

The Silent Assassin: When Satan Shifts From Temptation to Discouragement

By Admin | Sermon | April 23, 2026

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There is an old fable that tells of a time when the devil decided to have a garage sale. He laid out all of his tools on tables for the public to inspect. There was the dagger of Jealousy, the hammer of Anger, the trap of Lust, and the razor of Pride. Each tool had a price tag on it. But on a separate table, displayed on a velvet cushion, was a small, wedge-shaped tool. It looked worn, battered, and used more than any other weapon. Yet, its price tag was higher than all the other tools combined.

Someone asked the devil, "Why is this little wedge so expensive?"

The devil smiled and said, "That is the tool of Discouragement. I use it when all the other tools fail. If I can't get a Christian to sin with lust or pride, I can still defeat them with discouragement. If I can wedge this into their mind, I can pry open their defenses and make them give up. And once they give up, they are mine."

We often view spiritual warfare as a "hot war"—a battle against burning desires, screaming temptations, and obvious sins. We think of Satan as the Tempter who dangles a carrot in front of us. But what happens when you mature in your faith? What happens when you stop chasing the carrot? What happens when you are walking in holiness, reading your Bible, and serving in the church?

That is when the enemy shifts tactics. He moves from "Hot War" to "Cold War." He stops trying to seduce you and starts trying to suppress you. He stops trying to make you *bad* and starts trying to make you *heavy*. He knows that a discouraged soldier is just as useless as a fallen soldier.

If you are reading this today and you feel a heaviness in your bones—a sense that "it's not worth it," or "I'm not making a difference," or "I just want to go to sleep and not wake up"—you are under the assault of the Assassin's Second Weapon. Today, we are going to expose the mechanics of Discouragement. We are going to walk through the valleys of Elijah and the prisons of John the Baptist to see how the greatest men of God fought this battle. And we are going to find the specific antidote that lifts the weight off your soul.

Number 1: The Tactical Shift — Attacking the Will, Not the Flesh

Why does the enemy switch from temptation to discouragement? It is a matter of tactical necessity. When you are a young or carnal believer, Satan uses Temptation. He appeals to your flesh. He says, "Do this, it will feel good." It is active, impulsive, and exciting.

But as you grow in Christ, your tolerance for "hot" sins decreases. You love Jesus too much to go

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out and commit obvious sins. You have the Belt of Truth and the Breastplate of Righteousness. The enemy sees this. He realizes, "I can't get him to cheat on his wife," or "I can't get her to steal money." So, he changes the frequency. He attacks your Will.

Discouragement is the attack on your will to fight. Temptation says, "Do this." Discouragement says, "Don't do anything." Temptation appeals to pleasure; Discouragement appeals to hopelessness.

- * It tells you that your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling.
- * It tells you that your character isn't changing fast enough.
- * It tells you that the church is full of hypocrites and your service is in vain.

The goal of temptation is to stain your testimony. The goal of discouragement is to silence your testimony. If the enemy can't get you to switch sides, he will settle for you sitting on the bench. He wants to demobilize you. If you feel like you are walking through mud, realize this: You are not just "having a bad week." You are being targeted because your purity has made you immune to temptation, so the enemy is trying to crush you with despair.

Number 2: The Elijah Syndrome — The Post-Victory Crash

Discouragement rarely comes when you are already failing. It almost always comes right after a great victory or right before a great breakthrough. We see this clearly in 1 Kings 19 with the prophet Elijah.

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah is a superhero. He calls down fire from heaven on Mount Carmel. He defeats 450 prophets of Baal. He prays for rain after a three-year drought. He outruns a chariot. He is operating in massive spiritual power.

In 1 Kings 19—just 24 hours later—he is running for his life, sitting under a broom tree, praying to die. He says, *"I have had enough, Lord. Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."* (1 Kings 19:4).

How does a man go from calling down fire to begging for death in one day? This is the Elijah Syndrome.

Victory requires an expenditure of spiritual and emotional energy. When you pour yourself out for God—serving, leading, praying, loving—you eventually run dry. Adrenaline fades.

The enemy waits for the crash. He waits until you are physically depleted and emotionally vulnerable. Then he whispers, "Look at you. You did all that work on Mount Carmel, but Jezebel is still on the throne. Nothing changed. You wasted your time."

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If you are hit with a wave of discouragement on Monday morning after a powerful Sunday, or right after you finish a big project, recognize the timing. It is a counter-attack. You are not depressed; you are depleted. And the enemy is trying to make a permanent decision (death) based on your temporary condition (exhaustion).

Number 3: The Weapon of Isolation — "I Am the Only One Left"

Discouragement is a fungus; it grows best in the dark and in isolation. When the enemy wants to discourage you, he first tries to separate you from the herd.

Look at Elijah's complaint to God: *"I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty... but the Israelites have rejected your covenant... I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me."* (1 Kings 19:10).

The Lie of "The Only One": Discouragement convinces you that your suffering is unique.

- * "No one understands my marriage struggle."
- * "Everyone else in this church is happy and blessed; I'm the only one faking it."
- * "Nobody cares about me."

Once you believe you are the "only one," you stop asking for help. You stop going to small groups. You stop being honest. You retreat into your cave. And in the cave, the echo chamber of your own negative thoughts becomes deafening.

But God corrects Elijah. He tells him later in the chapter, *"Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal."* (1 Kings 19:18).

Elijah thought he was alone. God said, "There are 7,000 others just like you."

You are not alone. The devil is a liar. The very fact that you feel isolated is proof that you are under attack. The cure for this stage of discouragement is to force yourself into community, even when you want to hide.

Number 4: The John the Baptist Crisis — Unmet Expectations

There is a deeper, more theological form of discouragement that comes from Unmet Expectations. This is when God doesn't do what you thought He would do.

Look at John the Baptist. Jesus called him the greatest man born of women. He baptized Jesus. He saw the Holy Spirit descend. He **knew** Jesus was the Messiah. But in Matthew 11, John is sitting in a cold, dark prison cell, waiting to be beheaded.

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He sends a message to Jesus: *"Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"*

Can you feel the heaviness of that question? John is essentially asking, "Jesus, if you are who I said you were, why am I where I am?"

John expected the Messiah to bring fire and judgment. He expected a revolution that would overthrow Rome and open the prison doors. Instead, Jesus was healing people and preaching love, while John rotted in a cell.

The Gap: Discouragement grows in the gap between your theology and your reality.

* You expected to be married by 30. You are 35 and single.

* You expected the business to succeed because you tithed. It failed.

* You expected healing. The person died.

Satan uses this gap to whisper, "God isn't faithful. Or maybe, God isn't real."

Jesus sends a message back to John: *"Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."*

Jesus is saying, "John, I am working, but I am not working the way you expected. I am not a vending machine. I am God. Do not be offended by My methods."

To defeat this discouragement, you must surrender your script of how your life *should* go and trust the Author with the story He is actually writing.

Number 5: The Biological Component — H.A.L.T.

We must be very practical here. Sometimes, we try to cast out a demon when we really just need a sandwich and a nap. We are spiritual beings, but we live in biological bodies.

When Elijah was suicidal, God did not send him a sermon. God did not tell him to repent of his lack of faith.

God sent an angel. And what did the angel do?

1. He touched him (physical touch).
2. He baked him bread on hot coals (warm food).
3. He gave him water (hydration).
4. He let him sleep (rest).

Then, the angel woke him up, fed him *again*, and let him sleep *again*. The angel said, *"Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you."* (1 Kings 19:7).

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God is so tender. He acknowledged that Elijah wasn't evil; he was just human. The journey was too heavy for his physical frame.

There is a simple acronym used in recovery programs: H.A.L.T.

Never make major decisions when you are:

- * Hungry
- * Angry
- * Lonely
- * Tired

When you are in this state, your emotional defenses are down. Molehills look like mountains. A small criticism feels like a dagger. If you are battling discouragement, check your biology. Are you sleeping? Are you eating real food? Are you resting? Sometimes the most spiritual warfare you can engage in is to turn off your phone and go to sleep.

Number 6: The Whisper Therapy — Restoring Intimacy

After Elijah rested, God told him to stand on the mountain.

Then came a great wind that tore the rocks apart—but the Lord was not in the wind.

Then came an earthquake—but the Lord was not in the earthquake.

Then came a fire—but the Lord was not in the fire.

Finally, there came a gentle whisper (or a "still small voice").

Why did God whisper?

When you are discouraged, you feel like God is a million miles away. If God shouted, it would imply distance. You shout at someone who is far away. You whisper to someone who is close.

By whispering, God forced Elijah to stop the internal noise, stop the panic, and lean in. He was demonstrating intimacy. He was saying, "Elijah, I am right here. You don't need the fire and the drama and the performance. You just need Me."

The enemy uses noise—the noise of the news, the noise of your anxious thoughts, the noise of the "what ifs." God fights discouragement with quietness. He brings you back to the center. If you are discouraged, stop looking for a spectacular miracle. Stop looking for the earthquake. Go into the secret place, shut the door, and listen for the whisper that says, "I am with you. I love you."

Number 7: The New Assignment — Action Cures Fear

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Finally, how did God get Elijah out of the cave permanently? He gave him a job.

God said, *"Go back the way you came... Anoint Hazael king over Aram... and anoint Elisha... to succeed you as prophet."* (1 Kings 19:15-16).

God gave him a future. He gave him a succession plan. He gave him a purpose.

Discouragement paralyzes you. It makes you sit under the broom tree and gaze at your own navel.

The cure is movement. Action cures fear. Service cures self-pity.

God basically told Elijah, "You are not done. I still have kings for you to anoint. I still have a young man (Elisha) who needs your mentorship. Get up."

When you focus on helping someone else, your own discouragement begins to fade. The Dead Sea is dead because it has fresh water coming in, but no water going out. If you keep taking in information and feelings but never pour out into others, you will become spiritually toxic.

Find someone to serve. Find someone to encourage. In watering others, you yourself will be watered (Proverbs 11:25).

Conclusion

If the enemy has shifted from tempting you to discouraging you, take it as a compliment. It means you are too strong to be seduced, so he is trying to break you. It means you are a threat.

But remember the garage sale. That little wedge of discouragement is expensive, but it is not invincible.

* Recognize the Shift: It's an attack on your will.

* Check your Biology: Rest and eat.

* Reject Isolation: Find your 7,000.

* Listen for the Whisper: God is close.

* Get Up and Move: Your mission is not over.

Psalm 34:18 says, *"The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."*

You may be crushed, but you are not destroyed. The weight you feel is not the weight of the grave; it is the weight of glory being formed inside you. Hold on. The whisper is coming.

"Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." (Psalm 42:5)