiritual events that require much physical and emotional energy. Those who face these activities know this to be true but those who deny its

validity are often those who are not dedicated to the Lord’s work with all their heart and thus do not understand how this can take place.

Simply put, these conditions may appear as usual feeling with dedicated believers or ministers of the gospel. I would like to emphasize this because many churches deny these conditions and force people to the end of their strength until they burn out or lose their will for any spiritual work. Therefore such believers or pastors end up in mental institutions or continue serving while at the same time destroying their family relationships as well as their relationship with others because of their self-righteous criticism toward others whom they consider less worthy and unspiritual because of their emotional condition referring to it as a lack of faith. These who have experienced this despair and discouragement feel as though they are second-rate citizens and unworthy because the so-called “spiritual ones” talk about their constant victories and a victorious life. However, most of the stories are lies. I remember once meeting a sister who had lung cancer and asked her how she was. She denied her illness (in faith, of course) and said that everything is: “Hallelujah!!” Why cannot we have a normal conversation and still believe in God?

Imagine Elijah; was he any less the son of the Lord when he said: *“take my life, for*

★ **Feelings like fear and despair are a normal reaction for dedicated believers, too.**

I am no better than my fathers!" (1 Kings 19.4b) The Hebrew word for "better" is *tov* and is translated as: to be good, correct, and pleasant. The major emphasis is on moral goodness.

In other words, Elijah was discouraged and desperate, as he thought himself no better than his ancestors who served before him. After he had performed a just deed and executed the false prophets, under the pressure of Jezebel and her covenant to kill him Elijah probably thought that he had not performed his duty well or was not good enough for the Lord, as he was afraid!

Elijah was afraid of Jezebel but was still God's man. In the former chapter he had no fear of false prophets and he executed them; yet now he is afraid of the curse of a woman. Feelings like fear and despair are a normal reaction for dedicated believers, too.

We are not perfect in everything; neither do we need give up when we face situations in which we did not anticipate our reaction. We do not have to turn to sin and the world only because we are exhausted, and say: "It is enough!"

It is normal to have problems in certain measure, to be depressed or in despair in certain situations; to feel like giving up. We cannot get around problems!

A.W. Tozer once said about problems: *"What should we do about problems? Learn how to live with them until God gets us out of them. We should pray in order to pass through them without murmuring. Problems we patiently bear will spiritually improve us. They only harm us when we resist or unwillingly pass through them."*

▶ **2. THE SOLUTION IS OFTEN PRACTICAL AND SIMPLE FOR THOSE WHO SAY: "IT IS ENOUGH!"**

"Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angle touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again." (1 Kings 19.6)

In order to rescue Elijah from despair God did not shake the earth and sent angels to show him a vision for future things, rather He gave him a practical solution – "take a rest, eat, drink". Somebody may comment: "What does that have to do with spiritual problems?" Many think this way, but this is the mistake with many of God's people.

★ **The church nowadays is in trouble because it spiritualizes those things that are not necessary yet fails to be spiritual in the areas where holiness is required.**



After many victories when they grow weary and in despair, they begin to feel sorry for themselves; they begin criticizing and cease serving. If someone suggests they take a rest they become offended considering it unspiritual advice (some may even consider the advise to be from devil). If they are advised to go into spiritual battle, “to cleanse their house” and anoint their home and continue serving as “their strength is “the LORD God of hosts”, then it becomes valid spiritual advice. Their advisors also share a few miracle stories about believers who served supernaturally while ignoring their exhaustion because “we do not walk according to our feelings”, yet this “spiritual advise” serves only to push them deeper into depression because in the end they feel worse than before, thinking they lack faith or are not strong enough in the Lord.

Our God is not a perfectionist or spiritual sadist who only offers spiritual solutions void of logic forcing us to accept them as we “live according to faith”. The church nowadays is in trouble because it spiritualizes those things that are

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not necessary yet fails to be spiritual in the areas where holiness is required. I think that today, more than ever, it is necessary to come to our senses, which the Holy Spirit also gives, rather than having spiritual gifts.

The Holy Spirit does not only speak in a spiritual language, therefore Paul did not say to Timothy to speak more in his spiritual language when he felt anxious but confirmed that: *“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” (2 Tim 1.7)* The Greek word for „sound mind“ is *sophronismos*, which means: discipline, self-control – sound mind. In other words Paul says to Timothy: “Come to your senses and remember that you have God’s spirit in you who gives you the strength for discipline, self-control and sound mind - do not take leave of your senses in such situations.” “O Lord, give sound mind to today’s church!” should be the prayer of those full of the Holy Spirit.

The solution for Elijah’s depression and despair was this – go to sleep, eat, and drink!! Practical and simple! No big spiritual revelation! It is easier to say that something is a spiritual problem than to admit that one needs to be disciplined. The spiritual solutions we need are often found in the practical steps we must take. Therefore, do not give up, just take a rest, eat, and go on with your mission given by God.

▶ **3. IN PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS OFTEN LIES THE STRENGTH THAT WILL GUIDE US TO GOD; HE IS THE ONE WHO GIVES US STRENGTH FOR FURTHER SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES AND CONFIRMS THAT WE ARE NOT ALONE IN OUR BATTLES**

„So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.“ (1 Kings 19.8)

Practical things like sleeping and refreshment after major spiritual experiences that sap our strength and catapult us into depression will renew us and desire for God and His service. As I mentioned before, many believers burn out due to lack of discipline and understanding of the importance of rest, consequently, they do not want to serve any longer nor do they wish to come back to God.

After being refreshed, Elijah went to the One who could fully encourage him and give strength for the duration of his mission. Elijah set out for Horeb – the holy place – where Moses met the Lord and obtained the commandments. God gave Elijah extraordinary strength to travel for about 250 km without food. He fasted for 40 days and when he came to Horeb. *„And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place“ (1 Kings 19.9)*

After his extended fast God asked him what was he was doing. Elijah answered as most people who are discouraged and lonely in a self-righteous spirit of self-pity: *“I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.” (1 Kings 19.10)*

If we are tempted to believe that we are the only true (and theologically correct) church in the city or country where we serve let us not grumble to God about it; it will only discount the good things done thus far. God showed Elijah that there were others who were also diligent in working for God. One thing is certain; our church is not the only diligent and righteous one.

God told him to leave *“seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.” (1 Kings 19.18)* There is always a holy remnant, the holy church in the world, a church that does not compromise with the world!

Elijah also understood that God does not always reveal Himself in power or miraculous events. While Elijah was pitying himself, God talked to him *“in a sound of gentle whisper“.*

Believers often run here and there to big churches or conferences for an experience



thinking that God will talk to them through some great Christian leader or preacher and thereby free them from despair and unfaithfulness. In such places they rarely get spiritual invigoration and thus often miss Him because He also talks in the silence of humble heart.

Elijah gained encouragement in the Lord and completed his work. He did not remain in the attitude of: *"It is enough"*, but was rejuvenated and refreshed in God and finished his race.

Elijah was a man of momentary fears and depression, a man of strong spiritual experience, but also a man who learned that he was not alone and that God speaks through various means; simple, practical and less dramatic. He completed his mission powerfully and in a spectacular way. The Lord took him in the heaven in the whirlwind while he was talking to Elisha: *"suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of*

them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." **(2 Kings 2.11)**

Do you feel like giving up - dedication to work, church or family? Have you said to yourself or to others lately: "It is enough?" If so, it is time to step back, humble yourself, and listen for God's voice. His voice will come when you are in despair and encourage you not to give up your mission on the earth!

„Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved." **(Ps 55.23)**

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