

GOD'S MAN FROM  
TISHBI.

E. P. ELLYSON.



President E. P. Ellyson, D. D.

# God's Man From Tishbi



By Pres. E. P. Ellyson, D. D.

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## Chapel Talks on the Life of Elijah

Delivered at the

Texas Holiness University

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Pentecostal Advocate, Peniel, Texas

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## Introduction

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These Chapel Talks were delivered during the regular morning exercises at the Chapel of the Texas Holiness University, and while they were prepared during the stress of multiplied duties, we recognized their value to be such that they deserved a more permanent form, and requested their putting forth in this manner. President Ellyson has not been able to revise the matter, and so minor errors may have crept in, but we feel sure that the readers of this little volume will be richly repaid for its perusal.

THE PUBLISHERS.

# Talks on Elijah.

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For the remainder of this term our Chapel talks will be a study of the life of one of the old prophets. The story of his life is found in the first book of Kings and just a little of it in the second book. Who can tell who it is? (Some said Samuel, some Elisha, and some Elijah.) Elijah is the one.

The first mention we have of him is in the seventeenth chapter of First Kings. The first verse reads as follows: "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the sojourners of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As Jehovah, the God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

At this time we will think of that only which is suggested by that first little word "and." And, is a conjunction which connects that which is to follow with that which has gone before. To understand the life of Elijah then, we must become familiar with the past history of Israel, especially that part contained in a few of the previous chapters of this book of First Kings. Let us to-day

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take just a brief glance at this, that we may understand the conditions existing when Elijah made his appearance.

We are all sufficiently acquainted with Bible history to know that the days of Israel's greatest national glory, were the days of David and Solomon. And this greater glory is not attributable alone to the character and genius of David and Solomon, but was because of their loyalty and the people's loyalty to the worship and service of Jehovah. Those who honor God, God takes pleasure in honoring and prospering.

Upon the death of Solomon there came a great change. Rehoboam, his son, was heir to the throne, and was placed at the head of the kingdom upon the death of his father. When this was done, the ten tribes gathered together and reminded Rehoboam of the hard yoke his father had placed upon them, and asked him what he was going to do. After consulting first with the old men, then with the young men, he brought answer that he would not lighten the yoke. At this the ten tribes revolted, and set up a kingdom of their own in Samaria, with Jeroboam as king.

This division of the kingdom was previously prophesied and came as a punishment for Solomon's forsaking the Lord in the latter part of his reign. Jeroboam was named for this place

by a prophet of the Lord, and was promised great success if he would honor Jehovah. Soon after he came to the throne his attention was called to the fact, that according to their laws, all Israel had to go up to Jerusalem to worship each year. He reasoned that if this were to continue, it would still keep the people somewhat tied to Jerusalem and Rehoboam's kingdom. He feared that this would finally overthrow his kingdom, so he decided to change this and to have them worship God in their own land. Possibly he did not mean to depart from the worship of the true God, but he did. Whenever men go to tampering with God's arrangements and setting up worship to suit themselves, it is idolatry. Jeroboam erected two golden calves, placing one at Bethel and the other at Dan, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

Notice how he professed not to be changing gods, but to be serving the same God who brought them out of Egypt and had led them to their present prosperity. But when images have been introduced into the true religion, it is an easy step to the images of other religions. Thus it proved in Israel's case. We should be careful never to substi-

tute mere forms for real worship. Jeroboam is known from this on as "he who taught Israel to sin," and his successors to the throne "follow in the ways of Jeroboam," and Israel began to decline.

After many revolutions and much bloodshed the kingdom passed into the hands of Ahab, of whom it is said that he "did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah above all that were before him." It was he who made the final step into heathen religion. He disregarded the law in his marriage to the daughter of the king of the Sidonians. The world would no doubt say this was a happy match, but it was a sad day for Israel.

When the young and beautiful Jezebel left her palace-home in Tyre, the priests by whom she had been taught no doubt urged her to do her utmost to introduce into Israel her hereditary religion. Ahab being a weak man was easily influenced, hence her task was a comparatively easy one. She soon had a temple erected for the worship of Astarte in the city of the king's residence, and employed 450 priests in its service. Later Ahab and she built a temple for Baal in Samaria, the capital of the kingdom. Shrines and temples began to rise in all parts of the land and the priests of Baal rapidly increased.

The fires of persecution then began to burn,

and soon were burning with fury. The altars of Jehovah were ruthlessly broken down, the schools of the prophets were shut up, while the prophets and priests were hunted down and slain by the sword.

The whole land seemed apostate, the new religion seemed to triumph, and Jezebel was evidently in high spirits. But in all of this, there is one thing they had failed to count on. In their planning they had failed to consider God. But God was watching them and had his man ready, and that man was Elijah.

## II.

Yesterday we studied the little word "and" which led us back into the previous chapters and revealed to us the fearful apostacy of Israel at the time of Elijah's appearance.

God has a way of sometimes allowing wrong and infidelity to go so far as to seem to win the day, without His interference. It was so when the Saracens with their false religion, swept over North Africa where Christianity had been firmly established, Alexandria being one of the strongest centers of the church. They swept everything before them and crossed over onto the Continent, up through Portugal and Spain and on to the East, until it seemed the church would be de-

stroyed. It was so in the dark ages of Rome's dominion, when it seemed that Roman Catholicism had triumphed, until there was no longer any true Christianity remaining. And so it was with Israel at the time we are now studying.

No doubt Ahab and Jezebel felt well satisfied with the conditions, thinking the old religion was completely superceded by the new; but they did not know God, were not acquainted with His methods, and had not counted on the part He was taking in this affair. Too often men forget to count on God in their planning and are deceived in thinking they are making a success when they are making a great failure. While God seems to allow wrong to triumph for a time, He has a way of acting very suddenly and changing things when He gets ready. He had His Charles Martel for the Saracens, His Martin Luther for the Dark Ages, and His Elijah for the days of Ahab.

Ahab's time was now come. We can scarcely imagine the scene. We do not know where it took place, whether in the luxurious judgment hall surrounded by his men of state, or when he and Jezebel were out strolling in one of their beautiful gardens, or when he was alone, or passing through some public thoroughfare. No matter where it took place,

the sight was a strange one. Suddenly this proud king, in the midst of his pomp and show, found himself confronted by a coarsely dressed, rough, but rugged man of Gilead who was not used to the ways of the court. Look at the two men. Can you not in imagination see them? What a contrast! One is God's man and the other is the world's man. Yes, there is a great difference in the outward appearance, in their clothes and manners; but there is a still greater difference than this. One was proud and haughty, with affected manners called culture, but a weak character. The other might be called rough judged by Ahab's standard, but he had a culture produced by a strong character, a warm heart, and a strong zeal for the right. How vain is the world's idea of greatness. Let us take our place alongside of God's man. By any true test Elijah stood as a mighty giant before a lilliputian. Ahab had position, but Elijah had character.

This interview did not last long and there was little said, but what was said was startling in the extreme. So far as the record goes there was but one spokesman. It was not the king who spoke commanding his subject, but it was this backwoodsman who spoke to the king in a firm, emphatic voice, in the name of the God whom the king had

been disregarding. There was but one sentence uttered, but oh what a sentence. It so astonished the king that it seems he could make no reply, and so Elijah escaped. Ahab supposed he had all the prophets of the old religion either destroyed or so cowed down that they were afraid to speak. No doubt for some considerable time he had heard nothing from them. Though we find later that there were 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal, yet they were so hidden that Elijah did not know they were in existence until God told him.

But Ahab's supposed security was suddenly disturbed by Elijah's appearance before him, and hearing him say, "As Jehovah, the God of Israel liveth." How this must have startled the king. It made his heart beat fast and loud. He was afraid and turned pale. He was now reminded that while he had torn down the altars of Jehovah, destroyed His worship, killed many, and cowed down others of His priests, he had not yet killed God; "the God of Israel liveth."

Next came the words, "before whom I stand." This showed the king that he had not gotten rid of all of God's prophets, but here is one under special inspiration and commission to him to let him know that things had gone as far as Jehovah would per-

mit without interference. God was now going to act, and begin judgment, and this judgment was to be just what God had said He would send upon them if they forsook Him. "There shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word."

It was claimed that the gods of the newly-instituted religion had power over the natural elements, but now Elijah, acting in the name of the God of Israel, contradicts this, and proposes to shut up the heavens from rain and hold them shut at His word. It is Jehovah and not Baal that has control of the elements. This He will now prove, and thus proving, will prove the falsity of the new religion. Thus it was God's prophet against Baal's prophets, or God against Baal. Elijah has no fear in the contest. He uses no such word as "if," "possibly," or "peradventure," but boldly declares, "there shall not be." God's man with God's message need use no doubtful word, and need have no fear as to the final outcome.

What now will Ahab do? This is a pivotal moment in his history. Jehovah was giving him another chance to turn and stand for the right. In his early reign when he first began to turn Israel from the ways of the Lord, his conscience must have frequently troubled him; but urged on by the determined Jezebel,

he had drowned the voice of conscience and the voice of God, until God left him and kept silent for some time. His heart was now hardened so that it could only be awakened by the shattering peals of thunder or a bursting volcano. Fingers of forked lightning must write fiery words of condemnation to make him think and feel. Ahab needed an Elijah. Though hardened, God would not leave him, but would now employ the sterner, severer measures to awaken him. Behold the goodness of God! With what persistence He seeks to reclaim the lost.

### III.

2 ✓ We will study to-day a little more about the abrupt introduction of Elijah to Israel. We have seen that his appearance was very sudden, he having been unknown to Israel until this time when he stood so courageously before the king as the messenger of Jehovah. But there is an unwritten history back of this act and leading up to it. God's leading may often call for suddenness of action, but there is always a preparation leading up to that action. We may not understand the preparation as it is going on, and it may only be explained by the backward look from the act. The act may be all that history records, but the prep-

aration is an essential precedent to the event. In all of God's works after creation, there is to be discovered an unvarying method of process and crisis. The process is generally slow and often uninteresting, but the crisis is sudden and full of interest, often exciting, and even startling. The earthquake or volcanic eruption is the crisis, but for long years, possibly, they are forming in the bowels of the earth. Process is always to a given end, hence the crisis is not an accident. It is our failure to know the process, that seems to make the crisis an accident.

There was a process of preparation back of Elijah's act. He may have been all unconscious of that for which he was being prepared, and possibly may have had no thought that he was being prepared for anything, but God was planning, and step by step working out His plan. And God has a plan for your life and mine, and is working out that plan each day as we follow His leading. If we will but follow, we will be ready for every crisis. Let us not think the days are irksome. They are days of preparation under the direction of a wise leader.

2 We know but little as to the early life of Elijah. We do not know the name of his father or mother or any of his relatives. There are just two or three sentences that give us

some hint as to what his former life may have been. He is called "the Tishbite" because of his connection with the town of Tisbe, and he "was of the sojourners of Gilead." Gilead was to the kingdoms on the west side of Jordan very much what the Highlands were in the days of Scotland's chieftain feuds. It was a wild, rocky region, a country of chase, and a favorite haunt of robbers. It seemed very unlikely that a reformer would spring from such a land. But how different are God's choices from man's choices. God sees what man does not see and often passes right by those whom the world counts worthy and well prepared, and chooses the unsuspected, prepares them, and sends them forth as mighty workers.

Often after God has chosen we can see the wisdom of the choice, though we were too shortsighted to see it beforehand. After all, Gilead was just the place where the very qualities that were so essential in the one who was to match Ahab and Jezebel, would be likely to be developed, the quality of endurance, quick action, intrepid boldness, and the sternness of reproof amounting almost to fierceness. It was the Scottish Highlands that produced the race of stern, hardy, daring men so in contrast to the inhabitants of the Lowlands. God is never in the error in

His choices. Friend, if God has chosen, ask no questions, make no objections, He knows what He is doing.

4 We know not as to how Elijah was employed. Possibly he was a shepherd watching his flocks among the hills. But whatever his work, we know that he was just a man as other men. He probably attracted no special attention among his neighbors. He was a man of like passions with the rest of His race. He was just human, with a human nature, feelings, and capacity. He was just a man. This ought to encourage us. It is just men, common men, that God calls and uses. He will use each of us if we will let Him. It is a mistake to think that we must attain to a certain standard of worldly knowledge and refinement before we can do anything. God often breaks through our programs and spoils our arrangements. He delights in using anybody that is willing to be used. Not all can be as prominent as Elijah. When a crisis comes it may not be as brilliant, but let us be faithful in our sphere.

Another thing that we know about Elijah is that he was "very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts." He tells us this himself. He loved the Lord and no doubt was a careful student of the writings of Moses and took great delight in fulfilling the commandments.

He was zealous for the truth. As the reports of Israel's apostacy fell upon his ear from time to time, his very soul would be moved. At times it would be intense grief, at other times righteous indignation. Often he would query as to why God would allow such apostacy to go unchallenged. Then he would wonder why none of the prophets spoke forth, and in his own mind would chide them for their cowardice. He knew some of them had been killed for speaking out in the past, but the cause was worthy of martyrdom, hence this cowardice to him was criminal. But what could he, a backwoodsman of Gilead do? How often it is thus. We see what needs to be done and wonder why others do not do it, even censuring them for not doing it, but never think that we can do anything. But really now, what could Elijah do away over the other side of Jordan, unknown and hidden among the hills? There was but one thing he could do, and that he did do, and that we can do. What did he do? He prayed. And God answered his prayer. Oh how powerful is prayer! No more effective weapon can be wielded against the enemy. We are not using it as much as we should.

But did you notice that as soon as God answered his prayer, He called upon Elijah to go and announce the results to Ahab? It

is useless to pray unless you are willing to do your part in connection with the answer.

#### IV.

Let us today think about Elijah's prayer. What would you suppose he prayed for under these circumstances? He probably prayed for Ahab, for Jezebel, for the priests, for the people, and that God would remember His great name and vindicate His cause.

But one day a special prayer came upon him, and James tells us what he prayed for: "He prayed fervently that it might not rain." Was not this a very strange prayer? Does it not seem cruel for Elijah to pray, and God to answer, a prayer that will bring such widespread distress as this? What could have suggested such a prayer? Methinks one day out on the hillside he was in deep study. Possibly he was meditating upon some of the words of Moses, when his mind, and it may be his eye, fell upon the words of Deuteronomy 11:16,17, which read, "Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods and worship them; and the anger of Jehovah be kindled against you, and he shut up the heavens, so that there shall be no rain, and the land shall not yield its fruit; and ye perish quickly from off the

good land which Jehovah giveth you." He had gone over this many times before, but this time it took fast hold upon him. He began to think of these words in connection with Israel's present condition.

First, he may have wondered why this threat had not been executed, and the rain withheld, for they had turned aside and were serving and worshipping other gods. Then he thought of the possibility of Israel's repentance if this were fulfilled. He was anxious for their repentance, and began to think its fulfilment might be desirable. In fact, he would like to see it tried. Then he began to think it must be done, for if it is not done it will reflect upon the honor, the veracity of God.

This was enough reason for him, and he decides to give himself to prayer. He prays right to the point without compromise. He pleads the promise and asks that the rain be withheld. Having the sure promise to rest upon he soon prayed through and received the answer.

Here is a great lesson as to the true art of praying. Hilarity of expression and a jumbled up lot of words said to God, is not prayer. Neither is the mere expression of human or selfish desire, expressed to God, prayer. The true prayer artist is meditative, and finds a

ground for his prayer in the promise of God; his petition is inspired. If we would pray as Elijah did we might have success as Elijah had it. Let us put away a lot of the carelessness from our religious life and exercise, and be more meditative.

But think of this prayer, a prayer for a drouth which brings a famine with all of its accompanying woe. Can such a prayer be justifiable? Yes, there comes a time when such a prayer, and no other, would be in place. Kindness can be so trampled upon that mildness would cease to be kindness. Love can be so spurned that tenderness would not manifest true love. Favor can be so rejected that leniency would not be favor. There comes a time in the development of sin when only severity of method is justifiable. Certain conditions justify a righteous God, the God of love, sending forth judgments, and sometimes justifies the saints in praying for judgments to fall. The one thing of greatest importance is that men should be saved. Better anything else occur than a man should go to hell. Better suffer extreme hunger, pain, misfortune, accident, anything rather than be lost. Jesus felt this when he said, "And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of

thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not thy whole body go into hell." When less severe methods fail and the soul persists in sin, when there is any hope of bringing that soul to repentance thereby, judgments are justifiable, yes, even commendable.

If such salutary results are possible through judgments, when other methods have failed there comes a time when it is justifiable for the saints to pray, as Elijah did, for judgments to fall. Certainly we must be careful here and not be hasty. No selfish, no revengeful, no harsh feeling must ever enter into this prayer, but the prayer must be made. Let me say it carefully, we are not praying this prayer as often as we ought to, we are not employing this means of awakening hardened sinners as much as we should. Our human sympathy sometimes shrinks from this prayer, but sympathy must not get in the way and hinder the accomplishment of these eternal results.

Let us notice in passing that this prayer was not a mere harangue while upon his knees before the congregation. It was not an evangelist, disgruntled because the meeting

wasn't going with a swing to suit him, on his knees before the people calling upon God to do all manner of things to wake up these dead and damned people. Such harangues are generally inspired by some other than the Holy Spirit. This prayer is a private prayer, a secret between the Lord and the prayer, and only comes to the public after the answer has been fully assured.

Just a word in closing. We have become so scientific these days that we have ceased to interpret history as the old prophets did. Today we seek for natural causes for all drouths, famines, etc., and call it the scientific method. God is rarely ever thought of in connection with these scourges or accidents. But who is it controls the laws of nature and arranges when these things shall occur? There is a Divine Intelligence back of all and He still sends judgments upon the earth. We would be much wiser and better had we more prophetic insight along with our scientific methods; more practical belief in God along with our study of nature and history.

#### V.

We have now spent four days on the first verse of the record of Elijah's life. We will today read the second and third verses. "And

the word of Jehovah came unto him saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan."

In these words we notice first, that God's servant must be content to take one step at a time. We cannot tell just how Elijah felt, but since he was a man subject to like passions with us, we may make a safe guess. No doubt when he first realized he must bear a message of judgment to the king, he wondered how the king would take it. Naturally he would suppose it would greatly enrage the king so that the prophet's life would be in great danger. Other prophets had been destroyed upon much less provocation than this would be. If the king should be so astonished at his sudden appearance and the startling character of his message as not to be able to attempt any violence to his life at the time, later as he thought about it, if he did not repent, he would plan some violence against him, and where would he go to escape his vengeance? The king would have almost unlimited resources in hunting down those toward whom he had become disaffected. Escape would seem impossible.

But what if he did escape Ahab? When the famine came it would affect all alike, and he might starve to death with the others. At

least he would have to suffer with the others. And if the part he was playing in the coming and continuation of the famine became known, the people would become enraged and would give him no help, so he would be the greater sufferer. How could he help thinking of these things? It would only be human to thus think.

But no! he must not be influenced by these thoughts. They will pass through his mind, but he must not, he dare not, heed them. It is no time now to fear and falter. There is too much at stake. God has spoken and he has only to obey. It is his part to go, to take the step he sees, and God's part to provide and reveal the further plan. It is not easy to learn this lesson of taking one step at a time. Only persons of faith learn it. Elijah confidently went forth on his mission, leaving the results with God, trusting Him for his future.

Next we notice how this confidence was answered. After Elijah had delivered the message to the king, and not before, instruction for the next step came. It came just in time, and yet in plenty of time. Elijah did not need it until then. Had it been given before, it would have been but previous knowledge, and could have done little more than allay anxiety. But to have anxiety quieted

by faith was something still better. Could we be satisfied with this better thing?

The way this instruction came was by "the word of Jehovah." The Psalmist says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path." God has a way of making men know what He wants them to do. He has a way of speaking to His children. The word of the Lord will come to us. It may come through the written revelation, or through a distinct impression made upon the heart by the Holy Spirit, or through circumstances. By some method, through some avenue, it will find us out and tell us what to do. It means much to be under such care. How safe we are. Can we not all trust Jehovah's leading?

The word of Jehovah to Elijah at this time was, "Hide thyself by the brook Cherith." This may have been a great surprise to him. He had just been led from his life of obscurity over in the land of Gilead, to this place of prominence before the court of Israel. He had been called out on a great mission, and shall he now, after having spoken but one short utterance, go back into seclusion, in some place of hiding? Elijah must here learn another of those lessons that is so hard for most people to learn. It was the lesson of doing what he was told to do, then quitting and not trying to do more until God gave fur-

ther orders, but going off in quiet, even out of the public sight, and letting God go on with the work without his help. Is not this a hard lesson? So many of us want to keep acting, to keep putting in. We seem to think it won't go unless we do something, or it won't be understood unless we say something. Uzzah put forth his hand and touched the ark to keep it from falling over, but some people do even worse than that; they must put forth their hand to keep the ark going. It will be well for us all if we learn early in life that God can do some things without our putting in; that our activities are not essential to His plan. Better be doing nothing than to be doing just because we can, or just to get ourselves in it.

We must learn to "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." Yes, it is hard to leave the crowd, to leave the field of battle and go to that hiding place by the brook and wait, but it is a training we all need. A Carmel victory only follows a Cherith experience. Let us be just as willing to be in hiding, as to be in public, if it be His ordering. He will not order it unless He sees it will be best in carrying out His plan.

God has various ways of hiding His people away. Some of His methods may be rather humiliating and sometimes painful. John the

Baptist knew that he must decrease as Christ increased, but he did not know it meant to be hidden away in a jail. John the Apostle's place was on the isle of Patmos; Moses', the back side of the desert; Paul's, the Arabian desert, and Christ's in the wilderness. Sometimes it may be in the sick chamber, or some secluded place of rest and study. Whatever the method, God has His hidings in His leading of the saints. Just a few years ago the name of Evan Roberts was familiar on all lips as the leader of the great Welsh revival. But who has heard his name mentioned lately? Who knows where he is and what he is doing? After his work was through, God said, "Get thee away to some Cherith." He may be heard of again later. Could you stand it to thus be set aside for a time? To do something, to say something, and then be withdrawn and keep silent and let God or other of His servants go on with the work, for a time at least. When the hiding time comes, and it may come to any of us, let us so submit and trust that the time will not be irksome.

## VI.

To-day we will read and study the fourth, fifth, and sixth verses. "And it shall be that

thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. So he went and did according unto the word of Jehovah; for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook."

In Bedford jail Bunyan received such visions of God and truth, that he said if it were lawful, he could wish for greater trials for the greater comfort's sake. To Madam Guyon the revelations and glory were such as to make the rough stones in the walls of the jail appear as polished jewels. It was while in banishment on the isle of Patmos John the apostle received that wonderful revelation of Jesus and of the things which should shortly come to pass, and wrote them in the book of Revelation. We do not know how Elijah employed himself while in his seclusion, but we do know that he was here taught the wonderful lesson of God's care of His obedient servant. The lesson of "step at a time" or "day by day" is still here, for the food was provided meal at a time. He must learn to trust for each day's need as it comes. And what more did he, or do we need than enough for each "now" as it comes?

God's method of provision may sometimes be surprising and even strange. How strange

to be sent to a brook which would of course be as subject to the drouth as any other! How contrary to nature to suppose that ravens, which feed on carrion, would find such food as man would eat, or having found it would bring it regularly, morning and evening! It would seem that there was here an abundance of ground for unbelief had Elijah been inclined that way. It would be quite a test of faith to believe any mere animal should bring suitable food to a certain place regularly, but the last one to think of it would be a raven. If the raven did bring anything it would not be fit to eat.

But no, God can command even the ravens and make them His servants in providing for His saints. And if He can command the ravens, He can command all others, either animate or inanimate, animals, men, or angels. God's resources are unlimited and His power is infinite. He will provide for His trusting, obedient child. The ravens, to speak figuratively, are not all dead yet, but they still visit the saints, bringing necessary provision. Many are the persons who can testify to God's care, and the visit of some of His messengers bringing baskets of groceries, loads of coal, or a greatly needed sum of money.

"It may not be my way; it may not be thy way: Yet in His own way, The Lord will provide."

Elijah might have objected to the method employed in providing for him, especially to the kind of bird that was to be used. It might not have been very pleasant to think of being fed by a carrion bird. And besides, the raven was considered an unclean bird by the Mosaic law. Elijah might have said as Peter did, 'Not so, Lord, for I have never had to be helped by anything that is so common or unclean.' But Elijah had nothing to do as to choosing the means. He was only to receive and use the provision. Sometimes there are people who ask the Lord for daily care and provision, but who are very choice as to the method. Every thing must be in first class style or they will not receive it. They are not charity people, and second hand goods would not be acceptable. A few years ago a young man had an overcoat which he had worn for three years, and being tired of it, wanted a new one. He had the money and so he bought a new one. I was needing an overcoat badly, but did not have the money to buy it. The young man offered to give me his old one. It was second hand, but I was glad to get it. It did me for two or three years. I took it as God's provision, and was just as thankful as though it had been a new one. It served me just as well as a new one and possibly was worth more when I received

it, than the coat I would have had to buy had I gone to the store and bought a new one. If we will not be too choicy, God will provide for us all. God is a great economist and doesn't want things wasted, so will pass on things to have them worn out or used up by those who will accept them. Let us receive whatever God sends, however He sends it, and be thankful, If we will, we will be well provided for.

There is another word we wish to notice here. In the sentence we are now studying, special emphasis belongs on the little word "there." One can hardly read the sentence without emphasizing this word. "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee *there*." Here is an important thing to consider in connection with God's provision. God had commanded the food to be delivered "there," and no where else. If Elijah was not "there" he would not be provided for. Had he sought for more congenial quarters, a place more suited to his taste, he would have missed God's delivery wagon. He must be "there" to get the care, "There" is the place where God commanded him to go. God had not only commanded the ravens, but He had commanded Elijah also. Both must obey the command for the plan to succeed.

We forget this sometimes to our chagrin.

Only in the line of obedience, being in the place where God wants us, have we any right to expect God's special care. But there His care is sure, for He has commanded His delivery wagon to stop at that house. If then we are not being cared for, and our work is not succeeding, it might be well to examine carefully and see whether we are "there." I do not mean that we should become alarmed if we do not get mince pie and strawberry shortcake with good rich cream. God does sometimes give us the "extra spread," but what He has promised is that our "bread and water shall be sure," that we "shall be fed," and that our need shall be supplied. If it is not, we had best ask ourselves the question: "Am I 'there'? Am I in divine order; in the place God wants me?" Friend, God's promises will work if we get in the line of faith and strict obedience, in the place where God has commanded the ravens to stop and deliver the provisions.

## VII.

Elijah has already learned, or at least his life has suggested to us a number of very important lessons, but there are some others just as important and just as hard to learn. Listen, now, to the reading of the seventh, eighth,

and ninth verses: "And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land. And the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Sidon, and dwell there; behold I have commanded, a widow there to sustain thee."

After Elijah had been in Cherith for some weeks, one morning as he went to the brook for a drink it seemed to him that the stream was not flowing as full as it did at first. But no, God had promised that he should drink of the brook, and God's promise is good, so he brushes the thought of the brook's failure from his mind. But, in spite of himself, he now watches the brook a little closer. In two or three days he thought he saw more signs of failure so he decided to mark it and see. In about a week he became fully convinced that the brook was drying up. I wonder if he then said, "Just as I expected," or "just as I feared;" "Well, the thing I feared is come upon me." As from day to day Elijah watched the drying brook, the fading green on grass and tree, and the diminishing number of song birds in tree and upon rock, we know not what he felt. He may have stood firm in faith. He could not help some thoughts going through his mind, for this was a great test, to see this brook drying up. It seemed to be a

failure of God's promise. Possibly Elijah has been mistaken in all this. The drouth may be but the working of nature's laws, and the raven's visit a mere coincident. God has failed to sustain the brook which seemed essential to the life of the prophet, and He may not be in any of it. As to God's special part in the affair, it may all be the wild imagination of an enthusiastic, eccentric prophet. Elijah may have not had such thoughts as these, but it is the modern way of interpreting history.

The person who suggests that the San Francisco earthquake, the Galveston flood, the famine in India are God's judgments, is considered flat-headed, lacking in true scholarship and modern method. He may be good, but he is not smart, is not up to date. Today we do not believe in the prophetic vision in the interpretation of history. We use the scientific method, the historic method. Some men's scholarship has made such fools of them that they think everyone who dares to cross them is a fool. Well, we are oblivious to their frown. We do not deny, in fact we affirm, the usefulness of the scientific and historic methods, if along with them we have the prophetic vision. These happenings are all the working of natural law, but what is natural law? Law is but a statement of the way things are done. Natural law is but a state-

ment of the way God usually does things in the realm in which we are now most acquainted. Who was it arranged the time that these incidents should occur? Why did they occur just when they did? There is an intelligent design, hence a designer back of all history and all catastrophe. There is a purpose which the scientific or historic method cannot discover and we need the prophetic vision also in our interpretation.

But let us come back now to the incident. What do you suppose you would have done had you been there. No one knows just what he would do under certain circumstances until he is actually there. But I suspect most of us would have begun planning what we would do next, soon after we discovered the brook was drying up. We would begin making short excursions through the country to see if there were not some other larger streams near. Long before the brook was entirely dry we would have had some emergency plan laid, and possibly we would have left the country. But had Elijah left he would have missed God's thought and hindered His plan. Oh, this everlasting planning! How it does hinder us. It is not ours so much to plan. God is the architect and it is ours to build according to the plan He gives. What a hard lesson this is for us to learn,

and how slow we are in learning it.

Many of us have and others will—possibly some now are sitting by a drying brook. It may be the drying brook of popularity, ebbing away as it did with John the Baptist; the drying brook of health, the nerves breaking under the strain of responsibility; the drying brook of money, slowly dwindling before the demands of the home and church, or in the effort to secure an education; the drying brook of friendship, which since we took our stand for right has been diminishing. Yes, it is hard to sit beside the drying brook, possibly harder than standing before the king. Let us hope that Elijah waited quietly upon God, and pray that under such circumstances we may have grace to wait. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him."

Elijah's confidence is not misplaced. Again just in time, when the brook dried up, and yet in plenty of time came that same voice of command and instruction, the "word of Jehovah." God is always right on time and His care is sure. What more should we ask? This time the word of Jehovah is "Arise, get thee to Zarephath." He is now to change his location, and strangely enough is to go into the land of the nativity of the queen who is causing such trouble in Israel. Sometimes

God's leadings are very strange to us but we have but to obey to see how beautifully they come out.

But why this change? Could not God continue to support him here? Could He not keep the brook going as well as the ravens? Certainly He could. The answer is to be found in the wisdom of God rather than in any lack of power. Horticulturists tell us that the best results are secured with many plants and trees by starting them in one soil, often in the hot bed, and then transplanting them to another. The heavenly Gardener uses simular methods to secure the highest results in us. He is constantly transplanting. And sometimes this change is occasioned by the drying brook in our present location. But when one is entirely taken up with God, these changes become comparatively harmless and trifling. We accept what comes as His leading and with a certain cheerfulness we can break here and go there, knowing that He is planning for our best interest and development both for the present and the future.

## VII.

There are a number of things in Elijah's leading. In yesterday's reading it was told

him, "I have command a widow there to sustain thee." Does it not seem strange that a strong able-bodied man from the highlands should be sent to be sustained by a poor widow? Could he not work? Better send him down there to work and support the widow rather than add another to her family for her support. And the strangeness of the command only grows as we read on and find the condition of the widow. Let us read it.

"So he arose and went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me I pray thee a morsel of bread in thy hand. And she said, As Jehovah thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in the jar, and a little oil in the cruse; and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die." Not a very bright prospect for the prophet was it? Does it not seem cruel to send him to be sustained by this poor widow? And then listen to what he tells her, "And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it forth unto me

and afterward make for thee and thy son." Would Elijah rob this poor woman of her last morsal? Would indignation not be justifiable at such a demand? Certainly no one could blame the woman if she refused him in great disgust. But wait, we have not read it all. Elijah has more to say. "For thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, The jar of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that Jehovah sendeth rain upon the earth." It seemed an unreasonable proposition, but it was well for her that she obeyed. It was the saving of her life. "And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. The jar of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of Jehovah, which he spoke by Elijah."

I see here two lessons to which I will call your attention. First, God's blessing upon those who care for His messengers. Those persons who oppose supporting the preacher, and accuse the preachers of being after the money, and say, "Let him work, he is able to work for his living as we are;" had they been there, would have had much to say about Elijah's being sustained by this widow. But do you not see that she was very much better off by what she did? It paid her to bake the first

cake for Elijah for as she did that each day God multiplied her provisions equal to the daily need.

As she gave to Elijah she gave to God and God blessed her abundantly. And God still blesses those who care for and sustain His messengers. He who opposes ministerial support, and refuses to help in it, as Spurgeon says, "Cuts off his own nose to spite his own face." He is the enemy to his own best interest and gets in the way of his own blessing. Moreover it is very ungrateful treatment of God. The chief way we have of doing for God is doing for His servants. We cannot throw a five dollar bill up in the air and have the wind carry it away upward to the throne of God. That is not the way we give to God. Listen to how Jesus says we do it, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward." And then from the writer to the Hebrews, "For God is not unrighteous forget to your work and the love which ye showed toward His name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister." Let us be careful, for in refus-

ing to give to ministerial support, to drop a coin in the collection basket, or to help in the missionary collection we may be refusing to give to God. Methinks there will be some startling revelations at the judgment. God is keeping account of more things than shouting, and loud praying and long testifying. Have we yet learned to bake Elijah the first cake.

Poverty is no excuse for withholding; it is more the reason for giving. The widow gave and her supply was not diminished. From this on she always had enough for all dependent upon her. At any time had she failed to bake for Elijah first, the supply would have soon been exhausted. Her own sustenance depended upon her sustaining Elijah first. And the same is in a large sense true today. "There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to want. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." "Honor Jehovah with thy substance, and with the first-fruits (first cake) of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy vats shall overflow with new wine." "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give unto your bosom." Certainly this widow

is a great lesson to us along this line. Shall we learn the lesson?

Now just a few words about the second point which is to the messenger or the worker. Sometimes we find people who think that it is very humiliating to be dependent. It hurts their dignity to be supported. Occasionally a preacher will boast about being able to support himself and preach also. But this is all wrong, scripturally wrong. For a preacher or worker not to allow the people to support them when they are able, is to rob the people of one of their rights and take away from them one of the means of their giving to God and getting blessed. If you don't need it take it and pass it on, but don't rob the people of their rights and their blessing. Thank God for workers who are willing to work for a living and preach also where it is necessary. The person who is not willing to do this is not fit for the gospel ministry. But it is wrong to the preacher and wrong to the people to do this in any but a case of necessity. It is an unholy independence that keeps one from allowing the people to support him when he is rendering them faithful gospel service. This unholy independence was totally absent in Elijah and should be in us.

## IX.

Today our study will be the seventeenth and eighteenth verses. "And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Thou art come unto me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?"

We have an illustration of that which is entirely too common in most, if not all, of our lives; hasty, cutting impassioned speech. This speech is always unkind and causes great heart wounds, often to our very best friends. Elijah had been a great blessing to this home. He had brought God's favor to it and had kept the wolf from the door for now these many days. But now under the pressure of grief and possible conviction she lets slip some hasty words that are most unkind and unjust. What a serious and uncalled for charge this was, charging him with the death of her son. Oh no, she may not have meant it the way it sounded. Neither do we. But that is no excuse and is a poor salve for the wound when it is made. She possibly did not mean to charge him with murder, but she did

throw the blame for the lad's death upon his coming into the home, hence upon him. Oh, what mean things, what unkind, what unjust things men and women can say of and to each other. And many of these harsh, cutting things are said in haste. And is it not strange that most of these things are said to those whom we love best or who are our best friends and are trying to help us most? I sometimes think we are the most unkind to those who are our best and dearest friends, a father, a mother, a brother or sister, a teacher or classmate. Many are the heart-aches, the deep heart wounds we have all made by our hasty, thoughtless speeches. And are not these speeches all unnecessary; all unChristlike? They do the speaker no good and only wound the one spoken to. They are only injurious to all concerned. Why not quit all this unkind speech, these harsh, cutting words? It is evident that we can do it if we will, for we do not say them when strangers are around. We say "thank you," "please" and "excuse me," to the visitor, and we can be just as kind and polite to our own folks if we will. And if we don't do it the day is coming when we will rue it. Some day when you are sent for to come home in a hurry and when you arrive and enter the house and find everything so quiet and the

folks talking in a whisper, and they lead to the little bed room and pull the white sheet back and remove the wet cloth and your eyes fall on the pale face of mother, cold in death. Then will you remember all the unkind speeches, and were you able to do so, would give a world if you could recall them. When some day you see your father lying cold and stiff in a black box, and that awful sense of loneliness sweeps over you, and you realize he will no longer put his hand down in his pocket and bring out the silver dollar or five dollar bill and hand or send it to you, no longer will you have his care and counsel, then you will remember and regret. You are even now, as you think of what may be, thinking of some of those hasty words. Oh, let us quit them. Now is the time to be kind. Kindness to the memory of the dead cannot heal the wounds that were made in the heart of the living.

Do you remember that poem of Will Carleton's, "The First Settler's Story," in which he so forcibly illustrates this lesson we are now trying to impress upon you? It is the story of a young married couple who went to the far west when the country was new. They lived happily together, she caring for the cabin and he the clearing and tilling the land. But one night he came home very tired and a

little late. When he went out to milk he found the cows had wandered away from their usual feeding ground. Then came the hasty word to his wife:

“You ought to’ve kept the animals in view;  
And drove ’em in; you’d nothing else to do.  
The heft of all our life on me must fall;  
You just lie round, and let me do it all.”

Yes, how very unkind, and at once he knew it and at once confessed it to himself.

“That speech—it hadn’t been gone a half minute,  
Before I saw the cold black poison in it;  
And I’d have given all I had, and more,  
To’ve only safely got it back in door.”

But he said nothing of his confession to his wife, though he thought several times he ought to do it. But he passed it by and made the wound still deeper. The next day the cows wandered away again a little after noon and the wife went in search of them. All afternoon she hunted but found them not. Late in the afternoon she came back to the cabin and leaving this note, went back to the search:

“The cows have strayed away again, I fear;  
I watched them pretty close; don’t scold me dear.  
I’ve hunted for them all the afternoon,  
I’ll try once more—I think I’ll find them soon.

Dear, if a burden I have been to you,  
And haven’t helped you as I ought to do,  
Let old-time memories my forgiveness plead;  
I’ve tried to do my best—I have, indeed.”

When the man came home from his work early, and determined to ask forgiveness, he found his cabin empty. He read the note. A thunder storm was gathering. He rushed out search of his wife. The storm broke and still she had not come. All night long he hunted, returning occasionally to the cabin to find it deserted. But just as the morning broke and he approached the home he heard the cow bells ringing near the barn. He rushed into the house expecting to find his wife. And she was there, but listen:

“Yes, she had come—and gone again,—she lay  
With her young life crushed and wrenched away.  
Lay—the heart ruins of our home among—  
Not far from where I killed her with my tongue.”

What an awful harvest is this for a hasty word. Yet the harvest is sure. Oh, how true is the conclusion of this poem:

“Boys flying kites haul in their white winged birds;  
You can't do that way when you are flying words.  
Careful with fire is good advice we know;  
Careful with words is ten times doubly so.  
Thoughts unexpressed may sometimes fall back dead;  
But God himself can't kill them when they're said!”

Let us learn the lesson. If the harsh, cutting, censorious thought insists on coming to our mind let us at least stop it just inside our lips.

## X.

We talked yesterday about that harsh word. There is a clause in the midst of this hasty speech which reveals something that may help to explain it. This is the clause: "Thou art come unto me to bring my sin to remembrance." There seems to have been something dark in the past of this woman's life. Possibly it may have been something connected with the child's birth. However we cannot tell as to that, but it seems quite clear that there was something back there somewhere that had not been rightly adjusted.

There is a way of covering up sin, and only one way, so that it will never be remembered against us. Oh yes, the devil may tauntingly try to twit us with it occasionally, but no one but the devil or some of his kinfolks ever brings up that which has been put under the blood. But God has a way of bringing us around somewhere down the road to face those unconfessed sins. You may think you have them covered up ever so well, no one knows it who is near you, and you have hardened your conscience until it bothers you no longer, but just around the corner yonder, God will bring you face to face with it. It is not a pleasant life to have a skeleton hidden away in memory's closet, ever ready to jump out

and frighten one. It pays to settle up for sin right.

When these times come when the skeleton jumps out from its place of hiding, the person becomes irritated and speaks the harsh, censorious word, often to a dear friend. I am coming to believe that most of the fault-finding and harsh criticism comes from a guilty conscience trying to cover up one's own faults by trying to direct attention away from self to the faults of another. If we could always see the real motive back of our hasty speeches, we would often be greatly ashamed. Even holiness people need to be careful here.

Sometimes we have days when it seems that everything goes wrong. Possibly we get up in a bad mood. Some of our mothers used to call it "getting out the wrong side of the bed." This mood may be occasioned by physical conditions, by atmospheric conditions—a gloomy, dark, foggy day. Well, no matter what occasions it, we all have these days. This is the day to be especially on your guard. If you are not careful something will come up, and before you think, the harsh word has been said and a dear friend's heart has been wounded. This harsh word brings prickings of conscience which aggravate the irritation and intensify the mood. Ere long another occasion comes and another

hasty word is spoken and another heart is wounded. And so it goes through the day.

Now the trouble was not in the thing the person spoken to did, but was in the mood of the person speaking. The mood came unbidden, but when it was discovered it should not have been courted or yielded to. It should have been watched against and triumphed over. By moods we do not mean carnality. If carnality has not been removed it will give us very much trouble along this line. But there are moods against which the Spirit-filled saint must watch; moods which are not occasioned by sin's or carnality's presence, but by physical conditions and other things to which we are all liable. Grace will enable us to triumph, and if we conquer the mood, the hasty word will not be spoken.

When we turn and look at Elijah we see first, the power of a holy life. Coupled with her sorrow it was the power of Elijah's holy life that brought this woman to remember her sin and reproach her for it. A truly holy life always carries with it the power of reproach to sin. A few years ago I said to a man in whose soul I was interested, who was trying to quit the tobacco habit, "Well, how do you feel to-day?" His reply was, "I feel pretty well only when I see you. Then I am ashamed and convicted." I did not object to

this. Would that I might live such a holy life that men could not smoke or chew or lie or swear or commit any sin in my presence and not feel ashamed. I feel ashamed that my life is not more of a power in bringing sinners to conviction. If sinners can feel easy in our presence in their sinning, we should feel some alarm and inquire as to our own lives. Every holy life will have some power of reproof, and in proportion to the intensity of the life—the degree of the holiness, will be the strength of the reproof. We may all improve here.

Elijah also teaches us gentleness under provocation. No doubt he felt the unjustice of those unkind words, but he made no defense. He calmly asked for the lad and took him away to the bedchamber and there alone with God prevailed for his restoration to life. Then he took him back and presented him alive to his mother. Instead of resenting the unkind speech of the woman he is again her benefactor. This is returning good for evil sure enough. It is Christlike and following Christ's command to "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." Elijah proved true in his individual life all alone out by the brook. Now in the test of the little annoy-

ance of the home life and under the severer provocation, he keeps patient and gentle.

We need more of this practical godliness. Many people, it is feared, are deceiving themselves. They come to the altar and say they give up all and say they have received the blessing. They make high profession and manifest much emotion in the public services. But when they return to their home the least friction or interference with their plans, or a mistake on the part of others irritates them and they pout or give way to harsh words and act offish for the next hour or more. Not so with Elijah. If the Holy Spirit is really filling and having His unrestrained way in the life, there will come over the rudest, the most selfish, a marvelous change; there will come a gentleness in speech, in the very tone of the voice; a tender thoughtfulness in the smallest action; a peace and glory in the countenance; and there will be the evident seal, the trade mark of the Holy Ghost. Are they evident in your life, and in mine? Let us pray that they may be much more marked if they are there at all.

## XI

“And it came to pass after many days, that the word of Jehovah came to Elijah, in the

third year, saying, Go show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab, and the famine was sore in Samaria. And Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared Jehovah greatly: for it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of Jehovah that Obadiah took a hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.) And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go through the land unto all the fountains of water and unto all the brooks: peradventure we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, that we loose not all the brutes. So they divided the land between them to pass through it. Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself."

We have here a glimpse of what was going on in Israel while Elijah was hidden away at Cherith and Zarephath. After Elijah left Ahab if Ahab had any thought of repentance was soon banished. Jezebel would see to it that there was no backing down. Upon several occasions when Ahab had showed signs of weakness she came to the front and pushed him on in his evil ways. The announcement of Elijah only enrages her the more and she swore vengeance and went on with her work of destruction, killing the prophets,

tearing down Jehovah's altars, and establishing Baal worship. But all her wrath and spite could not keep back fulfilment of Elijah's statement. On came the famine. For three years and a half Israel lay gasping under a parching drouth, with all the attendant horrors of famine. Everywhere was desolation and barrenness; the soil seemed parched up with the wrath of God. The labours of the field had ceased and the joy of the harvest and vintage was hushed. The market-places were empty and silent, and the cottages were occupied by thin, bony forms, in which the pulse of life but faintly throbbed. The birds of bright plumage had all gone in search of food and only the carrion fowl remained, hovering in great numbers in the air and fattening on the carcasses that were strewn in ghastly plenty on the plains. But still Ahab and Jezebel were unmoved.

But this is not the worst of it, not only does Ahab show no signs of giving up his false religion which has brought this curse upon the land, but he shows no interest in his suffering people. We read nothing of a famine relief fund, nothing of the king's effort to alleviate the miseries of his people, only of Ahab's care for his horses and mules. He was concerned lest he should lose some of the beasts but seems indifferent to the loss

of souls. In this act Ahab is revealing himself. He is not only a weak man, easily influenced by Jezebel, but he is selfish through and through. Ahab is a type of man very common in our day, just such selfishness abounds. It is this selfishness that makes men of wealth and fashion revel in luxury and fare sumptuously every day, totally indifferent to those who earn their wealth for them and are paid starvation wages. It is this selfishness that organizes trusts and controls prices in the interests of the few who are already wealthy, with indifference to the hardships that it works upon the many who are the consumers. It will "get a corner on the market" of some very essential commodity, coal, for example, and hold it right at the beginning of winter for higher prices, and will not move a car until the exorbitant price is agreed to, even if people are freezing to death. What if some folks do die? They must have their price and fill their own coffers.

But this selfishness is not found simply in the great trust organizers. Many people who vehemently oppose trusts, would be trust organizers if they only had the skill, ability and the opportunity.

That woman who will go about town and tries to get all other women to raise the price

of butter or eggs five or ten cents, and all agree to hold the price there, is just a little trust organizer and would be as bad as a Rockefeller if she had the chance. So is the man who goes around and tries to raise the price of that which he has to sell. If these people had to "buy" instead of "sell" they would feel that the higher price was more than they could afford to pay. What a difference it makes whether we are selling or buying. But is the selfishness just as mean in the little trust magnate as in the larger trust magnate? The difference is simply in the ability and opportunity of the persons. And are professing Christians clear in this matter? And are there not many who spend more for a single dinner party than they do on the needs of a dying world? Is there not more spent for unnecessary and needless adornment and extravagance of dress than is given to the church? A church will spend as much for a great pipe organ as would support many missionaries on the field for many years, and yet will not give enough to foreign missions to support one missionary. And is not all this a repetition of the sin of Ahab who went out to find grass for the beasts whilst his people were left to take their chance. Oh, how dare men and women who call themselves "Christians" spend more up-

on the accessories and luxuries of their own lives than upon that service for men which is so dear to our Lord

Selfishness is very deep seated in the life, much deeper than supposed. He who thinks he is rid of it is often awakened to his deception and surprised to find how much there is left. Holiness people are as free from it as any class of people but there is still a great deal of it manifest to a careful observer.

But all are not Ahabs for in many lives there is large manifestation of unselfishness. There are some Elijahs who will live for others; and some Obadiah's who will hide the prophets and feed them their bread and water. How beautiful are these examples of unselfishness. It is unselfishness that attracts us, that puts the color in the picture that catches the eye.

Oh, that this unselfishness might possess our lives, that the Christ life might be more perfectly applied to our daily life and more fully manifest to the world. May you, young people, have this lesson well learned in early life.

## XII

Let us read the seventh to the fifteenth

verses to-day: "And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Is it thou, my lord Elijah? And he answered him, It is I: go, tell thy lord, Behold Elijah is here. And he said, Wherein have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? As Jehovah thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not here, he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord Behold, Elijah is here. And it will come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of Jehovah will carry thee whither I know not; and so when I am come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he will slay me: but I thy servant fear Jehovah from my youth. Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of Jehovah, how I hid a hundred men of Jehovah's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here; and he will slay me. And Elijah said, As Jehovah of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him today."

We now have Elijah's reappearance in public after his three years and a half in

hiding. God is the great time keeper, and His clock had struck the hour for another change in Elijah's life. Until God spoke he did not need to move, but now, he must be gone. Sometimes we get troubled about divine leading by not resting where we are until God speaks. We get restless and try to get a special leading when we need none. If God has sent us to a place we need have no worry as to whether we should stay there or not if God has not ordered us away. If you are in divine order rest where you are until He speaks, without trying to get special orders to stay or to go.

But God's clock had struck the hour and Elijah must now leave his quiet retreat and come forth to public activities. It may not have been a pleasant task to face Ahab again, but the unpleasant things must be undertaken for God. We are too apt to seek the pleasant, and shun the unpleasant; but there is a certain amount of the unpleasant for every life.

As Elijah went on his way to meet Ahab, he came upon Obadiah in his search for grass for the beasts. In the conversation which followed we get a little glimpse of the character of Obadiah. It is interesting to study him in his relation to and contrasted with both Elijah and Ahab. On the one hand is

Elijah, the rugged, stalwart, courageous, out and out servant of God, wholly separate from the wicked court. On the other hand is weak, but wicked, selfish, heartless Ahab, Baal's man with the determined, heathen Jezebel behind him. Between this servant of God and this servant of Baal is Obadiah, calling them both, "My lord," the professed servant of Jehovah and a chief officer of a king who has destroyed the worship of Jehovah.

As we look at these three characters, Ahab stands for wickedness and false worship, and Elijah for a positive servant of God, seeking to help, to reform, to restore the true worship. Obadiah represents one of those persons who does not believe in such radical measures, but who believes in staying in the world's crowd, going with them to their places of amusements, indulging in their fashions, thus hoping to temper and steady it and possibly win some to Christ. We read of another man who tried this same kind of a life. His name was Lot, and he pitched his tent towards Sodom. But he failed to keep Sodom, and Abraham had to rescue both Lot and the people of Sodom. So, also, it was Elijah and not Obadiah that helped Israel.

Let me ask you if you ever knew an Obadiah or a Lot to accomplish any lasting or extended good. I do not say that they never

do any good, but I will say that what little they may do would amount to nothing were it not for the Elijahs and Abrahams. Imagine a man getting inside of a bushel basket and trying to lift the basket by its handles. You know he could not do it. If the basket were a round bottomed one the result would probably be that man and basket both would tumble over together. To lift the basket one must be outside of it. And yet some people are trying to lift the world Obadiah style by staying in it, and they call the Elijahs too narrow and too radical. But this Obadiah style is contrary to the scripture which says "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord." There is not a single hero or saint, whose name sparkles on the inspired pages, who moved his times from within, but all alike have had to go without the camp. To help the world we will be "in the world but not of it." This truth is undergoing daily proof. The Christian woman who marries an ungodly man is in great danger of being quickly dragged down to his level. The child of God who goes into partnership with a man of the world will be unable to hold the business up to the Christian standard. The church which admits the world into its circle will soon find that it will get worldly faster than the world becomes

Christian.

Neither the mongrel life nor the mongrel method will succeed. Archimedes once said that he could move the world if only he had a point of rest, a fulcrum given him outside of it. He had no outside fulcrum and could find none; but thank God, we can find one. We can go outside the camp to Jesus. Let us go bearing the reproach.

There is no harm in a Christian man holding a position of influence in a court or society where he can do so at no cost to principle. In fact such a position may enable him to render most valuable service to the cause of God. Had it not been for the elector of Saxony, Martin Luther would have had a very much harder time than he did. But the temptations are very great in such a position under the best of circumstances. Few can fill such a position without putting kid gloves on their hands and velvet on their lips. And in a court like Ahab's one dare not be outspoken but must compromise and dip his colors to the flag of expediency. We have every reason to believe this was Obadiah's weakness. He did not believe in carrying things too far. Of course he could not fall in with this new notion of Ahab's, but there was no need of his pushing his religious views upon every one, thus making himself obnoxious. He was

often shocked at what he saw, and sympathized with the prophets that were being slain. He could get up courage to do a little secret work and hide some of the prophets and feed them but he could take no public stand. When Elijah asked him to go before Ahab and say, "Behold Elijah is here," he was full of objections. He feared for his life. He could risk nothing for the cause. His standing in the court was of the greater importance. And yet he had obligations to Elijah, God's man, since he proposed to be a servant of God. This poor man must have been in great strait to reconcile his duty to Jehovah with his duty to his other master, Ahab. But there are still scores of Obadiah's all around us, and in the Church. They never rebuke sin, and are nervous of being identified with any positive Christianity before any Ahab. They admire some of those who dare to take a strong stand, but are careful to keep out of their company except when the other crowd is not about. Such characters are worth little to the cause. Let us not be like them.

### XIII.

We will read to-day the sixteenth to the nineteenth verses. "So Obadiah went to

Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah. And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of Jehovah, and thou hast followed the Baalim. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty and the prophets of the Asherah four hundred, that eat at Jezebel's table."

When Elijah fully assured Obadiah that he would not disappoint him, but would really meet Ahab, Obadiah was willing to go and carry the word. We can hardly imagine Ahab's feelings when he received this news. For three years he had been hunting for Elijah but could not find him, and now he was coming to meet him of his own free will. This must mean something, though he knew not what. He remembered the last time he saw Elijah, how he felt in his presence as he gave utterance to God's judgment. Is he coming back now to bring rain or to bring greater judgment? He probably hoped the former, but not having repented and forsaken the false religion he could expect only the latter. He no doubt was so angered at Elijah that he

would have killed him if he dare, but he dare not do it for he knew the coming of rain depended upon Elijah's word. His desire for rain cooled off his wrath to some extent and he went to meet the prophet intending no harm to his person, at least until he had compelled him to bring rain.

And now they meet? See them. There is the king in his royal apparel and his goodly number of attendants. And there is Elijah in his sheepskin mantle, and all alone. To every appearance Ahab has every advantage and Elijah will have to yield now. Ahab speaks first. Listen to his heated, taunting speech. "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" But this is all he got said. In a calm, positive voice, the voice of authority, the like of which the king had not heard before, Elijah makes reply. He denies the charge and throws the blame for the trouble upon Ahab and his father's house, and then commands him to gather all the people to him on Mount Carmel. How strange. For years now the king had known only the giving of commands, but now he is being commanded by one who holds no position or appointment in any earthly government. But the king is silenced. He quails before this voice of authority. There is an authority, a power outside of earthly position, greater than any

power of mere place, the authority of character, of a God-appointed man with a mission; and a mission is vastly greater than a mere position. Position is of no value unless it helps one to greater usefulness. If position comes in incidentally, take it, not for itself but for the increase of usefulness. Position may be a hindrance. We generally think of great men in the different positions, but there are some men greater than any positions the world can offer. I was much impressed last fall after the election of the President, when it was found that Taft was elected, at the attitude of that most remarkable man, William J. Bryan, over his defeat. Shortly afterwards he said: "I have a mission to perform and I shall go right on with my work. The Presidency of these United States was only incidental." And has he not gone right on? And it is possible he may do a greater service for the world than though he were president. The greater man with the more permanent power, and the strongest voice for righteousness is undoubtedly the man without the position. We cannot but admire this matchless character. The mantle and staff of a prophet may be the symbol of greater authority than the crown and sceptre of a king.

Let me someway give you young people

the impression to seek the greater things. Don't be enticed by mere position of any kind. Seek to be the most useful. Find your mission and get your message to your times and throw yourself into it, letting position if it comes be only incidental.

But to return to Ahab and Elijah for another lesson. If Ahab was honest he was at least greatly mistaken and very unkind in his charging Elijah as the troubler of Israel. What had the prophet done to have deserved such blame? He had simply told Ahab of his sin and announced the coming of judgment. He had nothing to do with inflicting it and was in no way guilty of that which brought it on. And yet he is denounced as the troubler of Israel. All men who deal faithfully with careless souls are denounced as trouble-makers. They do get in the way of the wrong doer and stir up his conscience until he feels bad, and he calls this troubling. But he is greatly mistaken in his judgment. The real trouble is found elsewhere, and that which he calls trouble is his salvation if he will but heed it. But sin is very blinding and often calls an effort to stop wrong and get rid of the real trouble interfering with personal rights. The wicked dislike the righteous because righteousness reproves them of their sin. There is no higher testimony to the

consistency of our life than the hearty hatred of the Ahabs around us. If no man accuses you of troubling him you may question whether you are not becoming an Obadiah.

Elijah knew where the real trouble was and could tell Ahab about it in such plain words that he could not open his mouth in reply. The real trouble was to be found in broken vows, and in the forsaking of the worship and service of Jehovah. "If thou doest not well, sin coucheth at thy door." If one is in the midst of a spiritual drouth, if there is a drying up in your spirit let him look and see if the trouble is not to be found in broken vows, in the forsaking of the commandments of Jehovah. Let all such return at once in penitence and confession, and pick up the broken vows and set about fulfilling them, and see if the rain will not begin to fall upon the parched soil and bring back the song bird into the life.

#### XIV.

"So Ahab sent unto the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mt. Carmel. And Elijah came near unto all the people and said, How long go ye limping between the two sides? If Jehovah be God follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And

the people answered not a word."

He who has for years known only the giving of commands is now working under the command of another. At the command of Elijah, the prophet, Ahab, the king, goes forth to gather all Israel together before the prophet. Ahab, it seems, knew not the purpose of this gathering. He possibly thought it would have some connection with the giving of rain, and was afraid to disobey, lest his disobedience should mean the continuation of the famine. He had had enough of the famine but shows no sign of having had enough of Baal worship. Had Ahab known just what was going to occur on the mount he might not have been as willing to have gathered the people together. It seems that Jezebel was more suspicious. She had a woman's intuition and may have told Ahab that if he was foolish enough to run into Elijah's trap he could, but that she was not going to be caught. Accordingly when they gathered upon Mount Carmel, she and her company of priests were not present. But there was a large crowd without them. Look at them there, on the side of the mountain. There is Ahab and his court officers and attendants dressed in their gay apparel. Then we notice the large company of priests dressed in their long robes, and lastly we see a

great number of the common people. Now they have all gathered, and yonder, coming down the mountain is the man with the sheepskin mantle and the prophet's staff. All eyes are upon him. What will he do? If they dared they would rush upon him and slay him, but they dare not for God has put a hedge about him. And they feared also to harm him, for in him was their hope of rain. On he came with a firm, steady step. What courage! One man against a multitude, and a great cause at stake. But Elijah's faith saw something the crowd was blind to. Faith can see the mountain filled with horsemen and chariots, and can summon the legions of angels.

Elijah is the first to speak. And it seems that he surprised them in what he said. It was not what they expected and they were so astonished that they could make no answer. They had hoped he would go through some ceremony and bring rain, but he says nothing about rain; he only calls in question their religious condition and asks them to change. He speaks in a clear, firm voice, and has a dignity of bearing that awes them, and his question is so reasonable that no one can raise his voice in opposition and they fear to make answer. The first word spoken showed who was master of that crowd.

“How long go ye limping between the two

sides?" was the question asked, followed by the earnest appeal, "If Jehovah be God follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." There was no "if" in Elijah's mind; he doubted not that Jehovah was God, but he said this to call forcibly to the mind of the people their own unreasonable position. The effort to introduce Baalism into Israel was no doubt intentional on the part of Ahab, and especially of Jezebel, but the people may have drifted into it without any special decision to give up the worship of Jehovah and adopt that of Baal. They would take up first one thing and then another of Baal worship and drop some things from Jehovah worship, and they had some of both. This went on until they had largely given up the worship of Jehovah and become the positive worshipers of Baal, but made no final decision. They were trying to be both, which they could not be, hence in fact were only Baal worshipers. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." But while it is impossible really to have a mongrel service, yet people are ever trying it and do have much that is mongrel in form. But two things so contrary as Jehovahism and Baalism could not in any real sense be mixed.

Religions so diametrically opposed could not both be right. One of them must be wrong; and as soon as the one was proven right the other is shown to be wrong and must be cast to the wind. Any other position is absurd. "I would that thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold I will spew thee out of my mouth."

This is the New Testament attitude toward mixture and indifference. Israel's position at this time was illogical and very absurd, and yet people in this enlightened age are making the same effort. The people of this generation think themselves elevated far above Baal worship, but there is still much Baal worship; it has just changed its name and forms. Baalism was the deification of nature and the world. No longer are idols of wood and stone, built and bowed down to, but without the outward emblems men still erect idols of their own thoughts and worship their own ideas. Nature is deified and the supernatural is denied. And all this with great pretense of intelligent opinion as to God and high sounding words as to their loyalty to Him and to truth. They worship the creature rather than the Creator. They construct a god of love according to their kind of love that has no justice, no punitive dealings with men, no

sanctification of the heart from all sin. A God such as the Bible reveals, who is holy, who reproveth sin, who chastises, who sends judgments, who hears prayers, who works miracles they will away with. It is a false conception, the rude notions of a crude people. It was good and effective for a past age but we are advanced and have clearer vision in this age. It is the same God but our age. These enlightened men understand Him and his working better, and so they have freed Him from these old superstitions of divine interference, judgments, miracles, for it is all nature and nature is God, and the idea of the supernatural that the church has held to is all false.

This is the new theology, the new thought, the new religion of our age. But it is only another form of Baal worship. Were Elijah to return to earth he would scorn such a divinity, such worship, no less than he did the idol worship of Baal, and would reprove a Doctor Elliot, a Lyman Abbott and a R. J. Campbell as he did Ahab.

Let us take our place with Elijah. If we do we will have a host of good company. There are Abraham and Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezra, Peter, Paul, Polycarp, Augustine, Luther, Wesley, Inskip and an innumerable host of others. We are not ashamed of our crowd. We cannot

be classed with the Ahabs, Epiphanes, Neros, Diocletians, or even with your Alexanders or Miltons. But our crowd is the cleanest for morals and stands firm for the uncompromised truth.

Praise God for the privilege we have of standing in the Elijah line.

## XV.

Elijah was the first to break the awful silence that followed his question and appeal. To have spoken the people would have had to condemn themselves, so they stood in embarrassing silence. But Elijah did not let it continue long. He proposes a test which shall be the final settlement of their wavering. Listen to what he says and how the people retutn it. "Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, am left a prophet of Jehovah; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of Jehovah, and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spok-

en."

The people saw the reasonableness of the proposition, and as they thought about it they were anxious to have the matter settled, so with an almost unanimous voice they approved of the test. And Ahab and the priests dare not decline under such pressure, for to do so would be to acknowledge themselves wrong and confess their religion. Possibly Ahab is wishing he had not called the people together and is reproaching himself for not listening to Jezebel and keeping out of the trap he has run into. But it is too late now; there is nothing to do but to push ahead and possibly something will occur so it will not be so bad after all. It may be that Baal will come to their aid, or if possible Elijah will fail. At any rate they must go ahead now. If it was just Elijah they might get out of it, but now the people are interested and it is a trial before them which cannot be escaped. Notice what is involved in this trial.

1. It is a test between Elijah and Ahab. Ahab has accused Elijah as being the troubler of Israel. And he had told the people of his first meeting with Elijah and charged him with the famine, so that they shared with him in the belief that Elijah was the troubler of Israel. But Elijah calmly denied it and threw the blame upon Ahab and his

house for their forsaking the worship of Jehovah. This test will prove who is right.

2. It would vindicate Elijah's claim as a true prophet of Jehovah or show him to be an imposter.

3. Chiefly it would show whether Jehovah or Baal were God. The people no doubt believed in Jehovah as God, but not the only God, for they were also worshipping Baal as god. Elijah proposes to test it and prove that Jehovah is the only God and that Baal is no god, that his worship is only a creation of man.

4. The people's future worship—Israel's future relation to Jehovah is involved. Elijah's triumph in the test would break the power of Baal worship and restore the worship of Jehovah to some extent at least. There was a great deal involved in this test. It would be great if it were only for the times then present, and for the people of Israel, but it was also to reach down to the generations yet unborn.

It was done in great publicity and under the official call of the king, so it must be made a court record. It was to be a vindication of truth and a revelation of the false to the ages. And the truth need never fear any fair test.

Elijah's test was a fair one. It was fair to

the Baal worshippers because according to their own claim he was a god of fire, the sun god. They claimed for him the control of the weather, and Elijah had demonstrated that this power belonged to Jehovah by shutting up the heavens for these three years and six months. Now let them prove their claim along the line of fire. Is it not a fair test to any religion, to any system or philosophy, to require it to fulfill any or all of its claims? Any system that cannot make its claims good, that cannot do what it claims to do is of course false.

It was fair to Jehovah worshippers because He claimed all power both in heaven and on earth, and fire had a prominent part in the ceremonialism of His worship, and had been used in judgments and signs.

It was "fire from Jehovah out of heaven" that destroyed the Cities of the Plains. When the law was given "Jehovah descended upon (the mount) in fire" Journeying through the wilderness they were led by "the pillar of fire by night." When Nadab and Abihu made a strange offering, "there came forth fire from before Jehovah and devoured them" In connection with the rebellion "fire came forth from Jehovah and devoured the two hundred and fifty men that offered the incense." In the tabernacle and temple ser-

vice fire was ever present on the altar consuming the sacrifices.

And this is still a fair test today. The God that answers by fire He is God. If there is no answer by fire there is no God. Fire falling on the altar stands for God's acceptance of the gift and the sin destroying power of the atonement. The test of any religion is its theory of salvation and its power to make that theory work; in other words, its attitude toward sin, its power to save from sin. Any theory of religion, any creed that falls short of deliverance from all sin is not the true religion. And any system that cannot be made practical in the life of its votaries in giving such a completeness of forgiveness of sins past as to produce clearness and ease of conscience, because there is a conscious sense of freedom from condemnation; and in cleansing the heart from the inward state of sin so that the individual has a clear sense of purity or cleanness through the merits of the working of that system; and of giving the soul full assurance of its acceptance with God and a clear title to a home in heaven, falls short of the true system; it will not stand Elijah's test. The true religion will give rest of conscience as to guilt and impurity, and rest of mind as to the future.

Thank God, we are believers in and many of us are followers of a system that will stand the test. Not all that is called Christianity will stand the test. Much that passes for Christianity today has in it no real present deliverance from sin. But the Christianity of the Bible will stand the test, and many are proving it and can testify to the falling of the fire. Our God is a consuming fire, and the system which we follow may be made practical in a holy, Christian life.

## XVI.

The test has been called for and the method accepted and adopted and now it must be entered into. We will first examine the efforts of the Baal worshippers. Let us read the account. "And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Chose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped about the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon,

that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it was so, when midday was passed, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening oblation; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."

Idolatry was here put on its trial under the most favorable circumstances to secure its triumph. Beside the test being fair, as we spoke of yesterday, Elijah gave the Baal worshippers every advantage of numbers, and as to royal patronage, what was Elijah among so many? There was the king, the four hundred and fifty priests, and the multitude of people all against him. But he fears not, and now gives them the first chance and gives them nearly the entire day. We need have no fear for the truth under any fair test no matter how much advantage error may have. The truth will triumph and the person who has the truth is on the winning side and need not fear to give some advantage to the advocates of the false.

When the herdmen of Abraham and Lot

had their trouble and Abraham and Lot decided to separate and divide the land, Abraham gave Lot his choice, saying he would take what was left, and he got the very best of the land.

The man that is right, and the man of faith can well afford to let the man of sight, or the man of error choose first, act first. But rarely can we get a fair test before an honest jury, but whenever we can, the truth and the right need have nothing to fear.

After having the most favorable circumstances, idolatry here exhausted all its resources in this contest. Confident of success, the priests of Baal dress their bullock and place it upon the altar. The condition was that they should put no fire under, but idolatry has no conscience and would not shrink from trickery.

Saint Chrysostom has preserved an old tradition which asserts that inside their altar the Baalites had secreted an accomplice who was to kindle a fire, but that in the act of so doing he died of suffocation. However that may be, for the first time in their experience the false priests were unable to insert the secret spark of fire among the fagots that lay upon the altar. Or if they did, they could not make their trick work, so they were forced to rely on a distinct appeal to their patron deity.

And this they did with all their might.

As the moments went by and no fire appeared, the anxiety of the king and priests and the people grew intense. To hurry the answer they began a wild, frantic, pagan dance. But still there was no voice, nor any that answered. How sad to see them in fruitless effort, in this awful extremity. Round and around the altar they went in the mystic choric dance, breaking their rank only by an occasional excited leap up and down at the altar, all the while repeating the monotonous chant, "O Baal, hear us!"

For three long hours they kept this up, and about noon Elijah begins to mock them. Enraged and frantic they intensify their effort. They add to their dance and chant, fantastic gestures, wild screaming and cutting their flesh until the blood was running upon their bodies. And still there is no fire; the bullock lies cold upon the altar; there was none that answered.

"Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands; they have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; they that make them are like them, so is every one that trusteth in them."

Their efforts were of no avail, the heavens remained closed. It was clearly proved after

six hours of the best, most intense effort, under the most favorable conditions that their religion, and, in fact, all idolatry was a delusion and a snare.

In this incident we see the strained, fevered, coarse activities of effort in behalf of the false. There is a calmness, an assurance, a rest characteristic becoming effort in the interest of truth. Such effort as was put forth by these Baal worshippers would be most unbecoming to Jehovah worship, to Christianity. And sometimes ignorant, though honest, Christians mistake noise and excitement for power, and act unbecoming to the cause they so much love.

Intensity, shouting, clapping the hands, weeping for joy and fervency are all sanctioned by the Bible and are beautifully becoming to a holy life, to a profession of Christianity if they are exercised with reverence, with holy decency, dignity and refinement. But yelling is not shouting; fantastic gesticulations are not a manifestation of holy fervor. No such things are recorded in the Scriptures as characteristic of true saints in any age.

Elijah was intense, enthusiastic, fervent, but how calm, how restful, what assurance in this most trying test. The secret is to be found in his prayerful life, his communion with God before this test came off.

The restless, excited manifestation of certain persons and in certain meetings is but a manifestation of neglected communion. The holy, restful, easy hilarity that comes not by creaturely activity, but is begotten of the Holy Ghost, is a manifestation of the presence of God, and refreshes the saints and convicts the sinner. Let us guard against creaturely activity that tires, exhausts and often disgusts.

We see here also that there is a rare effectual use of sarcasm. Elijah uses it here in his mockery of the priests of Baal. Then there may be an occasional time when it may be used by a Christian, but the occasions are very rare indeed. Elijah used it once, and once in a lifetime might be enough for most of us, and some of us might be able to get along without it at all. Let us beware and not give way to sarcasm just because we can and because it will mock some one you chance at the moment to want to make feel your power. This would not be Christian.

## XVII.

Let us read today verses thirty to thirty-five inclusive: "And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me; and all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of Jehovah that was thrown down. And Elijah took twelve stones according to

The restless, excited manifestation of certain persons and in certain meetings is but a manifestation of neglected communion. The holy, restful, easy hilarity that comes not by creaturely activity, but is begotten of the Holy Ghost, is a manifestation of the presence of God, and refreshes the saints and convicts the sinner. Let us guard against creaturely activity that tires, exhausts and often disgusts.

We see here also that there is a rare effectual use of sarcasm. Elijah uses it here in his mockery of the priests of Baal. Then there may be an occasional time when it may be used by a Christian, but the occasions are very rare indeed. Elijah used it once, and once in a lifetime might be enough for most of us, and some of us might be able to get along without it at all. Let us beware and not give way to sarcasm just because we can and because it will mock some one you chance at the moment to want to make feel your power. This would not be Christian.

## XVII.

Let us read today verses thirty to thirty-five inclusive: "And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me; and all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of Jehovah that was thrown down. And Elijah took twelve stones according to

the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of Jehovah came, saying, Israel shall be thy name. And with the stones he built an altar in the name of Jehovah, and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood. And he said, Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time; and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time; and they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar, and he filled the trench also with water."

For six long hours the prophets of Baal were earnestly engaged in their effort to bring down the fire. Elijah quietly looked on, interrupting them but once.

But now when the time came for the priests of Jehovah to begin preparing for the evening sacrifice in the temple at Jerusalem, he invited the people to come near to him and he would take his part in this great test.

He would not do a thing until the people drew near. He wanted them to see him in every part of his preparation, so that they would be fully assured that he resorted to no trickery. What he did he was going to do

out in the open, in clear daylight.

In this he was much different from our modern miracle (?) workers—the spiritualists, hypnotists, etc., who always work in the dark. The truth is not afraid of the open, of the light.

This invitation of Elijah led the people away from the altars of Baal over to the broken down altar of Jehovah. I can imagine that as they approached this sacred, but neglected, spot their conscience began to quicken, and their condemnation for their neglect began to intensify; and especially now that the prophets of Baal had made such a failure. Memory also may have called up before them scenes of blessing that had taken place on that very spot years ago. But now all was ruin. The altar was torn down and the stones scattered about over the grounds. It was a sight to make them feel peculiar.

When the people were all gathered about him then Elijah began to work. He first set about repairing this "altar of Jehovah that was thrown down." In this, by example, he said to the people, "If you want God to bless you, if you want the fire to fall, you must forsake the altars of Baal and go and repair the broken down altars of Jehovah. It would be useless for them to try to go on, even if they did give up Baalism, without repairing the

broken down altars of Jehovah.

And are there not many broken down altars today? And is not the failure to go back and repair them one of the causes for weakness in the Church and in the individual? Broken down altars must be repaired before the fire will fall, before God will answer.

And did you notice that in preparing this altar Elijah did not bring any new material into it, but that he built it out of the very same stones that had been thrown down? He needed nothing more to bring the fire. Anything else would have been to put strange stones into the altar. It had been built according to God's plan in the first place and needed none of man's suggestions to improve upon it.

But people are not always thus careful in repairing altars. We fear that there are many strange stones in many altars today. And every strange stone built in is a great hindrance, to say the least. Let us not put any strange, unhallowed material into any of our service for God.

There were just twelve of these stones, one for each of the tribes of Israel, and Elijah used every one of them. This was a strong reproof, which, no doubt, was felt by the people. Ahab was the successor to Jeroboam, who had divided Israel into Judah and Israel,

and this Baal worship was an outgrowth of this separation from the worship at the temple in Jerusalem.

But Elijah recognized no such division. To him Israel must be and was one people of twelve tribes, not two people of two and ten tribes. In this he recognized the unity of Israel, and taught the people that apart from that unity, they were shorn of their power. And in spite of all the apparent divisions, God's true people are and always have been one.

There is a great lesson just here for our age. Elijah did not set up an independent service here upon Mt. Carmel. It is very noticeable the care he took to conform to the law and service of the temple, both as to time and arrangement. He considered himself and his service a part of God's great service in the unity of His people.

Elijah had no unity whatever with the crowd he was in, with Ahab, and the priests, and the worshippers of Baal; but he was a part of the unity of Israel and God's true service as represented in the Jerusalem temple. And he knew that the way to get the fire to fall was to get the twelve stones together in one altar.

Friends, there is bound to be weakness, great weakness, which will continue to grow

into more serious conditions, so long as the stones lay apart and scattered about. Each altar where the real, holy fire falls, will be found to be built, to speak figuratively, of twelve stones.

The altar having been repaired, the wood was placed in order and the bullock slain, cut into pieces and placed upon the altar all in accordance with the instructions for such an offering in the Levitical law. When Moses was commanded to build the tabernacle, he was cautioned to "see that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount." There are right ways of doing God's service and it is useless to expect blessings upon other service than that carried on after His instruction.

All of this preparation had been made under the keen eye of the people, so that there was no possible chance of any trickery in secreting fire among the pieces of wood. But Elijah was not satisfied with this. He must be placed absolutely beyond suspicion.

To make himself doubly, yes, trebly, yea, absolutely secure, twelve jars of water are ordered poured upon the altar and offering. This not only shows his confidence in God, but a wise precaution against any false explanations or accusations that might be gotten up by the enemy later.

The enemies of truth have always sought to get some naturalistic explanation of the supernatural, and are free to suggest trickery on the part of the agent. They sought to explain the disappearance of Jesus from the tomb by saying that His disciples came and stole Him away. The world resorts to trickery and sees so much of it that they are ever ready to accuse the divine agent of the same trickery.

The caution of Elijah is certainly a wise precaution, and should bring a strong lesson to us. Had he not done this, much of the good effect of his victory might have been lost by some false explanation which he could not have answered. Now was his time to place this test beyond question, and he did it. Let us do the same.

### XVIII.

All is now ready. The altar is repaired, the wood and bullock are in place, and water has been poured over them, filling the trench. The hour for the offering of the evening oblation according to the Levitical law has come. The people stand about in almost breathless silence watching to see what will be done next. The priests of Baal have failed, will Elijah succeed?

Let us read and see: "And it came to pass

at the time of the offering of the evening oblation, that Elijah, the prophet, came near and said, O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back again. Then the fire of Jehovah fell and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench."

We are told here that Elijah was successful in this great test and that the fire fell in answer to his prayer. Let us study together this wonderful prayer which brought about such remarkable results.

We would call attention first to its shortness. Elijah seems to have learned the lesson that later on Jesus taught His followers to "use not vain repetitions" thinking "that they shall be heard for their much speaking." A few words with meaning are worth much more than many formal phrases with no special meaning. Prayers are often buried beneath a superfluity of words, and become tiresome and ineffective because of their length.

We would not say that there is no time or place for longer prayers, but public prayer

should generally be short. In the closet is the place for the longer prayer. And if one has prayed long enough in the closet, he will not have to pray long in public until the fire falls.

Elijah had prayed much in secret and was prayed up, and had prayed through and needed now to say but little. Oh, that we might always come up to God's service this way. How much more lively, fiery and interesting would our service then be!

Again, notice the definiteness of this prayer. He took no circuitous route, he mentioned no unimportant things, he resorted to no flattery and said no soft, pleasing thing to lead up to the main request, but he spoke right out frankly, definitely and directly the thing he desired. This is the kind of a prayer that pleases God and brings a speedy answer.

Next, notice how this prayer puts God first. Elijah makes no request for the fire to fall. He possibly would have mentioned it in a sentence or two more had not the fire fallen. But falling of the fire was only incidental. He prays not for the incident, but for the real thing.

What was the real thing? It was the glory, the honor of God. "Let it be known this day that thou art God." This mention of

himself and his relation to this work, was that they might know that he was only God's servant acting under His direction. Elijah wanted them to give no honor to him, but to give honor to God. And then he was anxious that the people might turn again to the worship of Jehovah. What an excellent motive! What a beautiful spirit!

Were such high purposes back of all prayer what great things could be accomplished. If our prayers are not being answered it might be well for us to examine honestly as to the motives we have in offering them.

James tell us, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures." Jesus in giving a model of prayer to the disciples placed as the first petition, "Hallowed be thy name," thus placing God's honor first in prayer. "Our daily bread" came later, not first, though it generally has first place in much of our praying. Selfishness and mere self-interest, we fear, hinder much in getting answers to our prayers. Let us be more like Elijah.

Lastly, let us notice what a drawing together into one body again of all that was pathetic in God's relationship to the past, what a projecting of the past upon the destiny of the future in these words, "Abraham, Isaac and Israel."

We make too little of the past. When we pray thousands of years should crowd their sacred victories into our petitions and stimulate our faith

To Elijah the names Abraham, Isaac and Israel brought great inspiration. It reminded him of what marvelous things God had wrought. But these names made a different impression upon the people. Their very mention, no doubt, deepened their already strong conviction, because it reminded them of promises unfulfilled, of glory lost, of a great covenant which they had forsaken.

Possibly Elijah used these names in order to produce this very result. He did not pray to the people or at the people, or simply to be heard by the people. He prayed to God in the presence of the people, and meant for the people to hear him and get something from it.

No real prayer is ever offered with the sole purpose of being heard of men, but public prayer has as a part of its object to be heard of men, or else it would not need to be public. It would be well for us to remember this in public prayer. All public prayer should not only reach the ear of God, but the ear of the people present; should be understood by them, inspire, edify or convict them. Unless it does this it is useless as a public prayer. Don't misunderstand me. It may be useful as a

prayer, but it is useless as a public prayer.

Elijah's prayer not only reached God, but it made a deep impression upon the people. They felt keenly the address to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel. They were called Israel, but they knew they had forsaken Israel's God and were separated from Israel's true worship and from a part of Israel-Judah.

But such an appeal as this to the past would have been impotent had Abraham, Isaac and Israel not lived such lives and so related themselves to God's great plan as to make their names stand for true godliness. When I think of this I sometimes wonder if I am living such a life that, should someone appeal to my children in the name of the God of their father it would amount to something.

Friends, we ought not only to impress our own generation, but we ought to have a good influence on several generations to come. God help us to live such lives that we can be cited as examples of true godliness.

### XIX.

Let us briefly recall the circumstances. Elijah is religiously alone as far as men are concerned. All the prophets of Baal were there. Not only were they there, but they were greatly excited. The day had gone against them and whatever may now transpire will

count nothing in their favor. Ahab with his attendants was there, greatly chagrined at the failure of his priests. A great crowd of people were there with their faith in Baalism shattered and in excited wonder waiting the results of Elijah's operations.

They did not have to wait long for an answer to the prayer of faith. The fire of Jehovah suddenly fell, consuming not only the bullock, but the very stones of the altar and the water in the trench round about. This undoubtedly was fire from Jehovah, for had Elijah by any trickery succeeded in secreting some fire in the wood, that fire would have gone out when the bullock and the wood were consumed. God is careful to give unmistakable evidence of His presence to those who are willing to know.

Now let us read two more verses for our consideration today: "And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: And they said, Jehovah, he is God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there."

The victory for the present was complete, the people were enthusiastic in their acknowledgement of Jehovah. They were thoroughly convinced and completely taken off their

feet by overwhelming proof, and in the excitement of the moment are ready for any service. If only this may be a real conversion, a permanent change, the triumph will be wonderful.

But what is the miracle of the falling of the fire and the devouring of the sacrifice compelling the acknowledgement of the whole people that "Jehovah, he is God," in comparison with the miracle that God hath sent His Son into the world to kindle the greatest fire which has ever burnt in the world? In Bethlehem, and upon Golgotha, the glory of the Lord is infinitely higher in its manifestations than upon Carmel. That the Word has become flesh and dwelt among us and we have beheld His glory; that the Spirit of Jehovah is come into the world and His influence is so apparent in divine execution should be an abundant proof today that "Jehovah, he is God."

Now while the convincement of the people seems to have been complete, the danger was by no means passed. So long as a false prophet was alive there was great danger of the people, or some of them at least, lapsing back into the false religion. A false prophet is an undesirable, a dangerous quantity in any community. Though firmly set against him, by persistency he will finally get a hear-

ing by some one and gradually the heresy will spread. The only safety is to freeze out, drive out, some way get rid of the false prophet. God's law is very strict at this point. Let us read Deuteronomy 13: 1-11: "If there arise in the midst of thee a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams and he give thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet or unto the dreamer of dreams: for Jehovah your God proveth you to know whether ye love Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after Jehovah your God, and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death because he hath spoken rebellion against Jehovah your God. . . . So shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee. . . . Thou shalt surely kill him; thy hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. . . ."

Elijah was neither revengeful or hardhearted. His action was justified by the times in which he lived. Had the priests of Baal suc-

ceeded, Elijah would have been slain at once. And his action was justified and even commanded in the Law, as we have just read.

He had gained the advantage by the falling of the fire, by his complete triumph in this test and he must now make use of this advantage in bringing this victory on toward completion. He appeals to the enthusiasm of the people and has them arrest all the priests of Baal and take them down to the base of the mountain, to the brook Kishon where they are slain.

What a daring deed! Elijah without political position or authority, is master of the situation, while Ahab, the king, stands by witnessing the slaying of the prophets whom he had established, not daring to offer a word of remonstrance. But this is not the first time Elijah was master and Ahab servant. Elijah is God's man under authority from God, as was Paul when he became master of the ship and its crew.

But some one may now be ready to ask, "Does not this justify religious intolerance; religious persecution?" We answer unhesitatingly no. The fair pages of church history have more than once been stained by unjustified blood. Methods may change while principles remain the same. The New Testament has changed many of the methods of

the Old Testament. To see this, one has only to read the Sermon on the Mount. Ceremonialism has largely passed away, but all the principles for which they stood still remain

So in this case which we are now considering. We are no longer justifiable in the method, that is in the killing, but we are justifiable in the principle, that is, in getting rid of the false prophets. But we must be Christian in our getting rid of them. The first thought of Christianity is to save. But that which cannot be saved and is dangerous to the salvation of others, we are to turn away from and warn against, and get rid of them, if possible, by some Christian method. We have always been taught that it was dangerous to play with fire. It is most dangerous to trifle with false doctrine and false prophets. Let us beware.

## XX.

The Bible reading for today will be the last five verses of the chapter, the 18th of 1st Kings. "And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he bowed himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees.

And he said to his servant; Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold there ariseth a cloud out of the sea, as small as a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahah, Make ready thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in a little while, that the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel and the hand of Jehovah was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel."

The people having acknowledged Jehovah, and the priests of Baal having been slain there seemed to be no more reason for the rain being withheld. Others saw no sign, but Elijah heard the sound of abundant rain. Elijah had been where they had not been and he knew some things they did not know. He had been in communion with Jehovah.

The person who has learned well the art of prayer finds out many things other folks never know, and their ear can hear things to which other ears are deaf. Jesus said unto His disciples: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."

Jehovah said to Elijah that he lived in the midst of a people "who have eyes to see, and see not; that have ears to hear, and hear not." Prayer, communion with the Lord, enters one into a realm of spiritual knowing, seeing, hearing, to which others are strangers. Let us seek to become apt at the art.

Next, we will notice another contrast between Ahab and Elijah. We have been seeing these contrasts all along. Whenever you see a true man of God and a man of the world together you will always find a contrast. In our lesson it says that "Ahab went" and that "Elijah went." "Ahab went up to eat and to drink, and Elijah went up to pray. Both had witnessed the intense scenes of the day, but the impression upon each is very different.

We are surprised at Ahab. After the utter defeat of Baalism and the overwhelming triumph of Jehovahism we would suppose he would be convinced of his error and in repentance seek the forgiveness of Jehovah. But no, he only goes off to his pavillion to feast. We would have supposed if he did not repent he would become greatly enraged, especially since his priests had been slain. But no, scarcely had the last one bitten the dust until he starts for the royal meal. It is passing strange how indifferent, how hardhearted,

how self-centered men may become. But after all, this is just like Ahab, for when the famine was on, he thought only of his royal barns, his mules and horses. His temper was sensual and materialistic and he thought little of others.

Wretched man! He was no more touched by the great heart-searching events of the day than if he had witnessed an interesting but very long play, after which refreshments are most welcome and food tastes good. What would it have been for the world had he been the last of his class? But it is a very apparent fact in every community that there are Ahabs still living.

But while Ahab is eating, Elijah is on the top of Carmel bowed upon the earth with his face between his knees. Ahab is the worldly spirit and Elijah is the religious spirit. The contrast is threefold. (1) The worldly spirit finds relief in festivity while the religious spirit finds relief in prayer. (2.) The worldly spirit is but temporally affected by the most imposing spectacles of divine power, while the religious spirit bows in reverence and humility before God. (3) The worldly spirit is more intent in looking for temporal merits, while the religious spirit is intent for spiritual reformation and advancement. Let us be sure we are possessed of the religious spirit.

Now let us think of Elijah at prayer again. This is the third time we have had occasion to study Elijah at prayer. An hour or so ago he was praying for fire and now he is praying for rain. When he was commanded to appear before Ahab the second time the Lord promised him the rain, and now he is praying for it. But why pray for that which is already promised? Will not God fulfill His promise? The relation between prayer and the promise is often misunderstood. The promise is not a release from prayer, but is rather an indication of the direction in which we may ask and the extent to which we may expect an answer. A friend may write us out a check on the bank, but the bank will not cash it until we have endorsed it.

After making some promises of great value the Lord said: "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Though the Bible be crowded with golden promises from cover to cover they will be largely inoperative until we turn them into prayer. We are to throw the fervency of our spirit by prayer into the promises of God as the moulder pours the hot liquid lead into the mould.

God's promises are given not to restrain, but to incite prayer. Let us study the promises to see what God wants to do and then

give ourselves to prayer that it may be done, and pray on until faith becomes assurance.

When Elijah prayed for fire the answer came very quickly, but in praying for rain he prayed seven times before the little cloud appeared. Such differences come in our lives. At times the Lord answers almost before we ask, while at other times the answers only come after repeated praying. A possible reason for this is that we may be constantly reminded that we are only suppliants and not the Lord. Did all answers come easy we would become mandatory instead of humble suppliants. Then the delay is good for us as a test of faith. When we send out the little lad it does us good to hear him sometimes say, "There is nothing." But when the promise is behind the prayer, if we will but keep repeating the prayer, after awhile he will bring the answer that he has sighted the little cloud and the unfailing sign, the full assurance will be ours.

The cloud having been sighted now the prayer is ended and activity in another direction is in order. The rain is coming, is fast approaching, now act like it and hasten for shelter. Ahab is notified and he gets in his chariot and hastens away to Jezreel, eighteen miles distance. To prove his humility and good will, Elijah runs ahead of his chariot as

a footman. Had Ahab been what he ought to have been, he would not have allowed Elijah to have made this run, but would have invited him into his chariot. Before they reached the city the storm broke and there was a great rain. The God who had given the fire now gives the rain. Surely Jehovah He is God.

## XXI.

We are now ready to study the 19th chapter of I Kings, and our reading today will be the first four verses.

“And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough; now O Jehovah, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.”

Ahab entered the royal palace late in the evening. Jezebel was anxiously awaiting

his return. Though she had refused to go up to Mount Carmel, all day long she had nervously moved about, wondering what was being accomplished and what the outcome would be. She had hope that Baal would triumph, especially if they had planned by some trickery to bring the fire. Late in the afternoon she saw the cloud arising, the first cloud she had seen for three years. She knew by that that something had transpired, and since Baal had claimed to be the god of the elements, hope may have been awakened that Baal had triumphed. The cloud grew thicker and darker, and in a little while the wind began to blow and there was a great rain. She was glad that the famine was broken, but anxiety was deep, for she knew not who had triumphed. Hope said Baal, but fear said Jehovah. If only Ahab would come and tell her, so that she could rest.

Now he has come and she hurries to meet him with the question, "How has the day gone?" When Ahab told her all that Elijah had done she became greatly enraged. It was even worse than she had thought possible and she could not be indifferent. Ahab might eat and drink, but not Jezebel. To her the conditions were extremely serious. She must do something at once or all that she had worked for these years would be gone.

The people are turning from the worship she had introduced and were following Elijah. This reformation must be stopped and she must get rid of this Elijah. Ahab may quail before him, but not Jezebel. But how shall she get rid of him? She knew she dare not kill him, but she will threaten him and possibly he will flee and leave her alone to repair the havoc he had caused. Alas, how well she succeeds.

“And when Elijah saw that, he arose and went for his life.” How strange! How unlike the Elijah we have become acquainted with. And yet how very few even strong men but that break down somewhere, for there are weak moments even in strong men’s lives. But we must not be too hard on Elijah. Yes, we may exclaim with great sadness, “How are the mighty fallen?” From the standpoint of the work he was to do, this is one of the most serious breakdowns recorded on the pages of either sacred or profane history. Elijah should not have run for his life at this time. We cannot excuse him. Yet we must not suppose that Elijah went altogether bad in his life, that he intentionally meant to forsake Jehovah and His cause. He was not prepared for so sudden a collapse of the influence he had gained; he had expected that just the rehearsal of the Carmel tri-

umph would have convinced the idolatrous queen of her error, subdued her spirit, and prepared her to listen with respect to him as the prophet of Jehovah and then to encourage her husband, the king, in bringing about a complete religious reformation. On the contrary, all the wild, savage nature of the idol-enthusiast was stirred up, and she swore a tremendous oath of vengeance on Elijah for the slaughter of her priests. Under this surprise he faltered and then fled.

It means much to be prepared for the unexpected at any time and especially immediately after a great victory. The ecstasies of triumph, or the relaxation after a battle may be the occasion of the enemy's attempt to surprise us by some sudden, unexpected assault from some unthought-of quarter. We should never go into ecstasies or relaxation to such an extent as to be off our guard and cease from watchfulness. The enemy is ever on the alert to trip us up.

Another thing for us to think of here is Elijah's physical condition. The incidents of the day, and in fact the two or three days since he left Zarephath, were very taxing upon his strength. Beside the anxiety of the great test, he had run eighteen miles ahead of Ahab to Jezreel and he no doubt was greatly exhausted. Such a condition is sometimes an

open or an unguarded door of entrance for the enemy's temptation. We often hear talk about the mind's power over the body. But it is just as true that the body has some influence upon the mind. This fact must be remembered in studying Christian experience and spiritual emotions.

I have have had some experience just here and can speak from positive knowledge. For a few years I have been subject to occasional attacks of dyspepsia. I am always warned of the approach of the attack by special temptations to despondency. And do you not all know how much more easily you are irritated or discouraged when you are very tired?

Now we are not meaning to say that physical conditions justify wrong actions, oh no! But we are saying that physical conditions may be the special occasion for the enemy's attack, and may make us an easier prey for him than when the conditions are different, and unless we are especially watchful, we will falter, weaken, flee, or even loose clear out at this time. For the best Christian experience we should keep our bodies in the best possible condition.

Let no one misunderstand us in our interpretation of Elijah's life at this time. We are not meaning to apologize for or excuse his act. He should not, he need not have given

way. We are simply calling attention to the fact that there are weak moments even in strong men's lives, moments when one becomes an easier prey to the enemy than at other times, if they are not very watchful. If these moments come in the lives of the strong, they certainly come in the lives of all. The lesson, then, that we want to get today is to watch against the enemy at all times and especially be on our guard at these weak moments lest we be suddenly overtaken and fall into some more or less serious error.

## XXII.

Today we will give a little further attention to the reading of yesterday; we will study a little further Elijah's flight. If there was ever a time when he was needed it was just at this time when he fled. The victory of Carmel was a great one, but it was by no means a finished one. And no victory is really a completed one until it is brought to a full finish. The Carmel incident had given him the great advantage. The work of reformation and destruction had commenced, and the people were now in a mood to carry it through to the bitter end. The tide had turned and was setting toward God with great force, but he was greatly needed to direct its flow, to keep the people true to the choice

they had so vehemently made, and to complete the reformation so grandly begun. Even with the advantage now gained, a fearful failure is yet possible. We can scarcely call it less than criminal to flee and forsake the work at this critical time.

Then there is Jezebel and her priests still firmly intrenched in the city of royal residence. There can be no safety, no permanency of the reformation until she is removed or rendered powerless. With Jezebel removed, the finished victory would be assured. But just at this high point, this critical moment, Elijah gives way. Oh, how sad! Instead of returning an answer to Jezebel when she threatened him, like that which Chrysostom sent on a similiar occasion to the Empress Eudoxia, "Go tell her I fear nothing but sin," he arose and went for his life. At the very time when he should have shown the martyr spirit and been willing to die if the cause of Jehovah should demand it and greatest glory come to His name, he fled.

We do not believe but that Elijah's life was perfectly safe. It seems that God needed him, and hence would have protected him. The life of the man who trusts and obeys the Lord is immortal until his work is done. Men nor devils, cyclones nor earthquakes, train wrecks nor other catastrophies, can de-

stroy him. But he must stand at his post to the last and die heroically whether it be as a martyr at the hand of a cruel assassin or a natural death when his time comes.

Alas, how often do men break down where we least expected it. How vain it is to trust in man. Oh God, put the steel in us until we can stand through all.

Elijah took his eyes off Jehovah and placed them upon his circumstances and upon himself. "And when he saw that he arose and went for his life." This is a fatal error and yet many people fall into it. Peter succeeded well in walking upon the sea until "he saw the wind," then he was afraid and began to sink. Faith thrives well when the whole vision is occupied with God. To look away from God is to cause faith to falter. A faltering faith brings on weak moments and a fall is probable. We must keep God constantly filling our vision, and then not be disobedient unto the heavenly vision.

The effect and the results following this flight, this fall of Elijah, are most serious. They are very serious in their effect first upon Israel and the reformation undertaken, and second upon Elijah himself. In considering these we ask you to look into subsequent history for traces of the results of this reformation undertaken by Elijah. We do not say

that it was altogether fruitless. Such a marked display of divine power under such conditions as were here, and such a signal defeat of idolatry could not but make a strong and lasting impression upon the world, especially since it has been recorded in our sacred Book. Its general influence has been strong and wide. Its immediate influence, we may also say, was not small; and yet it was very small compared to what it might have been had Elijah, instead of fleeing, stood at his post and brought the work to a glorious finish. As it was, we hear nothing further concerning this reformation. We are given no reason to believe that the worship of Jehovah was anywhere established. On the contrary, the next few chapters reveal Ahab's unchanged condition and Jezebel still carrying out her unholy schemes. Oh, what a shame to have lost all of this great advantage gained for Jehovah by Elijah's Carmel test.

But this is only one of the natural consequences of the servants deserting their post at a crisis moment. How different Israel's subsequent history might have been had Elijah stood firm. He might at this time have wrought such a mighty reformation in favor of Jehovah that the captivity never would have occurred, and the first advent of Christ hastened, and His reception by many of the

Jews been very different. No one can tell the far-reaching effect of this flight of Elijah. Let us learn the lesson and never desert a post of duty because of threatened dangers. All through the ages, the onward march of God's cause has been hindered by just such desertions. Let no one of our names be found upon the list of deserters for our age when it is made up.

As to the effect of this flight upon Elijah himself, it brought a blotch, a stain upon his character, which has resisted all the obliterating erasure of the ages and still remains as a part of his life story to be carried as a warning wherever the Christian Bible is read. And he missed a chance, a chance of being a great blessing, which never again came to him. Elijah's influence in Israel never recovered that one false step.

And so has it been and will be with all who fall away. The song which says, "The bird with a broken pinion never soared so high again," may not put the truth just correctly, but the thing that is meant to be said is a great unalterable truth. There are circumstances where the bird might fly as high and even higher again, for it may never have risen to any great height, but it is true that under no circumstance can it fly as high as it might have gone had its pinion never been

broken. It is always true that when one has fallen from any considerable height it is rarely, if ever, reached again. As children, God may forgive and reinstate in His family as fully as ever. But He deals differently with relation to service. As servants, the fallen one is forever short and may never be reinstated and trusted quite as he was once. This is a solemn thought for us all. My young friends, let me warn you all to beware. Guard well your lives against giving way and deserting your post. Go through with Jesus at any cost, for it will cost you more to flee than to stand firm.

## XXIII.

Ever since Elijah's experience under the juniper tree that tree has become the emblem of despondency and despair. Today we want to think about Elijah's feeling, now that he has been overcome and forsaken his post, as is revealed in what he said while under this tree. Let us read it to you: "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough; now O Jehovah, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

What a contradiction! How strange! He

had fled for his life, for fear that Jezebel would have him killed, but now he is asking God that he might die. He flees from death on the one hand and seeks it on the other. Desertion of duty—fleeing from the word and work of God—is sure to be followed by trouble and the deepest mental anguish. Elijah's spirit seems to have become utterly demoralized and panic-stricken. The way of the transgressor is hard and his mind is filled with vague contradictions and deep anguish. Hide it as they may, this experience of Elijah is a fair sample of the feeling, the remorse of all who desert their post.

Let me read to you a letter recently received from one who is now in this very juniper-tree despair. The juniper tree may be the place of despondency, or it may grow into despair. In this case it is despair which follows a sad fall of one, who for years, was in the forefront of the battle. He did not yield and break down at the same point as did Elijah; there are many different points where men break down. But no matter at what point the break comes, the anguish of mind to a greater or less degree is sure to follow. Listen to this letter:

“Dear Brother:—Your last to hand and its evident intended kindness only opens afresh the ghastly wound of my soul.

“What pleasure can I find in the thought that six years ago I preached the funeral sermon of a sainted woman whom I had been instrumental in leading into the way of holiness? How can I find joy in Bro. ——’s testimony and the “Amens” when he thanked God for me? What profit to me is the ten thousand blessed under my ministry? What interest have I in the great and gracious cause of holiness that I spent a quarter of a century in honest effort to try to help forward, and gave the flower of my manhood to?

“These things stand and point ten thousand fingers of reproach in my face and pronounce ten thousand curses on me for unfaithfulness. What sickening, leaden feelings a traitor has when he hears the shout of victory and sees the proud banners waving and knows the certain victory of the army he has deserted. What remorse and shame fills the heart when such an one is forced to face the faithful ones and see them look with mingled pity and contempt. What a cringing coward he feels himself when he knows he threw away his sword and shield and turned his back in the day of battle.

“Others may be blessed because of my sacrifice and toil in the years gone by, but there is now no blessing in it all for me. Better to have filled a drunkard’s grave or died in

heathen blindness, than to see and know and then prove untrue. These and kindred thoughts drive me to madness and reason seems fairly to leave the throne.

"I did so much desire to be true; I truly loved the Lord and His cause; it seemed that heaven and the crown of the faithful was so near, but now I can only mope and mourn. How I wish I could warn others who tread near this awful pit lest they come to this place of torment. But that is denied me, the gulf is too wide to cross."

Further comment seems unnecessary at this point. It is evident that no one can forsake the post of duty without suffering anguish of mind. Shall we not all stand true and go clear through with our great Leader? To the deserter there is a miniature hell upon earth—hell in his own soul.

But thank God, there is still hope. The deserter is not forsaken of God. If he will but follow, the Lord will lead him back into His fellowship. This He did with Elijah. It is very interesting to notice God's tender dealing with Elijah at this time.

Let us read again from the 5th to 8th verses: "And he lay down and slept under a juniper tree; and behold, an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake bak-

en on the coals, and a cruse of water. And he did eat and drink, and he laid him down again. And the angel of Jehovah came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God ”

Jehovah perfectly understood Elijah at this time. He knew the state of his mind, that it was unfit for reasoning. He did not upbraid him, nor reprove him, nor threaten to discharge him, nor begin to give him good advice. There was something needed before any advice or reproof could be effective. His physical and mental condition was such that he was not approachable with the needed words of reproof and hope.

The first thing must be food and sleep. And this God gave him first. We may learn a great lesson here. It is not always earnest, intense praying that we need to quiet our spirits. It is sometimes rest, sleep and food that is needed first. Also there are states of mind in which if one goes to giving words of cheer to comfort and encourage the despondent one, he will but pervert your effort at consolation and turn the wholesome food into poison. Better tell him to go home and sleep

and come back in the morning when he is rested and then you will talk it over with him.

We do not sufficiently realize the influence of the body, or physical conditions upon the mind and spirit when we are dealing with ourselves or with others. God was very tender with Elijah and waited until he was approachable before He administered any reproof or advice, and in the meantime gave him the needed sleep and food and allowed him to make the long journey he was set upon.

We must close for today, but tomorrow we will study the next step in God's dealing with His prodigal prophet.

#### XXIV.

Our reading for today will be the 9th to the 14th verses. "And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and behold the word of Jehovah came to him and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth and stand upon the mount before

Jehovah. And behold, Jehovah passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and break in pieces the rocks before Jehovah; but Jehovah was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but Jehovah was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but Jehovah was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him and said, What doest thou here Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away."

Refreshed by food and sleep Elijah resumed his journey across the desert and came to Horeb. Here he chose a cave for his residence. What he expected to do or what he hoped for here we do not know. Possibly he did not know himself. Panic-stricken, his only thought had been for his life and to get far away from Jezebel. But in his mad flight for life, he ran recklessly to a desert country where he would have perished but for God's special care. There was no raven,

nor widow in this land. How reckless do men act under fits of despondency and despair. But God had compassion on him and His eye followed with tender pity his every step, knowing the conflict of his mind, the storms of disappointment and broken hope which was sweeping across his noble soul.

Hitherto Elijah had been directed in his service by the word of Jehovah. Each time that word had come to him telling him what to do. But this journey to Horeb was undertaken on his own account. If he had any thought of escaping the word of God lest he be asked to stand before Jezebel, his effort was all in vain. Though hid away in a cave God found him, and again "the word of Jehovah came to him." But this time that word was so different from what it had ever been before. At other times it had been for instruction, but now it comes in reproof.

Under the juniper tree his mental state was such as to make reproof unavailing, but now he is in a different state of mind, and the reproof must be administered. His failure was most disastrous, inflicting lasting disgrace upon his own reputation, and arresting one of the most hopeful movements that ever visited the land of Israel. It struck panic and discouragement to a great multitude

whose hearts began to gather courage from his splendid zeal, and it brought much discredit on the cause and name of God. He must be made to feel this wrong. To cause him to feel it, Jehovah asks him the question, "What dost thou here, Elijah?" thus calling keenly to his mind that he was out of place and without orders. No such question could have been asked him at Cherith, at Zarephath or at Carmel. What a contrast is Elijah at Horeb with Elijah at these other places. How sad to see a strong man thus broken down. May the dear Lord save all of you from such an experience.

But Elijah does not meet the question fairly. His answer is evasive. Instead of humility and confession he manifests self-consciousness and self-vindication, calling attention to his own past zeal and loyalty, contrasting it with Israel's unfaithfulness. But in spite of the evasive answer, the question no doubt pricked him in his heart. Jehovah must follow it up until Elijah is thoroughly awakened and his despondency dispelled. His next step is to bring before the prophet some object lessons to correct the error that he had fallen into, which had been the cause of his desertion. Elijah had depended too much upon the miraculous, upon physical show, upon the spectacular. He seems to

have supposed that the answer by fire that consumed his sacrifice, and the great wind and rain that followed so quickly afterward, together with the slaying of the false prophets would accomplish the speedy reformation of Israel, and that the mere rehearsal of these things to Jezebel would bring her down at his feet. Because they did not he supposes all is lost and gives way to a discouragement which does in a large measure cause it all to fail. But now the prophet must be taught the lesson that all is not physical force and outward show. To do this he is given the object lessons, the account of which we have just read. First it was the great storm, then the earthquake, and then the fire, but God was not in them. Not that He is never in them, but that all physical phenomena and outward display is insufficient in itself. Then came the still small voice, in which voice God spoke and greatly moved Elijah. What a lesson is here. Not that it was unimportant, but Elijah had unduly estimated the power of the miracles of Carmel and almost entirely failed to count on that more powerful, silent, invisible working of the Holy Spirit, without which the miracle is useless.

Elijah is not alone in this error of unduly estimating the miraculous. There seems to

be something in human nature that becomes fascinated with the spectacular. Fallen man is ever calling for a sign that is outward. The Pharisees demanded such a sign of Jesus. Satan tempted Jesus by suggesting that He do the startling and leap from the pinnacle of the temple. So some people today are demanding outward miracles as proof of Christianity, speaking with tongues as evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. But this is all a mistake. Jesus refused to give the sign. The miracle of Carmel did not reform the people. God is showing Elijah, and He would show us, that the outward demonstration is insufficient and that the still, small voice is the true test. The spectacular, the outward miracle, will startle and astonish but never convert. Miracles have an historic value but they have seldom, if ever, produced a moral benefit in those who witness them. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets"—the still, small voice in the Word of God—"neither will they be persuaded if one rise from the dead,"—the miraculous. There is a power that is greater and more effective than outward demonstration. Elijah had not yet learned that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation," and was here being taught this very important lesson.

But there is another extreme which entire-

ly ignores the outward and the circumstantial in the work of God. This is a serious error for these things do have their place. The Carmel display could not be passed by for it had a large part to play in opening the way for the still, small voice. Calamities or afflictions or display may not produce conviction but they may soften the heart, subdue the spirit, and make the person susceptible to the word of God. Let us then avoid both of these extremes.

## XXV.

Today we will read the remaining verses of the 19th chapter of I Kings: "And Jehovah said unto him, Go return on thy way to wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; and Jehu, the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah, shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and he that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet will I leave me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." The three remaining verses tell of his anointing Elisha.

It is a very solemn thought that just one sin, just one misstep may forever, as far as this world is concerned, hinder and possibly wreck our usefulness. God does not deal with all alike, as conditions are not alike. God is no respecter of persons, but He is a respecter of character and of conditions as they bear upon character. Elijah was never reinstated in quite the position he occupied before his fatal flight, and yet he is given some important work to do which he faithfully performs.

After having been taught the lesson of the still small voice, that God is going forward with His work by invisible influences, Elijah is commanded to return to Syria and Israel and work was indicated for him to do. But that work was the anointing of three persons to share with him the work which he alone might have done, even much more successfully, had he been true to his opportunity and faithful to his God.

Moses kept holding back and making excuses until Aaron was called to do part of his work and share his glory.

Evidently, Elijah was not now to be the deliverer of Israel from Baalism. Others were to do his work and another was to be prophet in his room, and the deliverance was not to be immediate, but long protracted.

What a warning is here for all who are high in position and influence! What a warning is here for all. We may not be tempted as was Elijah, but we will be tempted in other ways, and there is before us the possibility of making the fatal misstep that will set us aside to a greater or less extent, for a longer or a shorter period of time from active service. But with the danger there are sufficient safeguards if we will but keep our eyes on Jesus and be careful to move only at His command.

We see further here that God's work must go on. If one man fails, others will be secured and other methods employed. Men's failures may retard God's work, but they cannot stop it; it will go on and be brought to a glorious finish some day. Certain individuals may seem to be very essential to certain work, but yet God is not solely dependent upon any single person for the accomplishment of any of his purposes. We need to appreciate men in their place, but we must not unduly tie to them. They may fail, but if not, at best they will be taken from their work when there is still much work to be done.

A third lesson here is that God's nets are not all constructed with the same meshes; some may be coarser while others are finer. Some men may escape from some of them,

but no man can escape through all of them. Those who escape Hazeel will Jehu catch. There is no escape to one who neglects God's salvation and refuses to worship Jehovah. It is useless to try to get away as God will bring all men to judgment. Baal-worshippers, false religionists, evil doers will all be called to account and meet the just deserts of their own deeds. But those who have not bowed the knee unto Baal or kissed him are perfectly safe, for Jehovah hath declared. A fashionable world may look upon you as weak for being a Christian, and call you slighting names for being sanctified, but you are on the right road and the future will declare it. Be courageous and push ahead for you are in the only safe place.

The fourth and last lesson we will notice today is this, "How mistaken even good people may be as to the number of God's children." Elijah had just said, "I, even I only, am left." One is certainly in a very bad condition when he gets to thinking he is the only one. And when he does think so, he is nearly always mistaken. Elijah was mistaken, for Jehovah speaks of seven thousand who had not become Baal-worshippers. And we may have been sometimes. We may have looked upon the prevalence of sin in all classes and conditions of life, the widespread in-

difference even within the pale of the Church, and have thought the devil had it all. 'Tis true the saints are few enough and the picture is dark enough, but God does have His faithful few and we are not alone. And when we begin to count that few, they are no small crowd, and yet they are small compared with the masses on the other side. Could we get them all together we would no doubt be surprised at the number. We need not then feel lonesome or discouraged.

## XXVI.

Several years have now passed by since we last heard of Elijah. Ahab has made no change and Baal-worship seems to be again well established. Jezebel has succeeded in stopping the threatened reformation and all traces of the Mount Carmel triumph have about disappeared. How disappointing this must have been to Elijah. But he had no one to blame but himself. His own hasty act had lost him his advantage and caused these years of retirement. But he is not to stay in retirement forever. Though never to be reinstated in just the place he had left, God will yet use him. There are desertions that may retire one permanently, but for most backsliders, though serious and lasting results follow the backsliding, there may yet be a life of use-

fulness if right attitudes are taken. There is a message of hope for the fallen ones. But the one thus restored must patiently wait the Spirit's leading as to service.

The occasion of Elijah's reintroduction to Israel was this: One day when Ahab was walking about among the shrubs and fountains in his beautiful grounds his attention was called to the excellent vineyard which joined the royal gardens. He thought of what a valuable addition it would make to the royal estate and resolved to purchase it at once. He ordered his horses and chariot brought and drove over to where his neighbor lived and proposed to buy or trade for the vineyard. He offered all it was worth and then more than it was worth, but Naboth refused to sell at any price.

There are some men who can't be bought. We know little of Naboth in this world, but over on the other side of the river I am expecting that we will hear of him. The reason for his refusing to sell this vineyard was his loyalty to Jehovah's law and the custom of his forefathers, which were worth more than money to him. Israel's law of inheritance was that they should not alienate that which fell to their lot, except in case of extreme necessity, and then only on condition

that it might be redeemed at any moment at stipulated price, but if not redeemed it should be restored at the year of Jubilee. To this law Naboth faithfully adhered and no offer from the king could turn him aside.

This refusal greatly grieved the king and he hastily drove back to the palace, went to his sleeping room and threw himself upon the bed and turned his face toward the wall to pout, and refused to go to his meal when it was ready. Poor baby! But you have seen some others who have acted just that way when they are crossed. My friend, such conduct looks just as babyish in you as it does in anybody else. Take a good look at Ahab now and get ashamed of yourself if you ever have such spells.

Jezebel found Ahab in this condition and when she found out the reason for his grief she rebuked him for what to her was his weakness and asking him for his signet, she set about securing the vineyard. At her suggestion Naboth was slain and the vineyard fell into the royal hands. Ahab arose and went over into the vineyard to take possession of it. And now is God's time to act. The sins of Ahab must be brought to judgment. Listen to the reading in the 21st chapter, verses 17-24.

“And the word of Jehovah came to Elijah

the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab, King of Israel, who dwelleth in Samaria: behold he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he has gone down to take possession of it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, Hast thou killed and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah. Behold I will bring evil upon thee, and will utterly sweep thee away and will cut off from Ahab every man-child, and him that is shut up and him that is left at large in Israel: And I will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha, the son of Ahizah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and hast made Israel to sin. And of Jezebel also spake Jehovah, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field, shall the birds of heaven eat."

Elijah had stood before Ahab several times before this, but never with such a mes-

sage as he is now delivering. Before his message had in it some hope in the possibility of repentance, but now the ultimatum is given, the judgment sentence is passed. God has put up with a great deal from Ahab. His mercy has been long-suffering in not cutting him off and bringing his wicked career and influence to an end. He has graciously borne with him a long time granting him many opportunities of repentance. But Ahab has rejected them all and the sentence must fall.

Friends, there is a fullness of iniquity, a place where God will stand it no longer. The evil-doer may seem to be getting along well now, but just around the corner yonder, he will meet some Elijah with the sentence of judgment. He who continues to insult God's mercy will find that mercy's door will swing shut and severe judgments will be written up on its outside when we look for it. Oh my friend, boast not yourself in sin, for Elijah may now be on his way to meet you with the awful sentence.

“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” But this delay of execution is not because of any slackness on God's part, for “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffer-

ing to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief." Knowing then that judgment is sure "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness?"

### XXVII.

Our today's study will be a continuation of yesterday's reading. We spoke yesterday of the fulness of iniquity, the time when God speaks in positive, fixed judgment. There are two other lessons in this same reading which we wish to notice. The first one is in Elijah's statement to Ahab, "Hast thou killed?"

Naboth was dead and out of the way of Ahab's possessing the coveted vineyard. Ahab may have excused himself, as some people do still, with the thought that he was not responsible for the death of Naboth. He had been upon his bed in a pet and Jezebel had planned the whole thing without his knowledge or consent. But now that it was done and the vineyard naturally fell to the royal estate, he had just as well take possession.

But responsibility is not that easily shirked. True, it was not Ahab's hand that had signed and sealed the letters that gave the instruc-

tion for the murder. But it was his name and his seal that were used; and he was king. When he gave over the seal to Jezebel he should have known what was going to be done with it. He knew Jezebel, and knew she had some scheme in mind to secure the vineyard and did not care to ask what she was going to do. But such ignorance cannot secure innocency. And I scarcely think he was that innocent. While possibly he would not have ordered the murder himself, yet he was glad it was accomplished so he could get possession of the vineyard.

The word of Jehovah to Ahab was, "Hast thou killed?" Before God Ahab is a murderer. Guilt is incurred by being a party to a crime as well as by committing the overt act. Achan's family had nothing to do with the taking of the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment at Ai; and they may have had no part in digging the hole in which they were secreted. But it was in the tent and they were knowing to the crime and assisted him in concealing it, if in no other way, by keeping it a secret. When sentence was passed they were considered guilty and punished along with Achan. There are times when silence brings guilt. There are more people guilty of crime than just those who commit the outward criminal act. Let us be

careful not to become party to any crime, for the party to the crime must share with the criminal in the sentence, both guilty.

Again, position brings with it responsibility and no neglect of duty or carelessness of administration can exempt from guilt. The royal seal was Ahab's and he was responsible for its use unless it should be taken from him by force or without his knowledge. We must not treat lightly the responsibilities that are connected with positions that we accept.

The other lesson comes in connection with Ahab's answer to Elijah when he said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" Sin has so depraved us that we are constantly mistaking our foes and friends. We call a foe a friend, and a friend a foe. Though Ahab did not know it, Elijah was his best friend. Jezebel was his worst enemy and had brought him into much serious trouble, out of which Elijah seeks to extricate him. The popular idea of a friend is one who favors, pets and agrees with us, whether right or wrong, and anyone who crosses us or tries to prevent us having our own way is our enemy. This indeed is a very false idea, in fact it is the very opposite to the truth. A real friend is one of the most valuable things of earth and we sometimes have them and know it not. A real friend will never sanction our deeds of evil but will

do all in his power to hinder us in every evil step and kindly reprove us for our evil ways and bad habits. But he who does this will often be disliked and called an enemy by the very one whom he tries to befriend.

Elijah did not remonstrate at being called an enemy, for he knew he was, from Ahab's point of view, but he tells Ahab why he seems to be his enemy. "I have found thee because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah." If we are going to live true to Christ and do our duty, a part of our inheritance will be to be misunderstood, disliked and considered an enemy by some whom we love and sacrifice for their very best interest.

Seeing then that this is the case let us not feel that the person who corrects us or opposes some of our plans is necessarily our enemy. They may be our best friends trying to help us. They may not be right in their opinion or they may be right, but in either case they may be our friend honestly trying to help us. We ought to appreciate their interest in us; love them for their effort in our behalf. Heeding their advice may save us much trouble. But even if they are mistaken in their judgment and we cannot take their advice, we should avoid any hard feeling or censorious word toward them.

In conclusion, let me urge you as you are journeying along through life to give careful attention to the discerning of true friendship, and place not confidence in one as a friend simply because he always favors and agrees with you and helps you out in accomplishing your plans. Such an one may be your enemy. Let us be careful to know the true friend and the real enemy.

## XXVIII.

A few more years have passed by. According to Elijah's prophecy Ahab is slain and Ahaziah, his son, reigns in his stead and carries out the same religious policies. One day he was in his upper chamber on the roof of the royal palace in Samaria, and when he leaned against the lattice which was built around the edge, the lattice gave way and he fell to the pavement below. He was picked up and carried into the palace and found to be quite badly injured.

Ever since the reign of David the Moabites had been tributary to Israel, but now they had rebelled and the king was confined to his room and not able to go and suppress the revolt. He was greatly irritated at this condition. Then he was seized with an intense longing to know how this sickness was going to terminate. Accordingly he sent messen-

gers to Ekron to consult Baal-Zebub, the fly god, the patron deity of medicine in the Baal system. This was a terrible insult to Jehovah. Ahaziah was king of Israel and Israel was the people of Jehovah, but the king proves traitor and sends to consult a foreign god. Such an act could not in any justice be passed by; hence we read in II Kings 1: 3,4: "But the angel of Jehovah said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go to Samaria, and say unto them, Is it because there is no God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus saith Jehovah, Thou shalt not come down from the bed whither thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed."

Who these servants of the king were we do not know. They possibly were foreigners who had been brought in and were not much acquainted with the people of Israel. At least they did not know Elijah. But though a stranger to them, his speech so impressed them that they could not go further with their journey. Verses 5-8 read as follows: "And the messengers returned unto him, and he said unto them, Why is it that ye have returned? And they said unto him, There came up a man to meet us, and said unto us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith Jehovah, Is it because

there is no God in Israel, that thou sendest to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore thou shalt not come down from the bed whither thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And he said unto them, What manner of man was he that came up to meet you and told you these words? And they answered him, He was a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite."

Ahaziah had no doubt seen Elijah before and was well aware of the relation he bore to the court of his father. He may have frequently heard his parents discuss and condemn this prophet. At once he recognized him from the description given by the messengers. Whether or not any emotions of fear swept over the king's spirit we cannot tell, but if they did they were of short duration and gave way to hatred and anger. He resolved to get Elijah in his power, to vent on him his wrath and possibly slay him. He would not be harassed by this man during his reign as his father had been. And then it might be that if his prophecy was really true he might be induced to change it. At any rate Elijah must be taken and brought before the king.

Ahaziah is here making the mistake that is made by not a few in all ages, the mistake of misplacing the blame and charging it to

the agent rather than the authority back of the agent, and thinking that if only he can get rid of the agent he can go on in peace without the fulfillment of the threatened punishment.

I once asked a man how he was feeling spiritually and received for a reply, "Pretty well only when I see you." What was the matter when he saw me? He was trying to be a Christian and use tobacco and had told me he knew it was not right and that he would quit. My presence troubled him because of his knowledge of what I knew and thought that by keeping out of my presence he could get along. How foolish was this conclusion. If it was wrong for him to use tobacco it was wrong independent of my presence. And yet how many there are who fail to recognize this and are trying to hide certain acts from certain persons, or are trying to keep away from certain persons for fear of their reproof.

Friends, do you know that right and wrong grows out of the individual's relationship to God and that God sees when no other eye beholds? It was useless for Ahaziah to become angry at Elijah and seek to get him out of the road. Elijah was only Jehovah's agent and the facts would be just the same without Elijah.

To see how this came out let us read verses 9-16: "Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him; and behold, he was sitting on the top of the hill. (We wonder if it was not Mount Carmel again.) And he spake unto him, O man of God, the king hath said, Come down. (A most insulting speech. Either he spake in irony and did not hold Elijah to be a prophet, or he gloried in putting the power of the king above that of Jehovah. In either case the insult was more against Elijah's God than against Elijah himself. Under these conditions Jehovah must defend His great name, which He did.) And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty."

But this only enraged the king the more and he sent out another fifty to meet with the same result. Verses 11 and 12. Then a third fifty were sent out, but this time the captain spoke with more respect; Verses 13 and 14. "And the angel of Jehovah said unto Elijah, Go down with him; be not afraid of him. And he arose and went down with him unto the king. And he said unto him; thus saith Jehovah, Forasmuch as thou hast sent mes-

sengers to enquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, is it because there is no God in Israel to enquire of his word? Therefore thou shalt not go down from the bed whither thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." And the next verse says, "So he died according to the word of Jehovah which Elijah had spoken."

Thus was Jehovah worship again vindicated and Elijah proven to be a true prophet. There is no harshness revealed in this incident as some suppose, for it is in the age when God's righteousness and justice are being set forth and vindicated. God's mercy frequently bursts forth in this age, but it remains for the next age to fully reveal it. Had this incident taken place in our time a different method might have been employed. But while methods may change, let us remember that truth and principles never change.

### XXIX.

Our reading today will be II Kings 2: 1-7. "And it came to pass when Jehovah would take up Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha to Golgal. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me as far as Bethel. And Elisha said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel. And the sons

of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head today? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee, for Jehovah hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came near to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head today? And he answered Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry here I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me to the Jordon. And he said, As Jehovah liveth, and thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood over against them afar off, and they two stood by the Jordon."

Possibly we have been wondering how Elijah employed his time during the intervals between his public appearances, especially during these last few years of his life. The answer, we think, is suggested in this reading. We have here the expression "sons of the prophets." The word "son" is a relative term, that is, it is a word used to express re-

lationship. Now the relationship spoken of here cannot mean that these young men were all the flesh and blood sons of men who were prophets. A few verses farther on we have Elisha calling Elijah "father." It seems that Elijah had gathered together bands of young men in at least three different places to stand under his direction for the prophetic office. They were called of God and were now in training for their great work. Possibly Elijah originated this idea of a school of the prophets—a prophets' college. At any rate he seems to have general superintendency over these two at Bethel and Jericho and is now paying them a last visit before his final departure.

There is a very comforting thought in this. Though Elijah lost his chance of bringing about the great and immediate reformation, which he might have been the chief agent in accomplishing, God still gave him the chance of doing a great work which should last through the ages and bring about somewhat of the same end, but in a different way. In these other methods he had been the rushing wind and the flaming fire, but in this method he is the still small voice. Slowly, quietly, but surely he is implanting in the minds of fifty, a hundred, yea, possibly several hundred young men, the principles of Je-

hovah worship for which he stood, to go out and teach them far and near after he had gone to his reward. Thus will some of the reformation be brought about and Jehovah worship be kept alive through the years. The schools or colleges were a great power for good for years to come. If Elijah had done nothing else, yet for this he would be great.

We notice next in this reading Elijah's attitude in approaching his translation. When he started on his journey around to these different schools he must have been conscious that it was his last visit. We cannot but be impressed with his calmness and his readiness. Knowing that he would soon be in eternity mingling with the saints and angels and mingling his voice in the praise of the God Whom he loved and defended, we might suppose he would have spent the time in special devotions. But instead he visits again the schools of the prophets and converses with his friend until the chariot carried him away. This teaches us that we should so live that we need make no extra preparation when death comes, and that we should all the time be doing only those things that would be properly in order if we were soon to be called to meet the Lord. We should have no planning outside of the will of the Lord, and if we are doing the will of the Lord the

announcement of the arrival of the death angel in a short time would not change that work. John Wesley was once asked what he would do if he knew he would have to die in three days. His reply was, "I should just do the work which I have already planned to do: ministering in one place, meeting my preachers in another, lodging in yet another, till the moment came that I was called to yield my spirit back to Him who gave it." And what better could he do if what he had planned was approved of God. How beautiful to live such a life and come to such an end.

The third point we will notice today is Elijah's test of Elisha's fidelity. Through several years of service Elisha had been faithful to Elijah and the affection between the two had grown deep. Elisha had stood with him thus far and would not now turn back. But he must be tested. At each place Elijah suggested that he remain behind and allow him to go on alone. But each time Elisha is firm and emphatic in declaring his intention of staying with him to the end. To me this is a beautiful scene to see this young man so faithful, so respectful to this old man. There is a certain respect that youth owes to age that is often forgotten and neglected. But not so with Elisha. Notice them. "And they two went on." Can you

not see them walking along the highway, communing as they go? Would you not like to know what they talked about? It was too sacred to record. All we know is the test and the reply. Such fidelity on Elisha's part no doubt awakened deep emotion on the part of Elijah, and their conversation was no doubt very tender as well as of great importance. We shall see later some of the results of this fidelity.

### XXX.

Our last reading in the book of Kings will be verses 8-12. You will remember that we left Elijah and Elisha standing by the river Jordan. We will take up the reading just where we left off. God had commanded Elijah to go over the Jordan and he knew there must be some way of getting across. All of God's commands carry with them the promise of the possibility of their fulfillment. Backed thus by a promise the old miracle working faith leaps to the front in Elijah, and we read: "And Elijah took his mantle and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground."

After crossing over the Jordan they went on out into the country and were soon lost to the view of the watching company on the

opposite bank. As they were communing together, suddenly Elijah turned and asked Elisha a surprising question. "And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee before I am taken from thee." Now what answer would you young people make under such circumstances? The question implies that Elijah would give anything that Elisha might ask if it were in his power, and he was living close to Jehovah so that great things were within his reach. Solomon had just such a chance at one time and you remember that he made a wise choice. Will Elisha do as well? There are many fine things, many pleasant things he might ask, but this is an important moment and he must request the very best thing.

Let us see what he asked for. "And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." This is a magnificent choice. Let us see just what it is. Through ignorance and carelessness there has been many different explanations of this "double portion." Some of our holiness people have seen in the "double" the two experiences and have given this as proof of the second blessing which Elisha received. But no such straining of scripture or careless accommodative interpretation does any credit

to any doctrine. That which Elisha received may be what we may receive as a second blessing, but the word "double" here has no such reference. Double means two times or twice as much and has reference to quantity and not to time. If we will turn to Deut. 21: 17 we will see what this "double portion" means. According to Israel's law of inheritance, the first born son was to be the father's successor in the care of the family and he was on account of this to be given a "double portion" of the estate.

Several years ago Elijah had thrown his mantle upon Elisha, thus calling him to the sacred office of a prophet. He was in the prophetic relationship. Elijah's first born, the first one in his school of prayer, and the appointed one to succeed. Elisha's request for a "double portion" is a request that Elijah, now that his departure is at hand, recognize him in this position as his first born and successor by giving him the portion which is his rightful inheritance as such, which portion is his equipment, his qualification to enter into the work as Elijah's successor. Hence his request was in accordance with his own need and with the divine arrangement. Do you wonder that I said he made a wise choice? Would that we might be as wise in all of our choices.

We have here a beautiful picture of Christ and the Church. The Church is in some sense Christ's first born. At any rate the Church is Christ's successor in the propagation of His glorious gospel. When He went away He commissioned them, or the Church to "Go and make disciples of all nations." The Church is to carry on the work which Christ began. And there is a rightful inheritance, an equipment, a double portion which belongs to the Church if she will claim it. Jesus, on the eve of His departure, as Elijah did with Elisha, gave the Church promise of this portion. He said, "And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city until ye be clothed with power from on high, for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence. But ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Whatever may have been Elisha's double portion we have it clearly here that ours is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Marvelous portion: the inheritance of the Church! Why is she not more zealous to enter her claim?

It is blessed that the Lord has provided

such excellent equipment for His people. We have only to look at Elisha's after-life as well as those of the Apostles after the day of Pentecost, to see that it was a sufficient provision. And Elijah was no more pleased and anxious for Elisha to receive this double portion than is Christ that His Church should receive the mighty baptism with the Holy Spirit. Let none of us miss it.

But there were conditions placed upon Elisha in the reply of Elijah. "And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." His receiving of the double portion was conditioned upon his seeing Elijah's translation. And this he was determined to do, for he had already declared three different times "I will not leave thee." Elisha was a determined, persistent seeker. And Christ requires just this of those who receive the double portion which he gives. But alas today so many who start, stop at some Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, or Jordon and never receive the promised enduement. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is only for those who want it bad enough to press on determinately even through the Jordon.

This condition also suggests intense watching, attention, expectation. How could he

see except he watch and expect. And watching and expecting implies believing. A careless, inattentive, indifferent soul never receives the blessing. But Elisha was watching and suddenly he saw and received. "And it came to pass as they still went on and talked, that behold there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it and he cried, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof! And he saw him no more." What a marvelous bit of history told it so few words. Who but God could do it and who would do it if they could. Any mere human author would here paint a masterpiece of word picturing. But not so with Him who has inspired this blessed Book.

This you will remember is the second translation. God gave one to an earlier age, and now he gives one to this prophetic age. In this he is revealing clearly to both ages that death does not end all, but that there is life in a world beyond. Our age had at its very beginning a translation in the ascension of Jesus and at its close is to be another translation in the rapture of the Church—the Lamb's Bride. Let us be ready to take part in this last one should it come in our day.

### XXXI.

When we closed yesterday you may have thought that we were through with the life of Elijah. If you did you were mistaken, for we are to see him again, death does not end all. He is referred to a number of times in the Scriptures subsequent to his translation. In the 9th and 10th chapters of II Kings his sayings are referred to. Jesus makes mention of one incident in his life and the Apostles of another. Paul and James both name him in their Epistles. Besides this he is referred to several times indirectly. Then beyond these references there is first the prophecy in Malachi, "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. And he shall turn the heart of the father to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." This is followed by its partial fulfillment in the coming of John the Baptist, the rugged wilderness preacher of repentance who came "in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him." Jesus bore testimony to this by

saying, "And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah, that is to come." But John himself, when asked if he were Elijah, said, "I am not." At first this seems to be a clear contradiction between John and Jesus, but it cannot be. Both statements must be true and the truth always harmonizes. The apparent contradiction may imply simply a partial fulfillment of the prophecy, that John both was and was not Elijah. He was Elijah in that he came in the spirit and power of Elijah as the forerunner of Christ's first advent, which was a partial fulfillment of that referred to in the prophecy. He was not Elijah in that there was a fuller fulfillment in connection with Christ's second advent. Elijah may yet have some great work to do in connection with the Christ and His coming glory. Elijah may be one of the "two witnesses" referred to in the book of Revelation.

But not only do we meet Elijah in Scripture reference and in John the Baptist, but we are introduced to him in person again on the Mount of Transfiguration. Let us read the account in full as given in Luke 9: 28-36: "And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings that he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as he was praying

the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling. And behold, there talked with him two men, who were Moses and Elijah; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they were parting from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah: not knowing what he said. And while he said these things there came a cloud, and overshadowed them; and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud saying, This is my Son, my chosen: hear ye him. And when the voice came, Jesus was found alone."

We have seen many wonderful things in Elijah's life, but they all, even Mount Carmel and his ascension, pale before the great glory of this scene on the Mount of Transfiguration. The instruction we have received from his earthly pilgrimage has been most salutary, but here his life transcends in fullness of revelation. This is the high place, the ze-

nith so far as the written record is concerned. We will call your attention to three points especially that are suggested here:

1. We have here clear and unquestionable evidence of the immortality of the soul and of the great glory that belongs to the righteous. Elijah's translation brought us much of evidence relative to the life of the spirit after death and of a resurrection. While he did not taste of death; that is, while his spirit and body knew no separation such as is the lot of most men, yet his translation was but the lifting of the curtain and giving us a glimpse into the future. Every generation of the human race thus far has had to suffer the separation of spirit and body with but the two rare exceptions, Enoch and Elijah, but there is coming a generation out of which there is to be a great many translations. We read of this in I Cor. 15: 51, 52: "Behold I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

A further description of this same event is given in I Thes. 4: 13-1: "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them

that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." Whether or not the spirit and body be separated for a time there is for all a continuous life, death does not end all. Elijah's translation teaches us this very forcibly and pictures to us the great translation or rapture that is yet to come. But if there should be any doubt as to the immortality of the soul yet remaining after Elijah's translation it is here on the Mount of Transfiguration all banished. Nine hundred years have passed by since it was said of Elijah, "And he saw him no more." But now he is seen in conscious existence, living, standing upon the mount in conversation with Jesus. He has been somewhere

alive all these nine hundred years that have been beyond the human view. And so it must be with all the other of earth's millions, that have slipped out beyond earth's vision by that mysterious event we call death. Because we live now we must live forever somewhere. Tremendous thought!

The record we are studying further says concerning Moses and Elijah that they "appeared in glory." We sometimes speak of heaven as "glory" or the "glory world," but the meaning is something different here, for they appeared upon earth. The meaning must be that supreme glory which is to be the future lot of all the righteous. Now we are at a loss to know how to proceed. This word "glory" is one of those peculiar words which brings to one an idea much larger than can be expressed or defined, a spiritual meaning which can be felt in ever increasing degrees, but never fully comprehended, let alone told. At any rate the future state of the righteous is to be one of supreme brightness, goodness, gladness, richness, — what better can we say than that which has been said—glory. He that misses this misses all that is worth while in time and in eternity.

## XXXII.

To continue with our talk where we left off yesterday, we bring you the second great suggestive teaching from Elijah's appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration. The future life of the righteous will afford them the opportunity of finishing work begun here. We are not sure that we have worded this just right in using the word "finishing." But there is such a thing as finishing and yet not finishing. Eternity is unending, hence I do not believe our work will ever be finished in the sense of ended. But we may use the word relatively, so we will let it stand as we have stated it. But what do we mean by this finishing of a work begun in this life in the next life? We shall see in a moment.

First, we will ask: What was the supreme purpose of Elijah's earthly life, what was his great mission? John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah, was to "prepare the way of the Lord." And was not this Elijah's mission also? Was it not the purpose of both the law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah) to prepare the way for the coming of Christ and witness to Him? Philip's testimony concerning Jesus was, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law

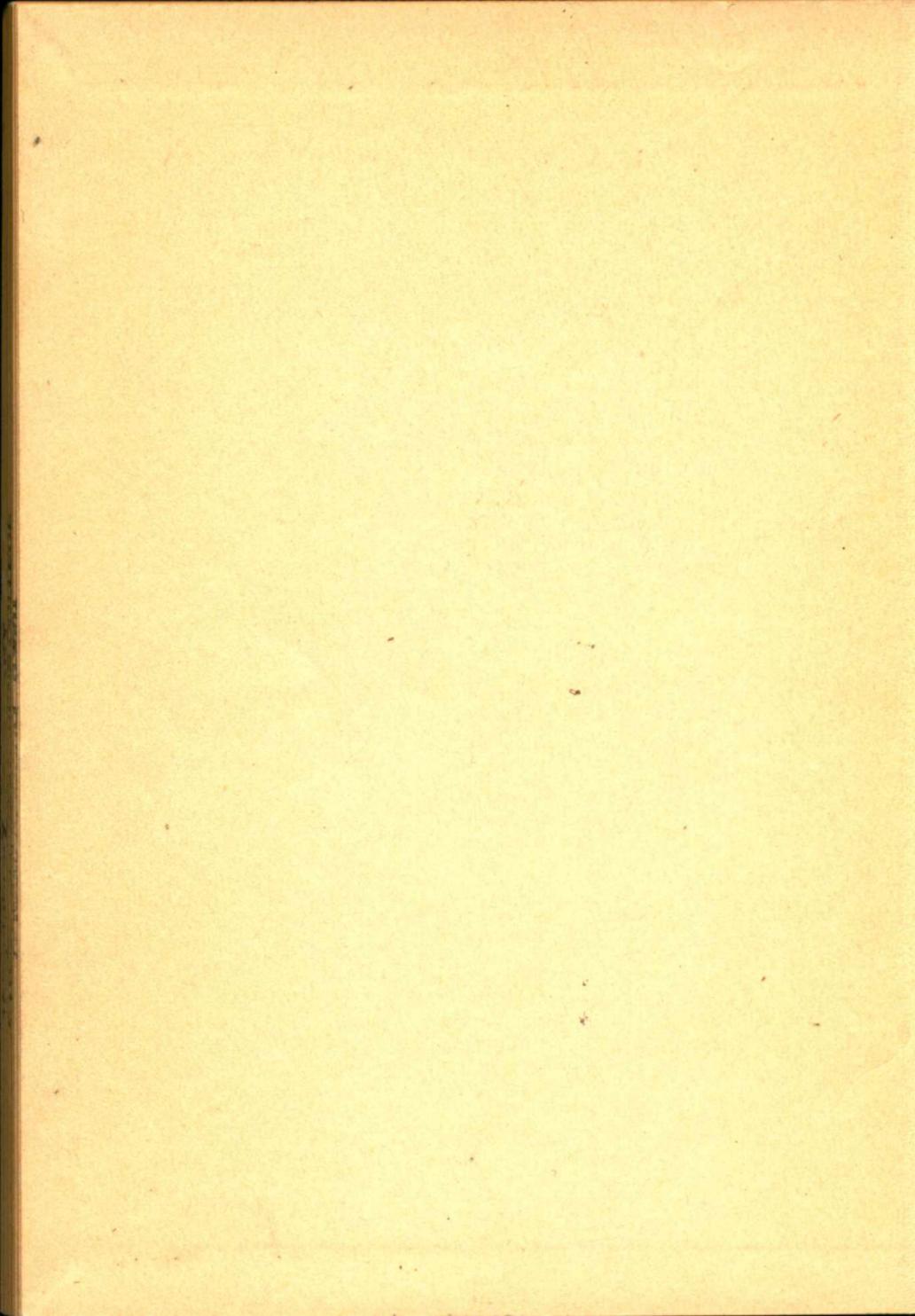
and the prophets wrote." Jesus said, "Moses wrote of me." Peter said, "To him bear all the prophets witness." The law and the prophets had a great work of witnessing to do, and they did it faithfully, so faithfully that the Jews all believed in a coming Messiah and were looking for Him with great intensity. But theirs is an incomplete witness without this transfiguration scene. The law and the prophets had witnessed to the fact that a Messiah was coming and the Jews believed it; now the Messiah has come, will they believe that it is He? It is one thing to believe in a coming Messiah, but quite another thing to believe that this man is the Messiah. Now that Messiah has come the law and the prophets must finish their witness and give clear testimony that this man born of the virgin Mary, Jesus of Nazareth, is the very Messiah of whom they spoke. This they did in the Transfiguration incident.

Now if the law and prophets had an opportunity to finish their work, why not we? Is there not here a message of hope? We said in another talk that man was immortal until his work was done if he was obedient to God. But is it not true in another sense that all men die with their work unfinished? If this life ends all, life only mocks us. Just as we

begin to acquire a little skill, to know a little something, the eye begins to dim, the fingers begin to stiffen with age, and the mind begins to weaken. This life seems to close just as we are getting started. Is this the end? Do we leave our work this way? Elijah upon the Mount of Transfiguration teaches us that we do not, but that in the future we go on with the good work of serving God, which we began here. Hence we may safely say, no real advancement in knowledge and righteousness that we gain here will ever be lost in the future. How faithfully then we should serve here and employ each moment in the search for truth and the development of character that will benefit us hereafter. How very encouraging it is to continue diligently our studies, our training, our service to the very end when we know it is to continue and be of service hereafter. Friends, students, we are not preparing for this life only, but for a long hereafter. Let us use faithfully the moments that are ours and crowd into them all that we can of improvement and usefulness.

The third point which we call to your attention here is that on the Mount of Transfiguration they knew one another. Peter seemed to know Moses and Elijah without an introduction.

On earth we find many strangers and most of us, especially if we are well-raised, feel a diffidence in the presence of strangers, and sometimes our bashfulness makes us feel very uncomfortable. But there is a land, a place to which there are no strangers and all will be at home. In heaven I expect to recognize Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Paul, John, the first time I see them and feel no strangeness in their presence. In heaven we shall all know one another and enjoy each other's company. Of course the chief joy will be the presence of God, but beside this there will be this fellowship of the saints. We have had a good time studying the life of Elijah together. It is the best we can do now. But how much better when we can see him and have him tell us face to face just how he felt while passing through these different experiences. And then, as Elijah did upon this Transfiguration Mount, we can talk with Jesus concerning things of deepest interest. We may know but little about heaven and the future but what little we do know is enough to make us want to go there. Would n't it be nice if as a school we could all meet there in some tomorrow? Shall we not all make the effort to be there?



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