

A DISCOURAGED REFORMER.

– JULY 24. – 1 KINGS 19:1-16. –

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." – Psa. 37:7.

SUDDEN was the reformation which apparently in one day overthrew the religion of Baal, and destroyed his priests, and revived the religion of Jehovah, and brought his prophet Elijah most prominently before Israel. But the influence of the slavery to superstition could not be easily eradicated. Reformation was not accomplished, but merely commenced by the test which the Lord had given at the hands of Elijah, in accepting the sacrifice with fire, and subsequently sending the promised rain. The people were lacking in those qualities of liberty and nobility of mind which are essential to a quick and thorough reformation. They lacked the courage of their convictions, and consequently were easily brought under the influence of that wicked woman, Jezebel, whose evil spirit and self-will were courageous enough to combat anything, everything.

Ahab, and all Israel, seemed to be thoroughly humbled and converted, but Jezebel, fearing not God and regarding not man, was furious when she learned that the priests of the religion which she had championed had been put to death. Ignoring the king and the people of Israel entirely, she constituted herself the executive, and sent word to Elijah that he might expect to die also, as the priests of Baal had died, within twenty-four hours. It is altogether probable that this was merely a threat, intended to drive Elijah out of the kingdom; so that she might the better overthrow the reform movement which he had so recently begun. Had she not become fearful that the killing of Elijah might have brought some disastrous result, either through an insurrection of the people or through a divine judgment, no doubt she would have ordered his assassination, instead of notifying him of what she would do twenty-four hours later.

The notification had what we presume was the designed effect: Elijah, thoroughly frightened and discouraged, fled panic-stricken before a woman; whereas but a few days before he had courageously faced the king, and reproved him. Ah, who will say that a woman has no power in the world! And her power for evil is commensurate with her power for good. No one can read the history of the world without seeing that woman has played an important part in all the important acts of the world's great drama. Her influences have been potent, both for good and evil, truth and error, God and Satan. Let not the sisters despise their opportunities, but let them seek to use them ever and always on the side of the good, the true, the pure, the noble, the holy, and in harmony with the Lord's Word.

Elijah fled to the kingdom of Judah. Utterly discouraged, he went alone into the wilderness, and prayed that he might die. How severe his disappointment was we may judge. There had been three and a half years of preparation for this reform movement, and it had been inaugurated under such favorable conditions, and at first with pronounced results; and now to have the entire matter fail was certainly very discouraging.

But the Lord did not even chide the Prophet for his timidity, etc. "He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust;" he makes allowance for our unintentional imperfections. God realized, better than did the Prophet, the physical exhaustion which he had experienced in connection with the great work which he had done within the past few days. So now, instead of chiding him, he was permitted to take rest in sleep and was provided miraculously with nourishment, and then sleep again; and, his vitality replenished, he arose refreshed, and ate again, before commencing a long journey and a long fast, of forty days.

The lesson here to us is God's care over those who are fully consecrated to him, and who seek to do his will. He cares for our bodily necessities as well as for our spiritual wants. "Your Father

knoweth what things ye have need of." Another lesson is found in the character of the food which the Lord supplied to Elijah. It would have been just as easy for Omnipotence [R2333 : page 207] to have provided dainties and luxuries for the prophet, but instead the provision was very simple – bread and water. The bread is called a "cake," for the customary food of that country then was, and still is, bread made about a quarter inch thick, and somewhat in the form of a pancake, baked on heated pebbles. Our Lord's promise to us, as his faithful people, is that our bread and water shall be sure; we are not to ask for more than this; whatever is received more should be accepted with thanksgiving and to the Lord's glory. Elijah's food also was a symbol of the Church's spiritual food: water is a symbol of truth – water of life; the unleavened bread is a symbol of Christ, whom we appropriate to our needs, for our refreshment through all the journey of life.

Having journeyed to Mount Horeb (that is, Mount Sinai) the Prophet seems to have been without any special aim or purpose before his mind, for he simply dwelt in a cave there. The Lord brings this fact that he had no definite purpose or aim in life, to the prophet's attention by the inquiry, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

Elijah told the Lord how discouraged he felt, and why, – that he had in his zeal for the Lord attempted to do all that he could, but that apparently everything was wrecked, and the people of Israel had lost their courage and their faith in the Lord, and that apparently nothing further could be done to help them. And the Lord proposed to give Elijah a little lesson on various methods of work – so he sent him out upon the mountain, and there exhibited his power to him in various forms: (1) "A great and strong wind rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rock before the Lord." Here was an illustration of power such as Elijah had probably never before seen – wind with a velocity to rend the rocks; yet notwithstanding all this power, this was not God; it was merely the power of God. (2) He showed him an earthquake – the power of God to lift and to shake the mountains; yet neither was

this the Lord; but an exhibition of his power. (3) A wonderful display of celestial fire, lightning, was next presented; but this was merely another grand manifestation of omnipotence. (4) Finally, in a great stillness, he heard a small voice speaking to him. Ah, here he recognized God. It had an influence upon him that all the manifestations of power did not have. He wrapped his face in his mantle, and fled back to the cave.

We are not informed what the voice said to Elijah, but we see that he learned the lesson designed, namely, that God has a way of appealing to the heart of man more powerfully than by the wonderful gymnastics and phenomena of nature. Perhaps the small voice told Elijah that he should have had greater faith in God, and should have remained at his post, notwithstanding the threat of Jezebel, and that the Lord could have delivered him from her power. However, the Lord spoke to him again, intimating that he was doing [R2334 : page 207] nothing, and not in a place to do anything – "What *doest* thou *here*?" Elijah made the same response as before, about his discouragement, but by this time he had learned lessons of the Lord's providential dealing, and was prepared for the mission given him. The commission indicated that there was to be a general change in the affairs of Israel – a new king instead of Ahab, and another prophet instead of Elijah. Hazael, who was anointed to be the new king over Syria was to be the divine agent in bringing the divine judgment upon Israel and its king, Ahab, thus compelling reform, and preparing for better conditions future.

The Lord's inquiry of Elijah may be variously emphasized, and may be applied fitly to each one of the Lord's consecrated people. It may be profitable to us if each one will ask himself the question, *What* doest thou here? What are we doing for the Lord and for his cause? What are we trying to do? Are we fleeing from the threats of the Lord's enemies? Are we discouraged in his service? Having begun in the spirit, are we hoping, contrary to his Word, to find earthly blessings and victories? Has the courage which enabled

us for a time to fight the good fight deserted us? After being courageous for the Lord and his truth and his people are we in danger of being put to flight by a woman or a man, or any other creature? Is the Lord's arm shortened that it cannot help us and deliver us? Shall we receive of his marks of kindness and provision for our necessities of spiritual food, yet doubt his care and ability to supervise our temporal interests, and our endeavors to render service to his cause. Let us gather a blessing of instruction from the experience of Elijah, as delineated in this lesson, lest we be weary and faint in our minds. Greater is he that is on our part than all they that be against us. He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation provide also a way of escape. His grace is sufficient for us. Nevertheless, for these things he will be inquired of by us, and he demands that we shall exercise faith in him corresponding to his mercies and manifold favors to us, for "without faith it is impossible to please God." – Heb. 11:6.

ELIJAH'S LESSON SYMBOLICALLY CONSIDERED.

Recognizing that Elijah was a typical character representative of Christ in the flesh (the complete Church, head and body), should lead us to scan every [R2334 : page 208] feature of his experience, to note, if possible, the correspondence to it in the experience of the Church. We have already pointed out that the discouragement of the Reformer and his flight represent the discouragement of many of God's people now, in view of the rising power of Papacy and the tendency of so-called *Protestants* to sympathy with Papal methods, and the general abandonment of faith in the "*ransom for all*" paid at Calvary.

It seems, therefore, not unreasonable to suppose that the *lesson* given to Elijah, just examined, represents a lesson which God has for his people now – to keep us at work undiscouraged or to revive the fainting. The lesson we see is this.

Protestants obtained from Papacy the false idea that the whole world must be converted during this age. Experience and statistics

prove that this is an impossible task; – that the population increases at a ten-fold more rapid ratio than even nominal conversions to Protestantism. Dismay and discouragement are followed by perplexity. But now as "meat in due season" the Lord gives his people an inkling respecting *his plan* for man's salvation and it restores confidence and zeal on the part of his people. He shows them that his power will first be manifested and that afterward he will speak to the people by the still small voice of the spirit of the truth which shall be surely heard.

The four exhibitions of the Lord, given to Elijah, represent, we believe, four manifestations, in which the Lord is about to reveal himself to mankind; – the first three of which will prepare men for the final one in which will come the desired blessing, to all the families of the earth. These are:

(1) The mighty winds rending the very rocks. Blowing winds seem to be used in Scripture as a symbol for wars. And Revelation (7:1-3) teaches us that the wars, whose dark clouds have threatened the civilized world so ominously for the past thirty years, have been miraculously hindered to give opportunity for "sealing" the Lord's consecrated people in their foreheads (intellectually) with the present truth. We are therefore to expect that when these winds of war shall be let loose, it will mean a cataclysm of warfare which shall divide kingdoms (mountains) – prefigured by the mighty wind shown to Elijah, which rent the rock. But God's Kingdom will not follow the epoch of war: the world will not thus be made ready for the reign of Immanuel. No, a further lesson will be needed and will be given. It is represented in

(2) An earthquake. Throughout the Scriptures an earthquake seems always to represent *revolution*, and it is not unreasonable to expect that an era of general warfare would so arouse the lower classes of Europe and so discontent them with their lot (and especially with the conditions which would follow such a war) that *revolution* would

be the next thing in order. If so, the earthquake made known to God's people is the one referred to in Revelation 16:18. But severe tho those revolutionary experiences will be to the world they are not sufficient to prepare men to hear the voice of God. It will require

(3) The fire from heaven; – an epoch of divine judgments and chastisements upon a maddened but unconverted world wild in anarchy, as other Scriptures show us. The results of their wars and revolutions and anarchy – the failure of their schemes and the lessons of divine judgments will however, have an exhausting and humbling effect and prepare mankind for God's revelation of himself in

(4) The still small voice. Yes, he who spoke to the winds and waves of the sea of Galilee will, in due time, "Speak peace to the peoples." He will speak with authority, commanding the observance of his long neglected law of Love. "And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hear that Prophet shall be cut off from among his people." – Acts 3:23.

Mark the harmony of Psalms 46 with these thoughts drawn from Elijah's lesson. After portraying in symbol the dashing of the kingdoms of this world, the shaking of society by revolution and the figurative melting of society under the fire of God's judgments, and after every hope of man in his own power is gone, the still small voice is heard, commanding, – "Be still and know that I am God! I will be exalted among the people, I will be exalted in the earth."

The difficulty with mankind is, in great part, their ignorance of God. And they fail to know him, partly at least because of their high opinion of their own wisdom and ability to get along without God. They will soon learn to the contrary and will then be willing to hearken to divine wisdom, and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain [kingdom] of the Lord's house. He shall teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths." – Isa. 2:3; Micah 4:2.

"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth." – Psa. 25:10.

The lesson to the Lord's people from these symbols is, that God has the power by which eventually he will "subdue all things unto himself," and bring order out of present confusion. We are to "wait patiently for him," and labor on diligently and fervently to the extent of our opportunities and abilities and to "hope to the end for the grace that shall be brought unto us at the revelation of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" for "in due season we shall reap if we faint not." – Gal. 6:9.
