

“I Can’t Do Anything Right”

(Third in a series)

by Heath Rogers

Few things are as discouraging as feeling like we are a failure. Sometimes young people feel pressured to excel in things like academics, sports, music, and relationships. In some cases, this pressure to succeed can become so great that they lose sight of the fact that their family and friends truly love them for who they are. Their life becomes “goal” oriented rather than “character” oriented. When this has happened, they determine their self-worth by how well they do things rather than by what kind of person they are. Thus, when they fail at doing something, they consider themselves to be failures. This warped sense of thinking can take its toll on a person, causing them to decide that their life is no longer worth living.

Elijah was a mighty prophet of God, but there was a time in his life when he felt like an utter failure. The people of Israel were wavering between belief in God and an idol called Baal. King Ahab and his evil wife Jezebel were promoting Baal worship while killing the true prophets of God. Elijah challenged 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). He proposed that both of them make an offering to their god, and the god that answered by fire would be considered the true God of Israel. The people agreed to the terms of the contest. The prophets of Baal made their sacrifice and cried unto their god from morning until the evening. There was no response from Baal. Then Elijah prepared his sacrifice and God responded in fire. The people fell on their faces and declared that the Lord was God. Elijah then commanded that the 450 prophets be killed.

Elijah had won a great victory, and all of Israel seemed to be convinced that the Lord was God, except for one person. When Jezebel heard that Elijah had killed her prophets, she sent word to him, saying, *“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).

Elijah responded to the threat by running away. *“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).

Consider what has happened. Elijah won a great victory, and all of Israel agreed with him, yet he considered himself to be no good and prayed for death because he failed to convince one person.

This is an easy trap for us to fall into. No matter how many people give us compliments, the voice of a lone critic will often ring so loud that we forget everyone else’s praise and support. Elijah was focused on one person who wanted to take his life. He was unaware of the fact that 7,000 people were on his side (v. 18). These people had benefited greatly from his courage at Mt. Carmel. He had made a difference in the lives of many people, but he didn’t realize it, in part, because he was lost in his own self-pity.

God also made it clear that Elijah had more work to do (vs. 15-17). The events at Mt. Carmel made the changes that God intended to bring about possible. It was not time for him to give up.

Life consists of moments of success and failure – neither one of which define who we truly are. Our character is shown in the way we choose to respond to moments of success and failure. Just because we have failed in one task does not mean we are a failure. Maybe you may have failed at

something, and perhaps it was very important, but you are not a quitter. There is more for you to do. Don't give up on your family, your friends, your God or yourself. **Choose life** (Deut. 30:19).