

“WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS – TURN TO JESUS”  
I Kings 19:1-18, Luke 8:26-39, Galatians 3:23-29  
June 22 & 23, 2019

“A man was driving an old Ford on a lonely road when it chugged to a stop. He was at a loss about what to do since he didn’t know much about cars. But he got out, put the hood up and began to tap here and there, jiggled this wire and that, when he heard the roar of a car coming toward him. As it got closer, he saw it was a brand new Lincoln. And the fellow was nice enough to pull over. He stepped out, walked up and said, ‘What’s the trouble?’

“Oh,’ the man said, ‘I can’t get this old Ford to go.’

“Well,’ replied the Good Samaritan, ‘let me see.’ So he began to tinker inside the engine compartment and asked, ‘Do you have a screwdriver?’ He adjusted something, then got inside, and started it right up.

“Say, thanks a lot! That’s great. Who are you?’ Putting his coat back on, the man said, ‘Well, I’m Henry Ford. I ought to know a little bit about that car we made.’”<sup>1</sup>

What happens when we reach the End Of The Rope? You know, when stuff happens that is out of our control, yet affects us so deeply that we’re stuck. Where do we turn? **WHO DO WE TURN TO FOR ADVICE?** Or help? Or encouragement? Or support? When the things of this world get us so down and out, what do we do to find the strength we need to keep on going?

Maybe we could turn to our Friends. Some of them might know a bit about what’s happening in our lives, so they might be able to tinker a bit here and there and get us going again. But don’t be too terribly disappointed if their advice fails. They don’t know you the best.

Maybe we turn to our Family, for certainly they should be the ones who know us the best. Certainly they should be able to help us out. But even then, they might not help us out as much as we’d like. Yes they know us better, but they might know the best of what we need. Their advice may fail.

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<sup>1</sup> (Billy Graham, *World Aflame*, found in Charles Swindoll’s, *Swindoll’s Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes*, Thomas Nelson, 1998, pg. 488)

Or maybe it's a Co-Worker, one we share the job with for 8 hours a day? They might be able to give us some advice so that we can get things straightened out and get us back on the road. After all, they might have gone through the same stuff we're in right now. Certainly they could help us! But don't get angry if they tell you they can't help. They are limited in what they can do.

What about the Government? Certainly we should be able to get help from the ones that are overseeing the environment in which we live. However they might not have our best interests at heart, and could even be a part of the problems we're facing. Relying upon them to guide us and help us could turn a bad situation into an even worse one.

Or we could turn to Sages and Seers, the ones who are supposed to know all things. They should have resources and contacts that might get us up and moving in the right direction. But they might have different persuasions and different beliefs than we have, so it could take us in a direction that would be counterproductive. In fact, depending on what they believe, they could even take us in the wrong direction and send us spiraling downward, even more out of control than what we were at the time.

So if these are ones we could turn to for advice, **WHAT DO WE DO?** What do we do if we are disappointed with all these "helps" and find ourselves still struggling out in the middle of nowhere? Oh, we could Whine and Cry, but folks get tired of us after a while if that's all we do. Plus, it doesn't get us anywhere. I've not seen a person yet who resolved the condition of their life by whining and crying about it. But we still do it, don't we?

We could Grouch and Complain. Certainly when life gets us down and we are stuck in a tough situation, we could grouch to others about our problems, or complain that we aren't getting our fair share, or that we're getting a raw deal. We could get others who are in the same pickle together with us and form a group that becomes very vocal about how we feel and tell everyone what's wrong in our life, or what's wrong with their life for that matter. We could even start blaming others for what's happening in our lives. You know, make it someone else's problem so that THEY can figure it out. But it usually doesn't turn out the way we want, so we end up grouching and complaining even more.

Or, we often Get Angry about it and Seek Retaliation for what we think has been done to us.

The anger often builds up so much that it boils over onto everyone around us and we snap at others for the littlest things. Road rage, drive-by shootings, protests and riots are examples of anger and retaliation. Sure, it lets off steam, but does it really help us out with the situations we find ourselves in? No! And what about those who are affected by our actions? Many times there are innocent bystanders who get the tough end of our frustration and anger. Retaliation only brings more retaliation from the other side, and soon it gets way out of control and there's no end to the violence that can erupt.

As a last resort, we often just Give Up. We resign ourselves that nothing is going to change, we're stuck in our desperate situation and nothing can be done about it. So instead of seeking additional help, we often turn to drugs or alcohol or other destructive behaviors to help us palliate and endure the stuff in our lives. Yet, I've never seen alcohol or drug use ever remedy a situation for the better. The use of drugs and alcohol ALWAYS leads us further down the destructive road that ALWAYS makes our situation WORSE. And the destructive behavior usually takes us to destruction. Go figure!

All right, if none of these things work **WHAT SHOULD WE DO?** Where can we turn to get the best results and consistent support for the crummy stuff affecting our lives? What can we do to get the results we really want?

Well, the first thing that we need to do is to Repent. We need to seriously look at what was the cause of the situation we are in and evaluate what we did to land us in that position in the first place. Did we fail to take the car in for its regular maintenance check-up? Did we eat right? Were we loving toward those around us, even when they did something or said something to us? Did we treat others with respect and look out for their interests first? Did we follow the instructions for how the job was to be done? Did we take advantage of someone's generosity and misuse the resources at our disposal? Were we fair in our judgement, or accurate with our statements? Whatever is going on in our lives is USUALLY a direct result of how we first acted toward someone else. True, some of what we face today is completely out of our control, like weather disasters. But even then, when they happen to us,

what do we do and who do we turn to for help? Those actions will determine how the rest of our life will go, and if it will get better, or keep spiraling downward out of control.

That leads us to the second thing to do, Seek the Lord for His help and guidance. As we saw in the opening story, Henry Ford could resolve the problem with the car he made because he knew all about it. As the designer of that vehicle, he knew every nut and bolt and wire in that car, so when something went wrong, he could remedy the situation to get the man back on the road.

Well, for us, we need to turn back to our Designer who knows all about us. Jesus Christ was with His Father at the week of creation, so He knows every last hair or wart or bone or nerve in us. As the designer of the human body, God knows all there is about us, and He is the only ONE who can really fix what's going on in our lives. He has the knowledge about us, He has the power to do great work in us, and He has the authority to make all things happen for us. Isn't it right, then, that He is the One that we turn to for help in our life? No matter what is going on, Jesus can influence our lives and tweak us in just the right way so that we are functioning again at peak capacity for the glory of the Lord. So we need to seek the Lord in all things so that He is the One who provides us the right answers at just the right time in just the right way to bring about His purpose.

And that means that we must Rely Upon His Help if we want things to turn out the best. Knowing us better than any other being in the universe, Jesus can transform our lives by the renewing of our minds through the Holy Spirit, but unless we humble ourselves to rely upon Him to make those changes in us, we're only stuck in using the resources at our disposal through our own strength. And that is demonstrated by the things we do instead of turning to Jesus. But in turning to Jesus, and relying upon His help, we are reaching out to the greatest source of authority, power, wisdom and guidance so that our lives can be changed.

So let's look at the examples we have in the Scriptures today. We started out with Elijah At The End of His Rope in I Kings 19. Elijah had just duked it out spiritually with the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, and had **turned to** the power and wisdom and authority of God to defeat

them and destroy them. It was a tremendous victory for God to bring the people of Israel back into worship of Him. But there was one problem: the King and Queen of Israel LIKED the prophets of Baal and the worship of the goddess Asherah, and they supported those false religions. Ahab and Jezebel had made Baal and the worship of Asherah the state religion to the point where Jezebel was systematically killing all of the Lord's prophets. Elijah became Enemy #1 in the eyes of the government, and Jezebel put out a death warrant against him.

That's not uncommon in our own world today – we have the Ahabs and Jezebels in our lives who are adamant about substituting Christianity with some sort of perversion in its place, and there is a great push to silence the truth of Christianity to anyone. It's almost getting to the point where it is dangerous to proclaim yourself to be a true follower of Jesus Christ today. Fines, law suits, arrests and imprisonments are happening more and more around this nation and the world. And there are even some death threats being made against those who oppose the liberal agenda today. We saw that when Supreme Court Justice Kavanaugh was appointed to his position. We see it in a lot of Twitters and Tweets focused toward those on the Trump Administration. It's getting dangerous to stand your ground on the traditional view of Christianity.

Well, faced with this, Elijah lost his courage and his focus on the Lord God and forgot all that had just happened. So Elijah RUNS AWAY, but in the midst of his journey away from Jezreel and the threat of death, he SEEKS THE LORD on Mount Sinai. There he has an encounter with God, but he whines and cries and claims to be the last of the Lord's prophets, but what can he do? (He just wiped out the prophets of Baal and Asherah, but how quickly he forgets). His "poor me, I'm all alone" speech gets little sympathy from God, Who demonstrates His great power and authority once more outside the cave where Elijah has hidden.

When we feel like we're all alone, it is easy for us to give up and hide and go into self-preservation mode rather than facing the struggles and standing strong in our faith. Elijah, thinking he was the last prophet of God, lost his courage and gave up. But God was not finished with him yet.

God demonstrated His great power before Elijah, and then convicted him of his fear. It was then that Elijah humbled himself before the Lord. It was then that God gave him instructions of what to do next in order to make the changes that were necessary. The same is true for each one of us – we must humble ourselves before the Lord so that He can direct us and recreate us into His image.

Folks, please understand this important concept. Never forget it. **YOU ARE NEVER ALONE** when you have the Lord walking with you, when you are seriously following His will and His way, when you are adamantly striving to live according to the Lord's standards. Though everyone around you forsake you, **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!** You have the Most High God standing there right beside you, and He can do ANYTHING! So don't give up. Don't give in to the ways of the world just to survive. Be bold and stand up for God, and He will stand up for you. (Acts 7:56)

Then, let's look quickly at the Demon-Possessed Man of Gerasa in Luke 8. This guy was in a real pickle. Somehow he has given himself to become completely dominated by demons. Because he had opened up his life to them, they came in and possessed him so that he was no longer in his **RIGHT MIND**. The demons took control of his entire life so that he was under the control of **EVIL**. And there were so many demons in him that he had been driven **MAD** by their influence in his life. Though he had great power, such that could break chains and fetters when the authorities tried to arrest him, the madness in his life left him **ISOLATED** and alone, with nowhere else to stay except the local cemetery. He had turned to the complete authority of the things of this world and he ended up without any friends or family, without security or health care, and even without clothing.

Yet, there was enough of the man left in him that when Jesus stepped ashore on his side of the Sea of Galilee, this man **TURNED TO JESUS**, for he realized that no one else could help him. And it was at that point that Jesus cast out all of the demons from him and set him free of the insanity he was living. He turned to Jesus and Jesus completely changed his life, bringing him back into the image of God once more.

You see, When All Else Fails – **TURN TO THE LORD JESUS!** No one else in this world can

do the total transformation in your life like Jesus can do. Jesus is the Designer of our lives, so He alone knows what we need to come back into a position to bring God honor and glory again. Only Jesus can change your life! But how does He do that?

First, He **CONVICTS US** of our sin. Being confronted at the very presence of God in Jesus, the demoniac was suddenly aware of all that was wrong in his life. And the demons realize that they have no control over Jesus, so they implore Him to not destroy them, but just change the residence where they were living (Luke 8:28).

Second, Jesus **CASTS OUT** ALL Evil from our life, realizing that we cannot do it by ourselves. Evil and good cannot coexist with each other, so either one or the other will win out in us. When we turn to Jesus and ask Him to come into us, there is no longer any more room for evil, so Jesus casts it out of us as we give Him control of each room in our life. All the demons had to go, and Jesus orders them to “GO!” and they had to obey Him (8:30-33).

Only then does Jesus **RESTORE US** to our right minds. When the people of the village came out to see what had happened, “...*they found the man from whom the demons had gone out sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind...*” (Luke 8:35). Jesus gave him his life back. Jesus brought peace back to his mind and healing to his body. Jesus restored all that the demons had tried to destroy. The man was completely brand new AND THAT SCARED THE PEOPLE! They had never seen such power or authority before, and they were worried about the rest of the pig herds around town. What if Jesus healed other demon possessed people? What would happen to the herds, then? So they “...*asked Jesus to go away, because they were terribly afraid*” (8:37).

Realizing that he had burned all of his bridges to the people in Gerasa, the healed and restored man begged Jesus to let him go with him to start a new life somewhere else, where the people didn't know his past, and wouldn't condemn him for his past. Instead, Jesus **SENDS HIM** out, to return to the very people who knew him so that he could tell everyone the great things that God had done for him (8:39). What better way could the people see the difference that Jesus makes in our lives than for the

people we know seeing the 180 degree change that takes place in us when we turn to Jesus? So Jesus sends each one of us out to do the same thing. We are to tell those around us what God has done for us so that they can see the need for Jesus to be in their lives, too.

And this is what the apostle Paul says is the Beginning of Faith. Listen to how Paul explains it in Galatians 3:23-29. (READ Galatians 3:23-29)

Faith in Jesus Christ begins as we realize that it is Beyond the mere adherence of **THE LAW** that changes us and saves us (3:26). We can follow the letter of the Law and still miss out on faith in Jesus Christ. There has to be **ACCEPTANCE** of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, the Maker of All Things New, the Restorer and Peace-Giver, the Giver of Eternal Life. We have to accept Him into our lives before anything can change in us (3:27). We have to be **BAPTIZED** into union with Christ, so that we can put to death the things of this world and give life to all that is good and God-like. Only then can we be **RECLOTHED** with the life of Christ Himself.

As we are now, we are similar to the demon possessed man of Gerasa. We, too, are deeply influenced with the ways and influences of this world. We, too, have a past loaded with sin and hurt and pain. We, too, easily find ourselves out of control, only to burn the bridges of family and friends, finding ourselves isolated and alone. Only as we **BELONG** to the Family of God can we find the newness of life that only Jesus can give to us. We don't find new life from anyone else except Jesus, so we must humble ourselves before Him, believe in Him, receive Him, follow Him, and live for Him. Only then can we find the eternal life that He promises all who trust in Him.

Will you submit yourself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ today? Will you give Him all your burdens and cares so that He can heal them and restore them? Will you give in to the Way of the Lord Jesus so that others might see the changes that take place in your life and seek Jesus, too? Let's pray.

Father, You know all about us. You know what we've been through and what we face even today. You are Lord of All. Give us the courage to kneel at the feet of Jesus, bow before Him as our Lord and Savior, so that He can renew us and restore us according to Your great purpose. Use us, even as we are, to be the light of Christ Jesus in our world today. This we pray in Jesus' name. AMEN.