

A VOICE WITH FOUR MESSAGES NO. 3171

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1909
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 31, 1873

*“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 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?
1 Kings 19:11-13*

[Another sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon verses 12 and 13, is #1668, The Still Small Voice]

THERE may be a great deal more teaching in what Elijah saw and heard in the cave than I shall be able to bring out this evening. Indeed, I shall not attempt to exhaust the very wonderful practical sermon which was preached to the prophet on the side of mount Horeb, but in the still small voice I hear four messages.

I. And first, THERE WAS A MESSAGE TO ELIJAH HIMSELF.

He had, apparently, conceived the idea that the whole nation of Israel would be converted from idolatry by one grand display of divine power. If it could once be indisputably proved that Baal was not God and that JEHOVAH alone was God, then he thought that, surely, the people would be convinced, and would loyally return to their old covenant with the one living and true God. But he found that it was not so.

Although the fire of the Lord had fallen from heaven and had consumed Elijah's sacrifice, burned up the very stones of the altar, and licked up the water in the trench, and although the people had cried out, "JEHOVAH is God! JEHOVAH is God!" yet for all that they forsook not Baal, nor the other idols that had been set up in the groves and on the high places—still the sun-god was worshipped and the God who made the sun was forgotten.

Elijah seems also to have thought that a display of terrible severity was necessary to bring these people back to their allegiance to JEHOVAH. Hence he took the prophets of Baal and the prophets of the groves and slew them at the brook Kishon, not suffering any of them to escape. It must have been stern work for him to be the executioner of God's justice, but he did it with a sacred zest, feeling that he was only slaying those who were the enemies of God—and that every blow he struck at those idolatrous priests was struck for the honor and glory of JEHOVAH.

Yet that stern severity did not succeed as Elijah had expected it would, and one result of it was that Jezebel sent to threaten him with death. I think that, possibly, Elijah desired that God would inflict upon the people some still severer judgment. Yet I know not what calamities he would have had them suffer, for there had already been dire distress through the three years of drought. Yet this had not driven the people from their idolatry. Perhaps Elijah would have had fire and sword sent among them, to drive them from their idols, and bring them back to the worship of JEHOVAH.

But God here teaches Elijah that this is not His way of working. He does use the wind, and the earthquake, and the fire when He pleases, but these are not His most effective instruments. He does not do His mightiest works by them, but in quite another way—by a still small voice. Thus the Lord

practically said to Elijah, “Gentler means must be tried with these rebellious people. My glory will be promoted among them by other methods than you have as yet used, or than I have used by you as My servant. I have let them see that I am Lord and Master of the terrible forces of nature, I have convinced them that I am a great God who can smite them as much as I please, but I have not thereby won their hearts—there must be other methods used. The still small voice must be tried.”

You have, perhaps, noticed that Elijah’s later ministry—although it still remained one of fire, and although his was still the voice that cried in the wilderness, as John the Baptist’s was afterwards to do, “Make straight in the desert a highway for our God”—became, on the whole, much more gentle and tender.

He seems to have devoted himself to the work of perpetuating the ministry among the people by founding schools of the prophets, for the young men, who were called the sons of the prophets. They evidently recognized him as their master and head, as they recognized Elisha after Elijah had been carried up to heaven.

The still small voice of prophetic teaching was to be tried. Judgments had apparently failed, for the hard hearts of the people had not been softened and subdued. Men had been terrified, but they had not been converted. They had been frightened out of their sins for a time, but they had speedily returned to them as swine that might be washed would soon be again wallowing in the mire.

Satan had been dislodged from them for a little while, but he had returned and brought other devils with him—and so made his possession of them the more secure. Now other methods were to be tried—gentler, softer, quieter methods, which would prove to be more efficient. I think that was the message of God to Elijah through the still small voice.

II. Secondly, if I understand that voice aright, THERE WAS A MESSAGE IN IT TO ALL GOD’S MINISTERS.

To all of us who preach the Word, or who try to teach it in any way, God seems to say, “Do not trust in great displays of force, in tremendous demonstrations of power—trust rather in the still soft influences of the distilling dew of God’s Spirit and the gentle rain of the Gospel. Preach the Word to the sons and daughters of men.”

There is a temptation which assails all of us who preach to want to do some great thing. We fancy that, if we could preach such a famous sermon as Jonathan Edwards delivered when he spoke of sinners in the hand of an angry God, when the people felt as though the very seats whereon they sat moved under them, and some of them even stood up, and grasped the pillars of the building in their terror—we fancy that, if we could but preach in such a style as that, then we should have lived to some purpose.

Or we think that, if we had the eloquence of Whitefield, and could go and stand, as he did, on Kennington Common, and preach to twenty thousand people at a time—then we should have accomplished something worthy of our highest ambition. Or it may be that we have some famous sermons of which we think a good deal. Possibly, there is a fine peroration, like the grand *finale* of the Crystal Palace fireworks—or there may be a great display of oratory all through the discourse.

Or if we have been wise enough to leave out all that sort of thing, we may have tried to make the sermon one that would convince the judgment of our hearers, or force its way into their understandings by its sheer sledge-hammer power—and we have hoped, by preaching thus, to see our congregations converted.

Now, if we have been long in the ministry, and if the Lord has given us true spiritual apprehension, we must have discovered how futile are all such hopes and expectations. There may be a great wind blowing while we are preaching such sermons, but the Lord is not in the wind. There may be a great earthquake, and the people may shake and quake with terror, but the Lord is not in the earthquake. Our pulpit may be lurid with the fire of coming judgment, but the Lord is not in the fire.

It is true that we are to preach the terror of the Lord, but like Paul, because we know the terror of the Lord, we are to “*persuade* men.” Persuasiveness is to be one of the dominant notes in our preaching just because of the terrible side of truth. We are not to conceal the threatenings that we find in the Word of

God, for the gentle, loving Savior uttered very terrible words concerning the wrath to come, the worm that never dies, and the fire that never can be quenched.

At the same time, *our main reliance must not be on that style of preaching*, and our expectation of blessing must not depend upon our heaping up words full of alarm and terror, and expressions intended to set forth the woes and horrors of impending judgment, for after all, we may alarm our hearers until they can be no longer alarmed, and we may make them weep in terror until they can weep no more. But instead of doing so, they may even scoff at that which once so greatly disturbed them.

But the preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified never loses its power. The telling over and over again of—

*“The old, old story
Of Jesus and His love,”—*

never becomes a mere repetition, if with warm heart and loving spirit we still cry to our hearers, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” There may be no excitement in our congregation, no sensation may be created by our preaching, but the Lord will be in it. He always has been in such preaching as that and He always will be.

A preached Savior must mean saved sinners before long, but even where sinners are not saved, if we faithfully, lovingly, and earnestly preach the Gospel to them, we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that perish as well as in them that are saved. So let us still be content to go on, and on, and on, and on—preaching Jesus Christ—praying for the Spirit of God to rest upon us while we tell over and over and over again how the Son of God loved us and gave Himself for us, asking the faithful to pray that God will bless the Word, seeking to make our own lives to be more like the life of Him whom we preach, and trying by all lawful means to be the instruments that God will bless in saving at least some of our hearers.

And we shall succeed in such a ministry as this if we have faith in God, and faith in the message we are sent to deliver, for the Lord is still in the ministry of the still small voice. There have been many kinds of ministries in this world, but where has God ever been except in the ministry of the truth as it is in Jesus? There have been ministries of learning, and ministries of eloquence, and ministries of philosophy, and ministries that have made a fair show in the flesh—but as a general rule—souls have not been saved by them.

The true soul-winning ministries are the ministries of the still small voice, the ministries that proclaim the redeeming grace and dying love of Jesus. And where those ministries are exercised, seeking souls will recognize the voice of God and give heed to it. So there was a message in the still small voice to every preacher of the Word.

III. I think there was also, in that still small voice, A MESSAGE TO THE WHOLE CHURCH OF GOD.

The Lord was not in the wind, nor in the fire, nor in the earthquake—but He was in the still small voice. Let us learn from this fact not to desire to see any great judgments fall upon any country, nor to see any extraordinary displays of divine power abroad in the world, with the idea that thereby God’s kingdom will come.

We sometimes grow dissatisfied because God’s cause is not advancing as fast as we think it ought to advance. Foreign missions are not as successful as we should like to see them, and home missions do not prosper as we think they should. Then we recollect the times when the cholera was rife in London, and remembering that the people seemed to be more tender in spirit then, and more willing to listen to the Gospel, we have almost wished that some such visitation as that would come again to arouse the callous inhabitants of this sinful city and nation.

Yet we must not cherish such a wish as that, for, after all, the good that comes in that way is more apparent than real—and after the apparent softening, there often comes a hardening of the heart against the truth.

We have sometimes looked upon the nations of the earth and as we have seen them besotted with idolatry and given up to gross error, we have wondered, if war broke out, or pestilence, or there was some other form of the rod of God, whether there might not then be fresh doors opened for the preaching of the Word, and whether the people might not be more willing to listen to it when it was preached.

It has, no doubt, been so in certain cases in the past, but let us not, even in our hearts, ever desire such calamities and chastisements to happen. But let us still place our confidence where the confidence of the early Christian church was placed—in the Spirit of God working through the preaching of the Gospel by earnest, faithful men who had proved its power in their own hearts and lives.

A further lesson to the Lord's people, in the still small voice, is this. It appears, from what God said to Elijah, that there was a work going on in Israel of which the prophet knew nothing. There were seven thousand people whose knees had never been bent in the worship of the sun-god and whose lips had never kissed the idol.

It is doubtless true today that there are thousands, of whom we know nothing, who are not partakers in the idolatry which causes us such sorrow of heart. What an accursed thing it is that idolatry of various kinds is so rampant today in this and other lands! O God of Elijah, put an end to it right speedily, we implore You! Yet, all the while that vile idolatry was spreading in Israel, the worship of the true God was being retained by seven thousand faithful souls—though Elijah did not know that there was even one beside himself.

How were they won to JEHOVAH? Certainly not by Elijah's impressive demonstration on the top of Carmel, for they were loyal to the Lord before that. Possibly, they were not converted even by the three years' drought—what then had made them so different from the bulk of their fellow countrymen? The secret movement of the Spirit of God upon their hearts.

Perhaps also the loving teaching of mothers by the fireside, the gracious influence of godly men and women upon their companions, and of the worshippers of JEHOVAH upon men of the world, who saw in them what they knew they did not themselves possess—and who so admired it that they inquired how they also might obtain such beauty of character—all these things had helped to range these seven thousand idol-haters on the side of JEHOVAH. The still small voice had been doing for Israel what Elijah could not do.

Brethren, a similar process is going on now, and I want to refresh your memories concerning it. Sometimes, as we carefully examine the organized Christianity of the present day, we cannot discover any progress at all. It is a great pity and a cause for great sorrow that there should not be any visible progress. But for all that, let us hope that there is an underground work going on—a secret work of God's grace proceeding in the hearts and lives of those by whom we are surrounded, although we can see no signs of it.

You who put leaven in your bread know that you do not hear it making a noise during the night, but the leaven is working effectually although it is working silently. There is still an open Bible in our land and in many other lands besides. And so long as that is the case, you need not fear that Protestantism will die out, or that the lamp of truth will be put out.

There is also more than an open Bible in this and other lands—there are many praying people who will take no rest and give God no rest until they see His cause and kingdom prospering in the earth. [There is a very remarkable sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon this subject which ought to be widely circulated in these days of "arrested progress." See Sermon #2189, A Call to Prayer and Testimony] You may not know them and they may not be among the great ones of this world, but there are many who are crying day and night unto God for the preservation and the spread of His truth.

There are eyes that are weeping over sin and there are hearts that are near unto breaking for the longing that they have for the coming of the Redeemer's kingdom. There are persons whose names will never be known to fame—some of the very poorest on the earth, who nevertheless are speaking softly with their voices for Jesus and who are also speaking very powerfully by their lives for Jesus—as

servants in the household, as toilers in the workshop, as poor humble bed-ridden sufferers who patiently endure great pain and privation because the Lord gives them the grace to bear it for His sake.

I believe in the power of these still small voices and I pray that the church of God may never get the idea that she is to depend upon certain great orators and distinguished ministers. I fear that many of our friends across the Atlantic have fallen into most serious mistakes with regard to this matter, for when certain of their great preachers are absent, their places of worship are closed just as if God had gone away to the country or the seaside because Mr. So-and-So or Dr. So-and-So had gone there.

I pray that you, dear friends, may never put such confidence in any of us as to think that God could not work just as well by other people if He pleased to do so, or to imagine that we must come to you with most elaborately prepared sermons and always charm your ears with brilliant oratory.

As for myself I abhor all oratory or eloquence except that which comes straight from the heart. The church of Jesus Christ has been greatly injured by the highly-polished sermons and speeches of famous orators. But let us, brethren, always speak in the language that our heart prompts us to use. Let our very soul run over at our lips as it pours itself out, like the gushing stream from an ever-flowing spring—for this is the best kind of eloquence with which we can plead with sinners to forsake their sins and turn to the living God. Let us be willing to be accounted weak and to have our speech called contemptible, as Paul's was, for God may then be pleased to bless us as He will not do in any other way.

The point I want to emphasize is this, that the reliance of the church, under God, must not be upon the voices that ring out, far and wide, like a peal of bells, nor upon the tongues that give forth the sweet music that pleases the ear. But we must rely upon the Gospel itself—upon the Gospel simply stated, upon the Gospel taught in the Sunday school, the Gospel explained at the family altar, the Gospel lived and loved by holy men and women. It is that which will do the work of God effectually and accomplish His glorious purposes of grace.

And I would have all of you, who are thus seeking to serve your Savior, believe that His blessing will rest upon your service even though it may only seem to be as a still small voice. You, my dear sisters, may not be able to preach a sermon, but you may do what is far better than that. The loving words that you may speak to your children, the helpful hymns that you may teach them as they gather around you, your evening prayer with them as you lay them down to sleep, and your own holy example will all be the still small voice in which God will speak to them.

And you servant maids, who help in caring for the children, and you who teach in the day schools, and you who are anywhere brought into contact with your fellow men, can, by your words and by your actions, bear most important messages for God, even though, in the judgment of mankind, you may be only like a still small voice that seems to have but little force in it.

I wish the whole church of Christ would realize that her greatest victories have usually been accomplished by those who did not seem, from a human standpoint, competent for the task, and that she may still expect to see the grandest results coming to her by the use of ordinary means, by ordinary persons devoutly exercising, in the name of God, their ordinary functions in an ordinary way—the workers being, however, under the gracious influence of the divine Spirit from whom all true power must come.

IV. I shall now conclude my discourse by using the text in a fourth way. I believe there was, in that still small voice, A MESSAGE TO SINNERS.

Now, in the scene which is here sketched by the inspired pen, you have many things that you may well consider. The prophet saw how the great and strong wind rent the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces. He felt the earth reel beneath him and saw the valleys lifted to the hills—and the hills sunk into deep glens by the mighty forces of the earthquake. And he saw the forests on the hillsides all ablaze with fire—but God was not revealed to him in any of those terrible sights.

It was only when the still small voice came that God spoke to him. And it is the same in many of those terrors that some seeking souls experience. Human nature is there, the devil is often there. But

very frequently God is not there in any saving sense—so you need not any of you wish to feel those terrors.

It is a great mercy when God brings His people to Himself by a smoother road than that. I know that some are brought to Him by that rough road and if they are, they may be thankful that they are brought to Him anyhow rather than left to perish in their sins. Yet if God, in His great tenderness to others, brings them to Himself gently, why should they regret it? Should they not be perfectly satisfied and even be doubly grateful to be saved without having to endure such trying experiences as many others have had?

Beloved friends, do not crave these experiences for yourselves, else you may thereby provoke God to anger and He may chasten you in His hot displeasure. You are refusing to do what He bids you do, namely, trust His dear Son, Jesus Christ, and you are wanting Him to make you have these horrible feelings, which, if you did have them, you would be only too thankful to lose.

Let me further say to you that if any of you have felt these dreadful terrors, I implore you not to place any reliance upon them. You will make a fatal mistake if you suppose that you are saved simply because you have been driven almost to despair. There can be no more insecure foundation for a hope of heaven than to think that you are saved because you have realized that you were lost.

It would be a very absurd idea for a man to conclude that he was in health because he had felt that he was ill, or for another to fancy that he was rich because he had felt that he was poor. There is a remorse which is near akin to repentance, but it is not the fruit of the grace of God. There is a sense of sin which arises, not from the work of the Spirit of God, but from a man's own conscience—from conscience aroused, yet still unenlightened by God the Holy Ghost.

There are few things more terrible than the awakened conscience of a man who still remains unbelieving. Yet some have had that dreadful experience and have even ventured to suppose that they were saved because they had passed through such a period of alarm and horror. If any of you have thus suffered, do not place any reliance upon that experience.

When the still small voice, in which God is, really comes to you, do you know how it will come? Probably in the same way that it came to Elijah. It will address you personally, so that you will begin to feel the personal bearing of the truths to which you have been listening Sabbath after Sabbath. As the still small voice said to the prophet, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" so will the truth begin to question you and you will then hear every sermon for yourself—and not for other people. When you read the Bible, you will read it for yourself, to find out what it says to you—and through the truth recorded there, God will speak to your soul.

But at first, that still small voice will not comfort you any more than it comforted Elijah. It will put searching questions to you concerning your character and conduct. It will make you look at your past life and cause you to sorrow over it. It will make you look at your present life and cause you to blush as you see how sinful it is. It will also make you remember how many years you have wasted in living for yourself and vanity—and not living unto God.

The still small voice will make you realize at what a distance you are from God and what a change must be wrought in you before you can be put among His children. It will also make you cast a glance forward to your future life and cause you to tremble at the prospect that lies before you. It will remind you that if you remain unconverted, you will go from bad to worse, you will heap up sin upon sin, and your heart will get harder and harder until you are given up to final impenitence.

After this stern message, it will be a blessed thing for you if the still small voice gives you some measure of hope. It may be that there is nothing striking about what you are now feeling. It is no alarming sickness that you have had, it is no wonderful dream that has come to you in your sleep, it is no singular providence that you have experienced—but some way or other, wherever you are, you feel ill at ease—you are troubled in spirit and cannot rest.

Oh, what a blessed unrest that is which drives a sinner away from his sins! What a sweet bitter that is which makes a sinful soul sick of the world, and makes it hunger and thirst after Christ! I pray the Lord

to give this unrest and this hunger and thirst to many of you. I have known some who have had this experience so severely that they could not rest in the workshop—they have done their work, it is true—but it was with many a sigh between. Their very meals have seemed to lose the zest they once possessed. When they slept at night, their sleep was unrestful. And when they woke, their sorrow was still upon them. They felt that they could not endure themselves unless they could get right with God. That is the effect of the still small voice when God is in it.

That voice will, before long, probably change its note in addressing some of you, for it will talk to you about redeeming grace and dying love. It will speak to you about the sinner's Savior, the Savior *for you*—and you will be conscious of a blessed, gentle, persuasive influence inclining you to hear about Jesus, making you attentive to the Word, and moving you to wish to believe in Jesus as your own personal Savior.

And that voice will check you if you begin even to look back toward sin with any desire to return to it, and it will stir up within you more and more holy aspirations till, at last, it will lead you to really look to Jesus and live. And when you have looked to Him, all your life long you will continue to hear that voice—even when others do not hear it, you will. If you attempt to put out your hand to iniquity, you will draw it back with a start because of the warning that voice will utter. Oftentimes, when others are busy only about the world, your mind will be soaring away to heaven because that voice will be weaning you from the earth, and wooing you to be up and away to your Father's house above.

That still small voice will often tell you what to do. "Thou shalt hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk thou in it." If you happen to be where you cannot listen to the ministry of the Word, or are not profited by it, that voice will speak to you. As you read the Scriptures, that voice will speak to you with such power as no other voice ever had over your soul, for after all, it is the voice of Jesus, it is the voice of everlasting love, it is the voice that said upon Calvary, "It is finished," it is the voice that said, "Come unto me all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is the voice that pleads in heaven, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

Do not, dear friends, be listening for any other voices. Do not be expecting to have any other revelation beside that which is recorded in this blessed Book. You not only have Moses and the prophets, you have also Jesus and the apostles, so hear ye them. Let the still small voice reveal the truth to you and ask not for any other message. This is the all-sufficient guide for you with the illumination of the Holy Spirit, so do not seek for any other.

If you have been saved by it, I charge you to obey it in every jot and tittle. Alter no ordinance of God and forget none of His precepts, but follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes. Wherever you see the print of His pierced feet, there put down your own feet. Do as He did, be as He was. And then, soon, you shall be where He is. May His blessed Spirit and His still small voice be with you till you shall see His face without a veil between, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 Kings 19

Verse 1. *And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.*

Jezebel was the chief patroness of the idolatrous prophets and therefore you may imagine how her wrath was stirred when her husband told her what Elijah had done to the men who ate at her table.

2-3. *Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.*

This is the man who could fearlessly face the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of the groves, and slay all of them at the brook Kishon—the dauntless prophet of fire, who dared to call King Ahab the troubler of Israel. Yet now he trembles before a woman’s threatening, and arises, and flies for his life.

Verily, the best of men are but men at the best, and the strongest of men are weak as water when once the power of God is withdrawn from them. The high-strung tension on the top of Carmel was now to be followed by a not unnatural reaction—and the heroic prophet was to sink into the lowest state of dependency. He left his servant at Beersheba;

4. *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;*

What inconsistent beings men are! Elijah had fled to save his life, yet, “he requested for himself that he might die”—that he might die because he was afraid of death—die under a juniper tree in the wilderness in order to escape death at the hands of Jezebel.

4. *And said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.* [See sermon #2725, Elijah Fainting]

This was the man who never died, yet, “he requested for himself that he might die.” How gracious it is, on God’s part, not to grant the requests of His people when they are unwise, as this petition of Elijah was! Had he known that he would go up by a whirlwind into heaven, riding in a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire, surely he would not have prayed after this fashion, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.”

5-6. *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 baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.*

He was very sad at heart because of the apostasy of Israel, and beside that, he was very weary, utterly exhausted by the tremendous excitement through which he had passed, and by the long journey which he had already taken. So he did the wisest thing possible, “he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.”

7. *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.*

God exercises foresight on behalf of His people which they cannot themselves exercise. He knows when we are to be called either to unusual service or unusual suffering, and He prepares us for it. He not only gives us spiritual meat to eat because we know that we are hungry, but He also gives it to us because of our future needs which, for the present, are quite unknown to us.

8-9. *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?*

“You, JEHOVAH’s courageous prophet, why have you fled? Why are you here when so much is necessary to be done for the apostate people? ‘What doest thou here?’ How come you are here, in a cave, when the nation needs your presence? ‘What doest thou here, Elijah?’”

10. *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.*

He despaired of the good cause, and this was a great pity, for a man such as he was ought never to have given way to such feelings. Was not God with him? And where God is, must there not be victory?

11-13. *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 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?

God will repeat His questions to His people if they have not due effect the first time, for He is very tender, and pitiful, and patient.

14. *And he said,*

A second time pouring out the bitterness of his soul before his God,

14. *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.*

It was a good thing that Elijah could thus pour out his complaint into the sympathizing ear of the Most High. Such bitterness of soul as his is very apt to ferment and to breed all manner of ills. But when we can tell the Lord all that is in our heart—then a time of blessed relief is not far off.

15. *And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus:*

“Get back to your work, be not a deserter from the field of battle. Return, for you are wanted for various duties.”

15-16. *And when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.*

Thus there shall be a successor to carry on your work when you have really done your part of it.

17-18. *And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. 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 him.*

How this gracious assurance must have revived the prophet’s spirit! He knew nothing about those seven thousand faithful Israelites, and he must have been amazed and delighted to hear of them. There was no need for him to say, “I, even I only, am left,” for there was a noble band of stalwarts to stand up with him, and defend the name and cause of JEHOVAH.

19. *So he departed thence,*

Cheered and comforted, he went back to his work without uttering another word, and we do not read of his spirit flagging again. “So he departed thence.”

19-20 *And found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth : and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?*

The Lord wants no pressed men in His service—His soldiers must all be volunteers. But Elisha was a man of a true heart and a brave spirit, so we read—

21. *And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.*

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.