

# Testimonies for the Church Volume Three :

## Page 252

### 28. The Laodicean Church

The message to the church of the Laodiceans is a startling denunciation, and is applicable to the people of God at the present time.

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

The Lord here shows us that the message to be borne to His people by ministers whom He has called to warn the people is not a peace-and-safety message. It is not merely theoretical, but practical in every particular. The people of God are represented in the message to the Laodiceans as in a position of carnal security. They are at ease, believing themselves to be in an exalted condition of spiritual attainments. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

What greater deception can come upon human minds than

253

a confidence that they are right when they are all wrong! The message of the True Witness finds the people of God in a sad deception, yet honest in that deception. They know not that their condition is deplorable in the sight of God. While those addressed are flattering themselves that they are in an exalted spiritual condition, the message of the True Witness breaks their security by the startling denunciation of their true condition of spiritual blindness, poverty, and wretchedness. The testimony, so cutting and severe, cannot be a mistake, for it is the True Witness who speaks, and His testimony must be correct.

It is difficult for those who feel secure in their attainments, and who believe themselves to be rich in spiritual knowledge, to receive the message which declares that they are deceived and in need of every spiritual grace. The unsanctified heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." I was shown that many are flattering themselves that they are good Christians, who have not a ray of light from Jesus. They have not a living experience for themselves in the divine life. They need a deep and thorough work of self-abasement before God before they will feel their true need of earnest, persevering effort to secure the precious graces of the Spirit.

God leads His people on step by step. The Christian life is a constant battle and a march. There is no rest from the warfare. It is by constant, unceasing effort that we maintain the victory over the temptations of Satan. As a people we are triumphing in the clearness and strength of the truth. We are fully sustained in our positions by an overwhelming amount of plain Scriptural testimony. But we are very much wanting in Bible humility, patience, faith, love, self-denial, watchfulness, and the spirit of sacrifice. We need to cultivate Bible holiness. Sin prevails among the people of God. The plain message of rebuke to the Laodiceans is not received. Many cling to their doubts and their darling sins while they are in so great a deception as to talk and feel that they are in need of nothing. They

254

think the testimony of the Spirit of God in reproof is uncalled for or that it does not mean them. Such are in the greatest need of the grace of God and spiritual discernment that they may discover their deficiency in spiritual knowledge. They lack almost every qualification necessary to perfect Christian character. They have not a practical knowledge of Bible truth, which leads to lowliness of life and a conformity of their will to the will of Christ. They are not living in obedience to all God's requirements.

It is not enough to merely profess to believe the truth. All the soldiers of the cross of Christ virtually obligate themselves to enter the crusade against the adversary of souls, to condemn wrong and sustain righteousness. But the message of the True Witness reveals the fact that a terrible deception is upon our people, which makes it necessary to come to them with warnings, to break their spiritual slumber, and arouse them to decided action.

In my last vision I was shown that even this decided message of the True Witness had not accomplished the design of God. The people slumber on in their sins. They continue to declare themselves rich and having need of nothing. Many inquire: Why are all these reproofs given? Why do the *Testimonies* continually charge us with backsliding and with grievous sins? We love the truth; we are prospering; we are in no need of these testimonies of warning and reproof. But let these murmurers see their hearts and compare their lives with the practical teachings of the Bible, let them humble their souls before God, let the grace of God illuminate the darkness, and the scales will fall from their eyes, and they will realize their true spiritual poverty and wretchedness. They will feel the necessity of buying gold, which is pure faith and love; white raiment, which is a spotless character made pure in the blood of their dear Redeemer; and eyesalve, which is the grace of God and which will give clear discernment of spiritual things and detect sin. These attainments are more precious than the gold of Ophir.

255

I have been shown that the greatest reason why the people of God are now found in this state of spiritual blindness is that they will not receive correction. Many have despised the reproofs and warnings given them. The True Witness condemns the lukewarm condition of the people of God, which gives Satan great power over them in this waiting, watching time. The selfish, the proud, and the lovers of sin are ever assailed with doubts. Satan has ability to suggest doubts and to devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue, a mark of intelligence in them, to be unbelieving and to question and quibble. Those who desire to doubt

will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and a teachable spirit, and all should decide from the weight of evidence.

Eternal life is of infinite value and will cost us all that we have. I was shown that we do not place a proper estimate upon eternal things. Everything worth possessing, even in this world, must be secured by effort, and sometimes by most painful sacrifice. And this is merely to obtain a perishable treasure. Shall we be less willing to endure conflict and toil, and to make earnest efforts and great sacrifices, to obtain a treasure which is of infinite value, and a life which will measure with that of the Infinite? Can heaven cost us too much?

Faith and love are golden treasures, elements that are greatly wanting among God's people. I have been shown that unbelief in the testimonies of warning, encouragement, and reproof is shutting away the light from God's people. Unbelief is closing their eyes so that they are ignorant of their true condition. The True Witness thus describes their blindness: "And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Faith in the soon coming of Christ is waning. "My Lord delayeth His coming" is not only said in the heart, but expressed in words and most decidedly in works. Stupidity in this watching time is sealing the senses of God's people as to

256

the signs of the times. The terrible iniquity which abounds calls for the greatest diligence and for the living testimony, to keep sin out of the church. Faith has been decreasing to a fearful degree, and it is only by exercise that it can increase.

In the rise of the third angel's message those who engaged in the work of God had something to venture; they had sacrifices to make. They started this work in poverty and suffered the greatest deprivations and reproach. They met determined opposition, which drove them to God in their necessity and kept their faith alive. Our present plan of systematic benevolence amply sustains our ministers, and there is no want and no call for the exercise of faith as to a support. Those who start out now to preach the truth have nothing to venture. They have no risks to run, no special sacrifices to make. The system of truth is made ready to their hand, and publications are provided for them, vindicating the truths they advance.

Some young men start out with no real sense of the exalted character of the work. They have no privations, hardships, or severe conflicts to meet, which would call for the exercise of faith. They do not cultivate practical self-denial and cherish a spirit of sacrifice. Some are becoming proud and lifted up, and have no real burden of the work upon them. The True Witness speaks to these ministers: "Be zealous therefore, and repent." Some of them are so lifted up in pride that they are really a hindrance and a curse to the precious cause of God. They do not exert a saving influence upon others. These men need to be thoroughly converted to God themselves and sanctified by the truths they present to others.

## **Pointed Testimonies in the Church**

Very many feel impatient and jealous because they are frequently disturbed with warnings and reproofs which keep their sins before them. Says the True Witness: "I know thy works." The motives, the purposes, the unbelief, the suspicions and jealousies may be hid from men, but not from Christ.

257

The True Witness comes as a counselor: "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

Those who are reproved by the Spirit of God should not rise up against the humble instrument. It is God, and not an erring mortal, who has spoken to save them from ruin. Those who despise the warning will be left in blindness to become self-deceived. But those who heed it, and zealously go about the work of separating their sins from them in order to have the needed graces, will be opening the door of their hearts that the dear Saviour may come in and dwell with them. This class you will ever find in perfect harmony with the testimony of the Spirit of God.

Ministers who are preaching present truth should not neglect the solemn message to the Laodiceans. The testimony of the True Witness is not a smooth message. The Lord does not say to them, You are about right; you have borne chastisement and reproof that you never deserved; you have been unnecessarily discouraged by severity; you are not guilty of the wrongs and sins for which you have been reproved.

The True Witness declares that when you suppose you are really in a good condition of prosperity you are in need of everything. It is not enough for ministers to present theoretical subjects; they should also present those subjects which are practical. They need to study the practical lessons that Christ gave His disciples and make a close application of the same to their own souls and to the people. Because Christ bears this rebuking testimony, shall we suppose that He is destitute of

258

tender love to His people? Oh, no! He who died to redeem man from death, loves with a divine love, and those whom He loves He rebukes. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." But many will not receive the message that Heaven in mercy sends them. They cannot endure to be told of their neglect of duty and of their wrongs, their selfishness, their pride and love of the world.

I was shown that God has laid upon my husband and me a special work, to bear a plain testimony to His people, and to cry aloud and spare not, to show the people their transgressions and the house of Israel their sins. But there is a class who will not receive the message of reproof, and

they raise their hands to shield those whom God would reprove and correct. These are ever found sympathizing with those whom God would make to feel their true poverty.

The word of the Lord, spoken through His servants, is received by many with questionings and fears. And many will defer their obedience to the warning and reproofs given, waiting till every shadow of uncertainty is removed from their minds. The unbelief that demands perfect knowledge will never yield to the evidence that God is pleased to give. He requires of His people faith that rests upon the weight of evidence, not upon perfect knowledge. Those followers of Christ who accept the light that God sends them must obey the voice of God speaking to them when there are many other voices crying out against it. It requires discernment to distinguish the voice of God.

Those who will not act when the Lord calls upon them, but who wait for more certain evidence and more favorable opportunities, will walk in darkness, for the light will be withdrawn. The evidence given one day, if rejected, may never be repeated.

Many are tempted in regard to our work and are calling it in question. Some, in their tempted condition, charge the difficulties and perplexities of the people of God to the testimonies of reproof that we have given them. They think the trouble is with the ones who bear the message of warning, who

**259**

point out the sins of the people and correct their errors. Many are deceived by the adversary of souls. They think that the labors of Brother and Sister White would be acceptable if they were not continually condemning wrong and reproofing sin. I was shown that God has laid this work upon us, and when we are hindered from meeting with His people and from bearing our testimony and counteracting the surmisings and jealousies of the unconsecrated, then Satan presses in his temptations very strongly. Those who have been ever on the questioning, doubting side feel at liberty to suggest their doubts and to insinuate their unbelief. Some have sanctimonious and apparently conscientious and very pious doubts, which they cautiously drop, but which have tenfold more power to strengthen those who are wrong, and to lessen our influence and weaken the confidence of God's people in our work, than if they came out more frankly. These poor souls, I saw, were deceived by Satan. They flatter themselves that they are all right, that they are in favor with God and are rich in spiritual discernment, when they are poor, blind, and wretched. They are doing the work of Satan, but think they have a zeal for God.

Some will not receive the testimony that God has given us to bear, flattering themselves that we may be deceived and that they may be right. They think that the people of God are not in need of plain dealing and of reproof, but that God is with them. These tempted ones, whose souls have ever been at war with the faithful reproofing of sin, would cry: Speak unto us smooth things. What disposition will these make of the message of the True Witness to the Laodiceans? There can be no deception here. This message must be borne to a lukewarm church by God's servants. It must arouse His people from their security and dangerous deception in regard to their real standing before God. This testimony, if received, will arouse to action and lead to self-abasement and confession of sins. The True Witness says: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot." And again, "As many as I love, I rebuke

and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Then comes the promise: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

The people of God must see their wrongs and arouse to zealous repentance and a putting away of those sins which have brought them into such a deplorable condition of poverty, blindness, wretchedness, and fearful deception. I was shown that the pointed testimony must live in the church. This alone will answer to the message to the Laodiceans. Wrongs must be reprov'd, sin must be called sin, and iniquity must be met promptly and decidedly, and put away from us as a people.

## **Fighting the Spirit of God**

Those who have a spirit of opposition to the work that for twenty-six years we have been pressed by the Spirit of God to do, and who would break down our testimony, I saw are not fighting against us, but against God, who has laid upon us the burden of a work that He has not given to others. Those who question and quibble, and think it a virtue to doubt, and who would discourage; those who have been the means of making our work hard and of weakening our faith, hope, and courage have been the ones to surmise evil, to insinuate suspicious charges, and to watch with jealousy for occasion against us. They take it for granted that because we have human weaknesses it is a positive evidence that we are wrong and that they are right. If they can find a semblance of anything that they can use to injure us they do it with a spirit of triumph and are ready to denounce our work of reprov'ing wrong and condemning sin as a harsh, dictatorial spirit.

But while we do not accept their version of our case as the reason for our afflictions, while we maintain that God has appointed us to a more trying work than He has others, we

acknowledge with humility of soul and with repentance that our faith and courage have been severely tried and that we have sometimes failed to trust wholly in Him who has appointed us our work. When we gather courage again, after sore disappointment and trials, we deeply regret that we ever distrusted God, gave way to human weaknesses, and permitted discouragement to cloud our faith and lessen our confidence in God. I have been shown that God's ancient servants suffered disappointments and discouragements as well as we poor mortals. We were in good company; nevertheless this did not excuse us.

As my husband has stood by my side to sustain me in my work and has borne a plain testimony in unison with the work of the Spirit of God, many have felt that it was he personally who was injuring them, when it was the Lord who laid upon him the burden and who was, through His servant, reprov'ing them and seeking to bring them where they would repent of their wrongs and have the favor of God.

Those whom God has chosen for an important work have ever been received with distrust and suspicion. Anciently, when Elijah was sent with a message from God to the people, they did not heed the warning. They thought him unnecessarily severe. They even thought that he must have lost his senses because he denounced them, the favored people of God, as sinners and their crimes as so aggravated that the judgments of God would awaken against them. Satan and his host have ever been arrayed against those who bear the message of warning and who reprove sins. The unconsecrated will also be united with the adversary of souls to make the work of God's faithful servants as hard as possible.

If my husband has been pressed beyond measure and has become discouraged and desponding, if we have at times seen nothing desirable in life that we should choose it, this is nothing strange or new. Elijah, one of God's great and mighty prophets, as he fled for his life from the rage of the infuriated Jezebel, a fugitive, weary and travel-worn, desired to die rather

262

than to live. His bitter disappointment in regard to Israel's faithfulness had crushed his spirits, and he felt that he could no longer put confidence in man. In the day of Job's affliction and darkness, he utters these words: "Let the day perish wherein I was born."

Those who are not accustomed to feel to the very depths, who have not stood under burdens as a cart beneath sheaves, and who have never had their interest identified so closely with the cause and work of God that it seems to be a part of their very being and dearer to them than life, cannot appreciate the feelings of my husband any more than Israel could appreciate the feelings of Elijah. We deeply regret being disheartened, whatever the circumstances may have been.

## **Ahab's Case a Warning**

Under the perverted rule of Ahab, Israel departed from God and corrupted their ways before Him. "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."

Ahab was weak in moral power. He did not have a high sense of sacred things; he was selfish and unprincipled. His union by marriage with a woman of decided character and positive temperament, who was devoted to idolatry, made them both special agents of Satan to lead the people of God into idolatry and terrible apostasy. The determined spirit of Jezebel molded the character of Ahab. His selfish nature was incapable of appreciating the mercies of God to His people and his obligation to God as the guardian and leader of Israel. The fear of God was daily growing less in Israel. The blasphemous

263

tokens of their blind idolatry were to be seen among the Israel of God There were none who dared to expose their lives by openly standing forth in opposition to the prevailing blasphemous idolatry. The altars of Baal, and the priests of Baal who sacrificed to the sun, moon, and stars, were conspicuous everywhere. They had consecrated temples and groves wherein the work of men's hands was placed to be worshiped. The benefits which God gave to this people called forth from them no gratitude to the Giver. All the bounties of heaven,--the running brooks, the streams of living waters, the gentle dew, the showers of rain which refreshed the earth and caused their fields to bring forth abundantly,--these they ascribed to the favor of their gods.

Elijah's faithful soul was grieved. His indignation was aroused, and he was jealous for the glory of God. He saw that Israel was plunged into fearful apostasy. And when he called to mind the great things that God had wrought for them, he was overwhelmed with grief and amazement. But all this was forgotten by the majority of the people. He went before the Lord, and, with his soul wrung with anguish, pleaded for Him to save His people if it must be by judgments. He pleaded with God to withhold from His ungrateful people dew and rain, the treasures of heaven, that apostate Israel might look in vain to their gods, their idols of gold, wood, and stone, the sun, moon, and stars, to water and enrich the earth, and cause it to bring forth plentifully. The Lord told Elijah that He had heard his prayer and would withhold dew and rain from His people until they should turn unto Him with repentance.

## **Achan's Sin and Punishment**

God had specially guarded His people against mingling with the idolatrous nations around them, lest their hearts should be deceived by the attractive groves and shrines, temples and altars, which were arranged in the most expensive, alluring manner to pervert the senses so that God would be supplanted in the minds of the people.

264

The city of Jericho was devoted to the most extravagant idolatry. The inhabitants were very wealthy, but all the riches that God had given them they counted as the gift of their gods. They had gold and silver in abundance; but, like the people before the Flood, they were corrupt and blasphemous, and insulted and provoked the God of heaven by their wicked works. God's judgments were awakened against Jericho. It was a stronghold. But the Captain of the Lord's host Himself came from heaven to lead the armies of heaven in an attack upon the city. Angels of God laid hold of the massive walls and brought them to the ground. God had said that the city of Jericho should be accursed and that all should perish except Rahab and her household. These should be saved because of the favor that Rahab showed the messengers of the Lord. The word of the Lord to the people was: "And ye, in anywise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it." "And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it."

God was very particular in regard to Jericho, lest the people should be charmed with the things that the inhabitants had worshiped and their hearts be diverted from God. He guarded His people

by most positive commands; yet notwithstanding the solemn injunction from God by the mouth of Joshua, Achan ventured to transgress. His covetousness led him to take of the treasures that God had forbidden him to touch because the curse of God was upon them. And because of this man's sin the Israel of God were as weak as water before their enemies.

Joshua and the elders of Israel were in great affliction. They lay before the ark of God in most abject humility because the Lord was wroth with His people. They prayed and wept before God. The Lord spoke to Joshua: "Get thee up; wherefore

265

liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you."

## **Duty to Reprove Sin**

I have been shown that God here illustrates how He regards sin among those who profess to be His commandment-keeping people. Those whom He has specially honored with witnessing the remarkable exhibitions of His power, as did ancient Israel, and who will even then venture to disregard His express directions, will be subjects of His wrath. He would teach His people that disobedience and sin are exceedingly offensive to Him and are not to be lightly regarded. He shows us that when His people are found in sin they should at once take decided measures to put that sin from them, that His frown may not rest upon them all. But if the sins of the people are passed over by those in responsible positions, His frown will be upon them, and the people of God, as a body, will be held responsible for those sins. In His dealings with His people in the past the Lord shows the necessity of purifying the church from wrongs. One sinner may diffuse darkness that will exclude the light of God from the entire congregation. When the people realize that darkness is settling upon them, and they do not know the cause, they should seek God earnestly, in great humility and self-abasement, until the wrongs which grieve His Spirit are searched out and put away.

The prejudice which has arisen against us because we have reprovved the wrongs that God has shown me existed, and the cry that has been raised of harshness and severity, are unjust. God bids us speak, and we will not be silent. If wrongs are

266

apparent among His people, and if the servants of God pass on indifferent to them, they virtually sustain and justify the sinner, and are alike guilty and will just as surely receive the displeasure of God; for they will be made responsible for the sins of the guilty. In vision I have been pointed to many instances where the displeasure of God has been incurred by a neglect on the part of His servants to deal with the wrongs and sins existing among them. Those who have excused these

wrongs have been thought by the people to be very amiable and lovely in disposition, simply because they shunned to discharge a plain Scriptural duty. The task was not agreeable to their feelings; therefore they avoided it.

The spirit of hatred which has existed with some because the wrongs among God's people have been reprov'd has brought blindness and a fearful deception upon their own souls, making it impossible for them to discriminate between right and wrong. They have put out their own spiritual eyesight. They may witness wrongs, but they do not feel as did Joshua and humble themselves because the danger of souls is felt by them.

The true people of God, who have the spirit of the work of the Lord and the salvation of souls at heart, will ever view sin in its real, sinful character. They will always be on the side of faithful and plain dealing with sins which easily beset the people of God. Especially in the closing work for the church, in the sealing time of the one hundred and forty-four thousand who are to stand without fault before the throne of God, will they feel most deeply the wrongs of God's professed people. This is forcibly set forth by the prophet's illustration of the last work under the figure of the men each having a slaughter weapon in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. "And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof."

267

Who are standing in the counsel of God at this time? Is it those who virtually excuse wrongs among the professed people of God and who murmur in their hearts, if not openly, against those who would reprove sin? Is it those who take their stand against them and sympathize with those who commit wrong? No, indeed! Unless they repent, and leave the work of Satan in oppressing those who have the burden of the work and in holding up the hands of sinners in Zion, they will never receive the mark of God's sealing approval. They will fall in the general destruction of the wicked, represented by the work of the five men bearing slaughter weapons. Mark this point with care: Those who receive the pure mark of truth, wrought in them by the power of the Holy Ghost, represented by a mark by the man in linen, are those "that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done" in the church. Their love for purity and the honor and glory of God is such, and they have so clear a view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, that they are represented as being in agony, even sighing and crying. Read the ninth chapter of Ezekiel.

But the general slaughter of all those who do not thus see the wide contrast between sin and righteousness, and do not feel as those do who stand in the counsel of God and receive the mark, is described in the order to the five men with slaughter weapons: "Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary."

In the case of Achan's sin God said to Joshua: "Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you." How does this instance compare with the course pursued by those who will not raise their voice against sin and wrong, but whose sympathies are ever found with those who trouble the camp of Israel with their sins? Said God to Joshua: "Thou canst

not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you." He pronounced

268

the punishment which would follow the transgression of His covenant.

Joshua then began a diligent search to find out the guilty one. He took Israel by their tribes, then by their families, and next individually; and Achan was designated as the guilty one. But that the matter might be plain to all Israel, that there should be no occasion given them to murmur and to say that the guiltless was made to suffer, Joshua used policy. He knew Achan was the transgressor and that he had concealed his sin and provoked God against His people. Joshua discreetly induced Achan to make confession of his sin, that God's honor and justice might be vindicated before Israel. "And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto Him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.

"And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the Valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones."

The Lord told Joshua that Achan had not only taken the things which He had positively charged them not to take, lest

269

they be accursed, but he had stolen and had also dissembled. The Lord said that Jericho and all its spoils should be consumed, except the gold and silver, which were to be reserved for the treasury of the Lord. The victory of taking Jericho was not obtained through warfare or the exposure of the people. The Captain of the Lord's host had led the armies of heaven. The battle was the Lord's; it was He who fought the battle. The children of Israel did not strike a blow. The victory and glory were the Lord's, and the spoils were His. He directed all to be consumed except the gold and silver, which He reserved for His treasury. Achan understood well the reserve made and that the treasures of gold and silver which he coveted were the Lord's. He stole from God's treasury for his own benefit.

## **Covetousness Among God's People**

I saw that many who profess to be keeping the commandments of God are appropriating to their own use the means which the Lord has entrusted to them and which should come into His treasury. They rob God in tithes and in offerings. They dissemble and withhold from Him to their own hurt. They bring leanness and poverty upon themselves and darkness upon the church because of their covetousness, their dissembling, and their robbing God in tithes and in offerings.

I saw that many souls will sink in darkness because of their covetousness. The plain, straight testimony must live in the church, or the curse of God will rest upon His people as surely as it did upon ancient Israel because of their sins. God holds His people, as a body, responsible for the sins existing in individuals among them. If the leaders of the church neglect to diligently search out the sins which bring the displeasure of God upon the body, they become responsible for these sins. But to deal with minds is the nicest work in which men ever engaged. All are not fitted to correct the erring. They have not wisdom to deal justly, while loving mercy. They are not inclined to see the necessity of mingling love and tender

**270**

compassion with faithful reproofs. Some are ever needlessly severe, and do not feel the necessity of the injunction of the apostle: "And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire."

There are many who do not have the discretion of Joshua and who have no special duty to search out wrongs and to deal promptly with the sins existing among them. Let not such hinder those who have the burden of this work upon them; let them not stand in the way of those who have this duty to do. Some make it a point to question and doubt and find fault because others do the work that God has not laid upon them. These stand directly in the way to hinder those upon whom God has laid the burden of reproofing and correcting prevailing sins in order that His frown may be turned away from His people. Should a case like Achan's be among us, there are many who would accuse those who might act the part of Joshua in searching out the wrong, of having a wicked, fault-finding spirit. God is not to be trifled with and His warnings disregarded with impunity by a perverse people.

I was shown that the manner of Achan's confession was similar to the confessions that some among us have made and will make. They hide their wrongs and refuse to make a voluntary confession until God searches them out, and then they acknowledge their sins. A few persons pass on in a course of wrong until they become hardened. They may even know that the church is burdened, as Achan knew that Israel were made weak before their enemies because of his guilt. Yet their consciences do not condemn them. They will not relieve the church by humbling their proud, rebellious hearts before God and putting away their wrongs. God's displeasure is upon His people, and He will not manifest His power in the midst of them while sins exist among them and are fostered by those in responsible positions.

Those who work in the fear of God to rid the church of hindrances and to correct grievous wrongs, that the people of God may see the necessity of abhorring sin and may prosper

**271**

in purity, and that the name of God may be glorified, will ever meet with resisting influences from the unconsecrated. Zephaniah thus describes the true state of this class and the terrible judgments that will come upon them:

"And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil." "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy: for He shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land."

## **Confessions Made Too Late**

When a crisis finally comes, as it surely will, and God speaks in behalf of His people, those who have sinned, those who have been a cloud of darkness and who have stood directly in the way of God's working for His people, may become alarmed at the length they have gone in murmuring and in bringing discouragement upon the cause; and, like Achan, becoming terrified, they may acknowledge that they have sinned. But their confessions are too late and are not of the right kind to benefit themselves, although they may relieve the cause of God. Such do not make their confessions because of a conviction of their true state and a sense of how displeasing their course has been to God. God may give this class another

272

test, another proving, and let them show that they are no better prepared to stand free from all rebellion and sin than before their confessions were made. They are inclined to be ever on the side of wrong. And when the call is made for those who will be on the Lord's side to make a decided move to vindicate the right, they will manifest their true position. Those who have been nearly all their lives controlled by a spirit as foreign to the Spirit of God as was Achan's will be very passive when the time comes for decided action on the part of all. They will not claim to be on either side. The power of Satan has so long held them that they seem blinded and have no inclination to stand in defense of right. If they do not take a determined course on the wrong side, it is not because they have a clear sense of the right, but because they dare not.

God will not be trifled with. It is in the time of conflict that the true colors should be flung to the breeze. It is then that the standard-bearers need to be firm and let their true position be known. It is then that the skill of every true soldier for the right is tested. Shirkers can never wear the laurels of victory. Those who are true and loyal will not conceal the fact, but will put heart and might into the work, and venture their all in the struggle, let the battle turn as it will. God is a sin-hating God. And those who encourage the sinner, saying, It is well with thee, God will curse.

Confessions of sin made at the right time to relieve the people of God will be accepted of Him. But there are those among us who will make confessions, as did Achan, too late to save themselves. God may prove them and give them another trial, for the sake of evidencing to His people that they will not endure one test, one proving of God. They are not in harmony with right. They despise the straight testimony that reaches the heart, and would rejoice to see everyone silenced who gives reproof.

273

## **Elijah Reproves Ahab**

The people of Israel had gradually lost their fear and reverence for God until His word through Joshua had no weight with them. "In his [Ahab's] days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun."

While Israel was apostatizing, Elijah remained a loyal and true prophet of God. His faithful soul was greatly distressed as he saw that unbelief and infidelity were fast separating the children of Israel from God, and he prayed that God would save His people. He entreated that the Lord would not wholly cast away His sinning people, but that He would by judgments if necessary arouse them to repentance and not permit them to go to still greater lengths in sin and thus provoke Him to destroy them as a nation.

The message of the Lord came to Elijah to go to Ahab with the denunciations of His judgments because of the sins of Israel. Elijah traveled day and night until he reached the palace of Ahab. He solicited no admission, and waited not to be formally announced. All unexpectedly to Ahab, Elijah stands before the astonished king of Samaria in the coarse garments usually worn by the prophets. He makes no apology for his abrupt appearance, without invitation; but, raising his hands to heaven, he solemnly affirms by the living God, who made the heavens and the earth, the judgments which would come upon Israel: "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

This startling denunciation of God's judgments because of the sins of Israel fell like a thunderbolt upon the apostate king. He seemed to be paralyzed with amazement and terror; and before he could recover from his astonishment, Elijah, without waiting to see the effect of his message, disappeared as suddenly as he came. His work was to speak the word of

274

woe from God, and he instantly withdrew. His word had locked up the treasures of heaven, and his word was the only key which could open them again.

The Lord knew that there was no safety for His servant among the children of Israel. He would not trust him with apostate Israel, but sent him to find an asylum among a heathen nation. He directed him to a woman who was a widow and who was in such poverty that she could barely sustain life with the most meager fare. A heathen woman living up to the best light she had was

in a more acceptable state with God than the widows of Israel, who had been blessed with special privileges and great light, and yet did not live according to the light which God had given them. As the Hebrews had rejected light, they were left in darkness, and God would not trust His servant among His people, who had provoked His divine anger.

Now there is an opportunity for apostate Ahab and pagan Jezebel to test the power of their gods and to prove the word of Elijah false. Jezebel's prophets are numbered by hundreds. Against them all stands Elijah, alone. His word has locked heaven. If Baal can give dew and rain, and cause vegetation to flourish; if he can cause the brooks and streams to flow on as usual, independent of the treasures of heaven in the showers of rain, then let the king of Israel worship him and the people say that he is God.

Elijah was a man subject to like passions as ourselves. His mission to Ahab, and the terrible denunciation to him of the judgments of God, required courage and faith. On his way to Samaria the perpetually flowing streams, the hills covered with verdure, the forests of stately, flourishing trees,--everything his eye rested upon flourishing in beauty and glory,-- would naturally suggest unbelief. How can all these things in nature, now so flourishing, be burned with drought? How can these streams that water the land and that have never been known to cease their flow, become dry? But Elijah did not cherish unbelief. He went forth on his mission at the peril of

275

his life. He fully believed that God would humble His apostate people and that through the visitation of His judgments He would bring them to humiliation and repentance. He ventured everything in the mission before him.

When Ahab recovers in a degree from his astonishment at the words of Elijah, the prophet is gone. He makes diligent inquiry for him, but no one has seen him or can give any information respecting him. Ahab informs Jezebel of the word of woe that Elijah has uttered in his presence, and her hatred against the prophet is expressed to the priests of Baal. They unite with her in denouncing and cursing the prophet of Jehovah. The news of the prophet's denunciations spread throughout the land, arousing the fears of some and the wrath of many.

After a few months the earth, unrefreshed by dew or rain, becomes dry, and vegetation withers. The streams that have never been known to cease their flow, decrease, and the brooks dry up. Jezebel's prophets offer sacrifices to their gods and call upon them night and day to refresh the earth by dew and rain. But the incantations and deceptions formerly practiced by them to deceive the people do not answer the purpose now. The priests have done everything to appease the anger of their gods; with a perseverance and zeal worthy of a better cause have they lingered around their pagan altars, while the flames of sacrifice burn on all the high places, and the fearful cries and entreaties of the priests of Baal are heard night after night through doomed Samaria. But the clouds do not appear in the heavens to cut off the burning rays of the sun. The word of Elijah stands firm, and nothing that Baal's priests can do will change it.

An entire year passes, and another commences, and yet there is no rain. The earth is parched as though a fire had passed over it. The flourishing fields are as the scorching desert. The air

becomes dry and suffocating, and the dust-storm blinds the eyes and nearly stops the breath. The groves of Baal are leafless, and the forest trees give no shade, but

276

appear as skeletons. Hunger and thirst are telling upon man and beast with fearful mortality.

All this evidence of God's justice and judgment does not awaken Israel to repentance. Jezebel is filled with insane madness. She will not bend nor yield to the God of heaven. Baal's prophets, Ahab, Jezebel, and nearly the whole of Israel, charge their calamity upon Elijah. Ahab has sent to every kingdom and nation in search of the strange prophet and has required an oath of the kingdoms and nations of Israel that they know nothing in regard to him. Elijah had locked heaven with his word and had taken the key with him, and he could not be found.

Jezebel then decides that as she cannot make Elijah feel her murderous power, she will be revenged by destroying the prophets of God in Israel. No one who professed to be a prophet of God shall live. This determined, infuriated woman executes her work of madness by slaying the Lord's prophets. Baal's priests and nearly all Israel are so far deluded that they think that if the prophets of God were slain, the calamity under which they are suffering would be averted.

But the second year passes, and the pitiless heavens give no rain. Drought and famine are doing their sad work, and yet the apostate Israelites do not humble their proud, sinful hearts before God; but they murmur and complain against the prophet of God who brought this dreadful state of things upon them. Fathers and mothers see their children perish, with no power to relieve them. And yet the people are in such terrible darkness that they cannot see that the justice of God is awakened against them because of their sins and that this terrible calamity is sent in mercy to them to save them from fully denying and forsaking the God of their fathers.

It cost Israel suffering and great affliction to be brought to that repentance that was necessary in order to recover their lost faith and a clear sense of their responsibility to God. Their apostasy was more dreadful than drought or famine. Elijah waited and prayed in faith through the long years of drought

277

and famine that the hearts of Israel, through their affliction, might be turned from their idolatry to allegiance to God. But notwithstanding all their sufferings, they stood firm in their idolatry and looked upon the prophet of God as the cause of their calamity. And if they could have had Elijah in their power they would have delivered him to Jezebel, that she might satisfy her revenge by taking his life. Because Elijah dared to utter the word of woe which God bade him, he made himself the object of their hatred. They could not see God's hand in the judgments under which they were suffering because of their sins, but charged them to the man Elijah. They abhorred not the sins which had brought them under the chastening rod, but hated the faithful prophet, God's instrument to denounce their sins and calamity.

"And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth." Elijah hesitates not to

start on his perilous journey. For three years he had been hated, and hunted from city to city by the mandate of the king, and the whole nation have given their oath that he cannot be found. And now, by the word of God, he is to present himself before Ahab.

During the apostasy of all Israel, and while his master is a worshiper of Baal, the governor of Ahab's house has proved faithful to God. At the risk of his own life he has preserved the prophets of God by hiding them by fifties in a cave and feeding them. While the servant of Ahab is searching throughout the kingdom for springs and brooks of water, Elijah presents himself before him. Obadiah revered the prophet of God, but as Elijah sends him with a message to the king, he is greatly terrified. He sees danger and death to himself and also to Elijah. He pleads earnestly that his life may not be sacrificed; but Elijah assures him with an oath that he will see Ahab that day. The prophet will not go to Ahab but as one of God's messengers, to command respect, and he sends a message by Obadiah: "Behold, Elijah is here." If Ahab wants to see

278

Elijah, he now has the opportunity to come to him. Elijah will not go to Ahab.

With astonishment mingled with terror the king hears the message that Elijah whom he fears and hates, is coming to meet him. He has long sought for the prophet that he might destroy him, and he knows that Elijah would not expose his life to come to him unless guarded or with some terrible denunciation. He remembers the withered arm of Jeroboam and decides that it is not safe to lift up his hand against the messenger of God. And with fear and trembling, and with a large retinue and an imposing display of armies, he hastens to meet Elijah. And as he meets face to face the man whom he has so long sought, he dares not harm him. The king, so passionate, and so filled with hatred against Elijah, seems to be powerless and unmanned in his presence. As he meets the prophet he cannot refrain from speaking the language of his heart: "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Elijah, indignant, and jealous for the honor and glory of God, answers the charge of Ahab with boldness: "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord."

The prophet, as God's messenger, had reproved the sins of the people, denouncing upon them the judgments of God because of their wickedness. And now, standing alone in conscious innocence, firm in his integrity, surrounded by the train of armed men, Elijah shows no timidity, neither does he show the least reverence to the king. The man whom God has talked with, and who has a clear sense of how God regards man in his sinful depravity, has no apology to make to Ahab nor homage to give him. As God's messenger, Elijah now commands and Ahab at once obeys as though Elijah were monarch and he the subject.

279

## **The Sacrifice on Mount Carmel**

Elijah demands a convocation at Carmel of all Israel and also of all the prophets of Baal. The awful solemnity in the looks of the prophet gives him the appearance of one standing in the presence of the Lord God of Israel. The condition of Israel in their apostasy demands a firm

demeanor, stern speech, and commanding authority. God prepares the message to fit the time and occasion. Sometimes He puts His Spirit upon His messengers to sound an alarm day and night, as did His messenger John: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Then, again, men of action are needed who will not be swerved from duty, but whose energy will arouse and demand, "Who is on the Lord's side?" let him come over with us. God will have a fitting message to meet His people in their varied conditions.

Swift messengers are sent throughout the kingdom with the message from Elijah. Representatives are sent from cities, towns, villages, and families. All seem in haste to answer the call, as though some wonderful miracle is to be performed. According to Elijah's command, Ahab gathers the prophets of Baal at Carmel. The heart of Israel's apostate leader is overawed, and he tremblingly follows the direction of the stern prophet of God.

The people assemble upon Mount Carmel, a place of beauty when the dew and rain fall upon it causing it to flourish; but now its beauty is languishing under the curse of God. Upon this mount, which was the excellency of groves and flowers, Baal's prophets had erected altars for their pagan worship. This mountain was conspicuous; it overlooked the surrounding countries and was in sight of a large portion of the kingdom. As God had been signally dishonored by the idolatrous worship carried on here, Elijah chose this as the most conspicuous place for the display of God's power and to vindicate His honor.

Jezebel's prophets, eight hundred and fifty in number, like

**280**

a regiment of soldiers prepared for battle, march out in a body with instrumental music and imposing display. But there is trembling in their hearts as they consider that at the word of this prophet of Jehovah the land of Israel has been destitute of dew and rain three years. They feel that some fearful crisis is at hand. They had trusted in their gods, but could not unsay the words of Elijah and prove him false. Their gods were indifferent to their frantic cries, prayers, and sacrifices.

Elijah, early in the morning, stands upon Mount Carmel, surrounded by apostate Israel and the prophets of Baal. A lone man in that vast multitude, he stands undaunted. He whom the whole kingdom has charged with its weight of woe is before them, unterrified and unattended by visible armies and imposing display. He stands, clad in his coarse garment, with awful solemnity in his countenance, as though fully aware of his sacred commission as the servant of God to execute His commands. Elijah fastens his eyes upon the highest ridge of mountains where had stood the altar of Jehovah when the mountain was covered with flourishing trees and flowers. The blight of God is now upon it; all the desolation of Israel is in full view of the neglected, torn-down altar of Jehovah, and in sight are the altars of Baal. Ahab stands at the head of the priests of Baal, and all wait in anxious, fearful expectation for the words of Elijah.

In the full light of the sun, surrounded by thousands,--men of war, prophets of Baal, and the monarch of Israel,--stands the defenseless man, Elijah, apparently alone, yet not alone. The most powerful host of heaven surrounds him. Angels who excel in strength have come from heaven to shield the faithful and righteous prophet. With stern and commanding voice Elijah cries: "How

long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." Not one in that vast assembly dared utter one word for God and show his loyalty to Jehovah.

What astonishing deception and fearful blindness had, like

**281**

a dark cloud, covered Israel! This blindness and apostasy had not closed about them suddenly; it had come upon them gradually as they had not heeded the word of reproof and warning which the Lord had sent to them because of their pride and their sins. And now, in this fearful crisis, in the presence of the idolatrous priests and the apostate king, they remained neutral. If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God.

All Israel is silent. Again the voice of Elijah is heard addressing them: "I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; 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 wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let Him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, 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 upon the altar which was made."

The proposition of Elijah is reasonable. The people dare not evade it, and they find courage to answer: The word is good. The prophets of Baal dare not dissent or evade the matter. God has directed this trial and has prepared confusion for the authors of idolatry and a signal triumph for His name. The priests of Baal dare not do otherwise than accept the conditions. With terror and guiltiness in their hearts, while outwardly bold and defiant, they rear their altar, lay on the wood

**282**

and the victim, and then begin their incantations, their chanting and bawling, characteristics of pagan worship. Their shrill cries re-echo through forests and mountains: "O Baal, hear us." The priests gather in an army about their altars, and with leaping, and writhing, and screaming, and stamping, and with unnatural gestures, and tearing their hair, and cutting their flesh, they manifest apparent sincerity.

The morning passes and noon comes, and yet there is no move of their gods in pity to Baal's priests, the deluded worshipers of idols. No voice answers their frantic cries. The priests are continually devising how, by deception, they can kindle a fire upon the altars and give the glory to Baal. But the firm eye of Elijah watches every motion. Eight hundred voices become hoarse. Their garments are covered with blood, and yet their frantic excitement does not abate. Their

pleadings are mingled with cursings to their sun-god that he does not send fire for their altars. Elijah stands by, watching with eagle eye lest any deception should be practiced; for he knows that if, by any device, they could kindle their altar fire, he would be torn in pieces upon the spot. He wishes to show the people the folly of their doubting and halting between two opinions when they have the wonderful works of God's majestic power in their behalf and innumerable evidences of His infinite mercies and loving-kindness toward them.

"And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."

How gladly would Satan, who fell like lightning from heaven, come to the help of those whom he has deceived, whose minds he has controlled, and who are fully devoted to his

**283**

service. Gladly would he send the lightning and kindle their sacrifices; but Jehovah has set Satan's bounds. He has restrained his power, and all his devices cannot convey one spark to Baal's altars. Evening draws on. The prophets of Baal are weary, faint, and confused. One suggests one thing, and one another, until they cease their efforts. Their shrieks and curses no longer resound over Mount Carmel. With weakness and despair they retire from the contest.

The people have witnessed the terrible demonstrations of the unreasonable, frantic priests. They have beheld their leaping upon the altar as though they would grasp the burning rays from the sun to serve their altars. They have become tired of the exhibitions of demonism, of pagan idolatry; and they feel earnest and anxious to hear what Elijah will speak.

Elijah's turn has now come. "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 the Lord that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord: 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 him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, 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. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, 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 Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the

**284**

Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God."

Elijah at the hour of evening sacrifice repairs the altar of God which the apostasy of Israel has allowed the priests of Baal to tear down. He does not call upon one of the people to aid him in his laborious work. The altars of Baal are all prepared; but he turns to the broken-down altar of God, which is more sacred and precious to him in its unsightly ruins than all the magnificent altars of Baal.

Elijah respects the Lord's covenant with His people, although they have apostatized. With calmness and solemnity he repairs the broken-down altar with twelve stones, according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel. The disappointed priests of Baal, wearied with their vain, frenzied efforts, are sitting or lying prostrate on the ground, waiting to see what Elijah will do. They are filled with fear and hatred toward the prophet for proposing a test which has exposed their weakness and the inefficiency of their gods.

The people of Israel stand spellbound, pale, anxious, and almost breathless with awe, while Elijah calls upon Jehovah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. The people have witnessed the fanatical, unreasonable frenzy of the prophets of Baal. In contrast they are now privileged to witness the calm, awe-inspiring deportment of Elijah. He reminds the people of their degeneracy, which has awakened the wrath of God against them, and then calls upon them to humble their hearts and turn to the God of their fathers, that His curse may be removed from them. Ahab and his idolatrous priests are looking on with amazement mingled with terror. They await the result with anxious, solemn silence.

After the victim is laid upon the altar, he commands the people to flood the sacrifice and the altar with water, and to fill the trench round about the altar. He then reverentially

285

bows before the unseen God, raises his hands toward heaven, and offers a calm and simple prayer, unattended with violent gestures or contortions of the body. No shrieks resound over Carmel's height. A solemn silence, which is oppressive to the priests of Baal, rests upon all. In his prayer, Elijah makes use of no extravagant expressions. He prays to Jehovah as though He were nigh, witnessing the whole scene, and hearing his sincere, fervent, yet simple prayer. Baal's priests have screamed, and foamed, and leaped, and prayed, very long-- from morning until near evening. Elijah's prayer is very short, earnest, reverential, and sincere. No sooner is that prayer uttered than flames of fire descend from heaven in a distinct manner, like a brilliant flash of lightning, kindling the wood for sacrifice and consuming the victim, licking up the water in the trench and consuming even the stones of the altar. The brilliancy of the blaze illumines the mountain and is painful to the eyes of the multitude. The people of the kingdom of Israel not gathered upon the mount are watching with interest those there assembled. As the fire descends, they witness it and are amazed at the sight. It resembles the pillar of fire at the Red Sea, which by night separated the children of Israel from the Egyptian host.

The people upon the mountain prostrate themselves in terror and awe before the unseen God. They cannot look upon the bright consuming fire sent from heaven. They fear that they will be consumed in their apostasy and sins, and cry out with one voice, which resounds over the mountain and echoes to the plains below with terrible distinctness: "The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God." Israel is at last aroused and undeceived. They see their sin and how greatly they have dishonored God. Their anger is aroused against the prophets of Baal. With terror, Ahab and Baal's priests witness the wonderful exhibition of Jehovah's power. Again the voice of Elijah is heard in startling words of command to the people: "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." The people are ready to obey his word. They seize the false prophets

286

who have deluded them, and bring them to the brook Kishon, and there, with his own hand, Elijah slays these idolatrous priests.

The judgments of God having been executed upon the false priests, the people having confessed their sins and acknowledged their fathers' God, the withering curse of God is now to be withdrawn, and He is to renew His blessings unto His people and again refresh the earth with dew and rain.

Elijah addresses Ahab: "Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain." While Ahab went up to feast, Elijah went up from the fearful sacrifice to the top of Mount Carmel to pray. His work of slaying the pagan priests had not unfitted him for the solemn exercise of prayer. He had performed the will of God. After he had, as God's instrument, done what he could to remove the cause of Israel's apostasy by slaying the idolatrous priests, he could do no more. He then intercedes in behalf of sinning, apostate Israel. In the most painful position, his face bowed between his knees, he most earnestly supplicates God to send rain. Six times in succession he sends his servant to see if there is any visible token that God has heard his prayer. He does not become impatient and faithless because the Lord does not immediately give the token that his prayer is heard. He continues in earnest prayer, sending his servant seven times to see if God has granted any signal. His servant returns the sixth time from his outlook toward the sea with the discouraging report that there is no sign of clouds forming in the brassy heavens. The seventh time he informs Elijah that there is a small cloud to be seen, about the size of a man's hand. This is enough to satisfy the faith of Elijah. He does not wait for the heavens to gather blackness, to make the matter sure. In that small, rising cloud his faith hears the sound of abundance of rain. His works are in accordance with his faith. He sends a message to Ahab by his servant: "Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not."

287

## **Elijah's Humility**

Here Elijah ventured something upon his faith. He did not wait for sight. "And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel."

Elijah had passed through great excitement and labor during the day; but the Spirit of the Lord came upon him because he had been obedient and had done His will in executing the idolatrous priests. Some will be ready to say: What a hard, cruel man Elijah must have been! And anyone who defends the honor of God at any risk will bring censure and condemnation upon himself from a large class.

The rain began to descend. It was night, and the blinding rain prevented Ahab from seeing his course. Elijah, nerved by the Spirit and power of God, girded his coarse garment about him and ran before the chariot of Ahab, guiding his course to the entrance of the city. The prophet of God had humiliated Ahab before his people. He had slain his idolatrous priests, and now he wished to show to Israel that he acknowledged Ahab as his king. As an act of special homage he guided his chariot, running before it to the entrance of the gate of the city.

Here is a lesson for young men who profess to be servants of God, bearing His message, who are exalted in their own estimation. They can trace nothing remarkable in their experience, as could Elijah, yet they feel above performing duties which to them appear menial. They will not come down from their ministerial dignity to do needful service, fearing that they will be doing the work of a servant. All such should learn from the example of Elijah. His word locked the treasures of heaven, the dew and rain, from the earth three years. His word alone was the key to unlock heaven and bring showers

288

of rain. He was honored of God as he offered his simple prayer in the presence of the king and the thousands of Israel, in answer to which fire flashed from heaven and kindled the fire upon the altar of sacrifice. His hand executed the judgment of God in slaying eight hundred and fifty priests of Baal; and yet, after the exhausting toil and most signal triumph of the day, he who could bring clouds and rain and fire from heaven was willing to perform the service of a menial and run before the chariot of Ahab in the darkness and in the wind and rain to serve the sovereign whom he had not feared to rebuke to his face because of his sins and crimes. The king passed within the gates. Elijah wrapped himself in his mantle and lay upon the bare earth.

## **Elijah in Despondency**

After Elijah had shown such undaunted courage in a contest between life and death, after he had triumphed over the king, the priests, and the people, we would naturally suppose that he would never give way to despondency or be awed into timidity.

After his first appearance to Ahab, denouncing upon him the judgments of God because of his and Israel's apostasy, God directed his course from Jezebel's power to a place of safety in the mountains, by the brook Cherith. There He honored Elijah by sending food to him morning and evening by an angel of heaven. Then, as the brook became dry, He sent him to the widow of Sarepta, and wrought a miracle daily to keep the widow's family and Elijah in food. After he had been blessed with evidences of such love and care from God, we would suppose that Elijah would never distrust Him. But the apostle tells us that he was a man of like passions as we, and subject, as we are, to temptations.

Ahab related to his wife the wonderful events of the day and the marvelous exhibitions of the power of God showing that Jehovah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, was God; also that Elijah had slain the prophets of Baal. At this,

**289**

Jezebel, who was hardened in sin, became infuriated. Bold, defiant, and determined in her idolatry, she declared to Ahab that Elijah should not live.

That night a messenger aroused the weary prophet and delivered the word of Jezebel, given in the name of her pagan gods, that she would, in the presence of Israel, do to Elijah as he had done to the priests of Baal. Elijah should have met this threat and oath of Jezebel with an appeal for protection to the God of heaven, who had commissioned him to do the work he had done. He should have told the messenger that the God in whom he trusted would be his protector against the hatred and threats of Jezebel. But the faith and courage of Elijah seem to forsake him. He starts up from his slumbers bewildered. The rain is pouring from the heavens, and darkness is on every side. He loses sight of God and flees for his life as though the avenger of blood were close behind him. He leaves his servant behind him on the way, and in the morning he is far from the habitations of men, upon a dreary desert alone.

"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 Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the Lord 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 meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?"

**290**

Elijah should have trusted in God, who had warned him when to flee and where to find an asylum from the hatred of Jezebel, secure from the diligent search of Ahab. The Lord had not warned him at this time to flee. He had not waited for the Lord to speak to him. He moved rashly. Had he waited with faith and patience, God would have shielded His servant and would have given him another signal victory in Israel by sending His judgments upon Jezebel.

Weary and prostrate, Elijah sits down to rest. He is discouraged and feels like murmuring. He says, "Now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." He feels that life is no more desirable. He expected after the signal display of God's power in the presence of Israel that they would be true and faithful to God. He expected that Jezebel would no longer have influence over the mind of Ahab and that there would be a general revolution in the kingdom of Israel. And when the threatening message from Jezebel was delivered to him, he forgot that God

was the same all-powerful and pitiful God that He was when he prayed to Him for fire from heaven, and it came, and for rain, and it came. God had granted every request; yet Elijah is a fugitive far from the homes of men, and he wishes never to look upon man again.

How did God look upon His suffering servant? Did He for sake him because despondency and despair had seized him? Oh, no. Elijah was prostrated with discouragement. All day had he toiled without food. When he guided the chariot of Ahab, running before it to the gate of the city, he was strong of courage. He had high hopes that Israel as a nation would return to their allegiance to God and be reinstated in His favor. But the reaction which frequently follows elevation of faith and marked and glorious success, was pressing upon Elijah. He was exalted to Pisgah's top, to be humiliated to the lowliest valley in faith and feeling. But God's eye was still upon His servant. He loved him no less when he felt brokenhearted and forsaken of God and man than when, in answer to his prayer, fire flashed from heaven illuminating Carmel.

## 291

Those who have not borne weighty responsibilities, or who have not been accustomed to feel very deeply, cannot understand the feelings of Elijah and are not prepared to give him the tender sympathy he deserves. God knows and can read the heart's sore anguish under temptation and sore conflict.

As Elijah sleeps under the juniper tree, a soft touch and pleasant voice arouse him. He starts at once in his terror, as if to flee, as though the enemy who was in pursuit of his life had indeed found him. But in the pitying face of love bending over him he sees, not the face of an enemy, but of a friend. An angel has been sent with food from heaven to sustain the faithful servant of God. His voice says to Elijah: "Arise and eat." After Elijah had partaken of the refreshment prepared for him, he again slumbered. A second time the angel of God ministers to the wants of Elijah. He touches the weary, exhausted man, and in pitying tenderness says to him: "Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee." Elijah was strengthened and pursued his journey to Horeb. He was in a wilderness. At night he lodged in a cave for protection from the wild beasts.

Here God, through one of His angels, met with Elijah, and inquired of him: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" I sent you to the brook Cherith, I sent you to the widow of Sarepta, I sent you to Samaria with a message to Ahab, but who sent you this long journey into the wilderness? And what errand have you here? Elijah mourns out the bitterness of his soul to the Lord: "And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord 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 the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the

## 292

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 entering in 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 the Lord God of hosts: because 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."

Then the Lord manifests Himself to Elijah, showing him that quiet trust and firm reliance upon God will ever find Him a present help in time of need.

I have been shown that my husband has erred in giving way to despondency and distrust of God. Time and again has God revealed Himself to him by remarkable evidences of His care, love, and power. But when he has seen that his interest and jealousy for God and His cause have not been understood or appreciated, he has at times given way to discouragement and to despair. God has given my husband and me a special and important work to do in His cause, to reprove and counsel His people. When we see our reproofs slighted and are repaid with hatred instead of sympathy, then we have frequently let go our faith and trust in the God of Israel; and, like Elijah, we have yielded to despondency and despair. Here has been the great error in the life of my husband--his becoming discouraged because his brethren have brought trials upon him instead of helping him. And when his brethren see, in the sadness and despondency of my husband, the effect of their unbelief and lack of sympathy, some are prepared to triumph over him and take advantage of his discouraged state, and feel that, after all, God cannot be with Brother White or he would not manifest weakness in this direction. I refer such to the work of Elijah and to his despondency and discouragements. Elijah, although a prophet of God, was a man subject to like passions as we are. We have the frailties of mortal feelings to contend with. But if we trust in God,

**293**

He will never leave nor forsake us. Under all circumstances we may have firm trust in God, that He will never leave nor forsake us while we preserve our integrity.

My husband may take courage in his affliction, that he has a pitying heavenly Father who reads the motives and understands the purposes of the soul. Those who stand in the front of the conflict, and who are reined up by the Spirit of God to do a special work for Him, will frequently feel a reaction when the pressure is removed, and despondency may sometimes press them hard and shake the most heroic faith and weaken the most steadfast minds. God understands all our weaknesses. He can pity and love when the hearts of men may be as hard as flint. To wait patiently and trust in God when everything looks dark is the lesson that my husband must learn more fully. God will not fail him in his integrity.

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