ELIJAH

"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel Sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. And when Elijah saw that, he arose and went for his life . . . and he came unto a cave, and lodged there ." (vv. 1-9). And in that one desperate flight, poor Elijah ruined the work of a lifetime.

A Great Ministry Ruined

Language is inadequate to describe the greatness of the opportunity presented on Mount Carmel. The prophet had suddenly appeared before the nation, and his challenging faith had cornered the opposition. The dramatic intercession of the prophets of Baal had ended in disappointment before Elijah repaired the altar of God and cried to his Creator. The falling fire struck fear into the hearts of the entire congregation, and everyone present had cried, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God" (1 Kings 18:39). The enemies of Israel had been ruthlessly slain, and the way opened for national repentance. The showers of rain confirmed the evidence of the hillside, and everywhere, receptive hearts awaited the leadership of the man so signally honoured by God. True revival was never nearer than it was in those moments: but when victory was within the grasp of God's great man, he threw it away. The threat of Jezebel paralysed his faith, and he fled into obscurity. And for weeks after that sad day, the people talked of his failure, and many of them laughed the prophet to scorn. Poor Elijah!

A Great Mistake Rebuked

"What doest thou here, Elijah? " (19:9). The gentle whisper disturbed the silence of the cave, and the despondent prophet lifted his head. He was not alone! "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 J even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (v. 10). Poor man! where is the courage that rebuked a nation? Alas, it has gone up in flames! There was no mention of Jezebel, and no reference to his tragic blunder. "And God said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord." Elijah witnessed the great manifestations of God in nature, but remained unmoved until he heard the sound of a still small voice. Then he wrapped his head in his mantle and went forth to stand in the mouth of the cave. 'And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? " (v. 13). Are you a preacher? Then what doest thou here? Were you called to minister to Israel? Then what doest thou here? Are you a prophet of the Highest? Then what doest THOU - HERE? "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed \mbox{him} "-and you say that you are the only saint left in Israel-Oh, Elijah!

The kindness of God is beyond human comprehension. Elijah could never again urge Israel to look to God, and was therefore instructed to call and commission his successor. "So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him . . . Then Elisha arose, and went after Elijah and ministered unto him" (vv. 19-21). And these two men were still together when God greatly honoured His prophet. Human failures cannot change the kindness of God. "And it came to pass, as they still went on and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire ... and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kings 2:11). God graciously promoted His servant to higher realms. Instead of ministering for the Lord, Elijah had the honour of ministering to the Lord. He was sent to the mount of transfiguration to commune with the Lord Jesus.

Grace, grace: God's grace; Grace that can pardon and cleanse within. Grace, grace: God's grace: Grace that is greater than all our sin

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