

GRACE GAZETTE

Volume X

Issue 25

Published occasionally for Zion's mourners

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

TOO GREAT A JOURNEY

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.

I Kings 19:7

Elijah, the embodiment of the Old Testament prophets, had just witnessed one of the greatest manifestations of GOD's awesome power and utter dominion which is displayed for us, in all of the Old Testament. He saw with his own eyes the answer of GOD by fire on Mount Carmel, and then the resultant destruction of the prophets of Baal at the hands of a people stirred with religious zeal. Yet hardly had the smoke of the fire subsided and we find him hiding in the woods with no small dose of self pity and fearing the threats of a wicked woman.

This is but a picture of the strongest of GOD's children when they are left to their own devices. We often hear men boast of their faith and taking umbrage of others who do not measure up to their own feats of faith's demonstration. Yet we find in the scripture the recurring theme of great men being humbled by the chastening hand of GOD and being stripped of all confidence in themselves or the ability of men to come to their aid. We think of Job abhorring himself and repenting in dust and ashes, (see Job 42:1-6) David lamenting his own willful dalliance with another man's wife and the subsequent murder which was the result, (see Ps.51) and Peter weeping uncontrollably who had recently boasted of his steadfastness. (see Luke 22:61,62)

One would think (in the natural mind) that Elijah would have been bold in the face of Jezebel's threats, yet the LORD humbled him, (even as HE did the apostle Paul with the thorn in the flesh; (see II Cor 12:6-9) and reminded him of his own weakness so that he might clearly see from WHOM his courage and strength truly came. Those who make great boasts of their exploits and their courage in the face of trial are strangers to grace, and ignorant of the weakness of the flesh.

Every one of us is prone to self pity and fearfulness, except that the LORD deliver us from it. Even though HE knew exactly what Elijah was thinking, HE exhorted him to examine himself when HE said, *"What doest thou here, Elijah?"* While the hand of the LORD is ever faithful to humble the sons of GOD and acquaint them with their own inadequacies, yet HIS purpose is greater than the mere humbling of them, rather it is through this humbling to lift them up. *"Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."* (1Pet 5:5-7)

For until a man is thoroughly acquainted with his own unfaithfulness, weakness, and fear he will never be made strong, for it is through weakness that GOD's children are strengthened. *"For when I am weak, then am I strong."* (II Cor 12:10) It is then that they can do nothing but cast themselves upon the mercy of GOD. Well did the apostle say, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."* (Phil 4:13) This was not a boast of his accomplishments but rather an acknowledgement of the SOURCE of all of HIS strength.

The angel (i.e.; messenger) told Elijah to eat the bread that he had prepared for him because the journey which he was being sent on was *"too great"* for him. (see I Kings 19:7) The sons of GOD are in like fashion called to sojourn in this world, and to make a "journey" which is "too great" for them to make, except that they eat the BREAD which is given to them. The LORD said, *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever."* (John 6:51) *"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."* (John 6:53-58)

Elijah was able to go for forty days and nights after eating the bread (see v.8) which was given to him but he had to eat again. This BREAD which the sons of GOD are given does indeed sustain them in times of famine and leanness but this is a BREAD which they must continue to eat and by which they are fed continually as the LORD is pleased to give it to them. A very common notion which exists among many who preach and confess what they purport to be the gospel, is that a man can get "saved" by a one time simple act of free will. Salvation is presented as though it is a singular transaction which they participate in and once they have it then all is well.

The scripture indicates that *"the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble."* (Psa 37:39) The sons of GOD are granted "salvation" according to the mercy of GOD who is pleased to deliver them from sin and darkness and set them on a journey which requires a constant source of SUSTENANCE. This SUSTENANCE is the LORD JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF. HE is their SALVATION and the strength of their song. HE is pleased to lead them upon the mountain tops and the valleys of life, in times of darkness and in the most enjoyable seasons of light. The one constant throughout this journey which begins at the brink of hell and culminates at the gates of heaven is that HE is ever faithful, both when HE can be seen and when HE is pleased to hide HIS face. *"And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."* (Isa 42:16)

Yes indeed this journey is much too great for any of the sons of GOD, we cannot know the way nor can our eyes behold the glory of that city to which we are called, except HE should guide us and keep us from falling we could never arrive at that destination. It is only natural that men should clamor to see GOD do "great" and "mighty" things. It is then that religious fervor is at its pitch even as the people of Israel were stirred on Mount Carmel to kill the prophets of Baal but were in a few days right back to their old ways. This reminds me of the "revival" meetings where great and mighty things are promised and sometimes even delivered.

Thus the LORD showed Elijah a wind which *"rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks"* (1Kings 19:11). A mighty earthquake and then a consuming fire. Yet the LORD was not "in" any of these "displays", rather HE spoke to Elijah in *"a still small voice."* (1Kings 19:12) It was the same exhortation to self examination as before, *"What doest thou here, Elijah?"* (1Kings 19:13)

The work of the SPIRIT is never centered in "great and mighty" occurrences even though HE might from time to time visit in a rushing wind even as on the day of Pentecost. The true work of the SPIRIT is in humbling the elect of GOD by the deliverance of HIS word to them even as we see happening on the day of Pentecost. Men in religious zeal center their thoughts on the display of tongues but the greater display of the SPIRIT was when men "heard" in their own language the sweet sound of the gospel. *"God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* (Act 2:36-37)

We cry out with these men of old *"Lord, evermore give us this bread."* (John 6:34)