ROAD TO REVIVAL

By

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"ARE YOU THERE?"

"And the word of the LORD came unto him (Elijah), saying, Get thee hence and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee THERE...

"Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell THERE: behold, I have commanded a widow woman THERE to sustain thee. So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was THERE..." (I Kings 17:2-4, 9, 10).

DO not believe that the ravens would have fed Elijah anywhere else, nor would the widow woman have appeared anywhere else except "THERE." GOD did not say, "Elijah, ramble around as you please and I will provide for you."

"THERE" was the place of GOD's will for Elijah-the place of His Purpose, the place of His Power and the place of His Provision.

"THERE" WAS THE PLACE OF GOD'S PURPOSE. GOD has a "THERE" for you, somewhere He wants you to be, something He wants you to do. You can never be truly happy elsewhere, nor can you please GOD anywhere but "there." You may do lovely things and become a "success," but always there will be the haunting sense of having chosen life's second best.

Sir Thomas Lipton, the English sportsman, won many yachting prizes, but he never could capture the American cup. One day, showing a friend his glittering collection of trophies, he suddenly said, with a wave of the hand, "And I'd give them all for the one I didn't get!" So, however many of earth's awards and crowns we may gain, if we miss the reward of GOD's approval, the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS, we shall feel at the close of our day that we would gladly give them all for the one we missed. Woodrow Wilson spoke of "being defeated by one's successes." Verily, we are cheated when we choose our own way, whatever we may attain in it, if we miss the purpose of GOD.

"THERE" is the place of blessing. When Jacob wandered from Bethel and trouble descended upon him at Shalem, GOD commanded him, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell THERE" (Gen. 35:1). Sometimes we go back to Bethel during the revival but we do not dwell there.

"THERE" is not a particular emotional experience; it is simply the place of GOD's will. David "served his own generation by the will of God" (Acts 13:36), and in so doing he proved that he was "THERE." Epaphras prayed that the saints might "stand perfect and complete in all the will of GOD" (Colossians 4:12), in other words, that they might be "THERE." Our Lord could say to the Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). He was always "THERE!"

GOD has a Cherith and a Zarephath for you. It may be across the street, it may be across the sea. Some sing, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord," but they are not willing to stay where He wants them to stay. A radio preacher tells of receiving a letter from a young lady who was sure that she could do great things for the Lord if she could move to Pittsburgh, but was sure she could do nothing in the small town where she was. It developed that she refused to work in the small tasks in her home church because she felt too big for it. We have plenty of "Pittsburgh Christians," or eagles on hummingbird nests, always too big for where they are.

In the account of the Great Commission, we overlook the setting: "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them" (Matthew 28:16). They were in the place of the Divine appointing, therefore they received the Divine appointment. Some of us have had no commission because we are not "there," at the place of His appointing.

In the second place, "THERE" WAS THE PLACE OF GOD'S POWER. I do not believe that the miracle of the ravens and the meal barrel would have occurred anywhere but "THERE." Men wonder why they never feel GOD's power or see any evidences of His working. It is because they are out of His purpose, not in His will. We say, "What power Elijah had!" but he had no power in himself, he was simply" THERE," in the place of power. We might say, "What power that radio has!" "What power that electric light has!" But they are very frail contraptions, they are simply in the place of power, connected with the source.

When the traffic officer stops you as you drive down the street, it is not his strength that does it; you could drive over him. It is his authority that makes you halt; he represents something greater than himself. So we are nothing in ourselves, but when we are in the place of GOD's purpose we have His power, and greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

Men have wondered at the power of George Muller. He had no power of himself; he was simply "THERE," in the place of GOD's purpose for George Muller. Hudson Taylor said he once thought GOD was looking for men strong enough to use, but he learned that GOD was looking for men weak enough to use. The lad who supplied the loaves and fishes for the feeding of the multitude would have been nonplussed if you had told him that morning that he had enough food for several thousand people. He did not know what he had until JESUS took it and broke it and blessed it and passed it around. Nor do you know what you have until you give it to the Lord.

Only when we are" THERE," in the place of His purpose, are we in the place of His power.

Samson did a great many remarkable things, but he never was much; he did not stay "THERE." He may have looked better after his haircut but he lost his strength. Too many Christians let the world give them a haircut. One day they carry off the gates of Gaza, but next day they may be in the lap of Delilah; They do not abide in CHRIST, they do not stay "THERE."

There is no place "just as good" as "THERE," the place of GOD's purpose. We try to strike bargains with the Lord, offer to do something else, seek a compromise or substitute. We work terribly hard at something that may be fine and lovely, but it is not His choice and inwardly we are rebellious. A minister brother tells of a stubborn youngster in a home who was told by his mother to sit down. He refused twice, and then she made him sit down; but he said, "Mother, I may be sitting down but I'm standing up inside!" So often do we seem to be yield to GOD and living "THERE," but there is inward rebellion. And GOD rates rebellion as a grievous thing: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (I Samuel 15:23).

Finally, "THERE" WAS THE PLACE OF GOD'S PROVISION. There would have been no bread, no flesh, no meal, for Elijah anywhere but "THERE." "Where GOD guides, He provides" is a well-worn proverb but gloriously true. Notice that GOD said, "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee THERE"; "I have commanded a widow woman THERE to sustain thee." Elijah had gone on ahead and made arrangements. Strange arrangements they were - I doubt that stranger arrangements ever were made for boarding a preacher! But the plan worked, as it always does when GOD is in it. He is responsible for our upkeep when we follow His directions, but He is not responsible for any expenses not included in His schedule.

Elijah began his interview with the widow by asking, like our Lord at the well of Samaria, for a drink of water. You will observe that when Elijah found this woman, she was engaged at a menial task, gathering sticks, but before he left she had seen the miraculous. From the menial to the miraculous! So our Lord found Peter fishing for fish and made him a fisher of men; found Matthew collecting taxes and made him a Gospel writer. If we are faithful in the least, GOD will show us much. Fetching a drink of water does not cost much, although a cup of water given in His Name shall not be unrewarded. But it does not test faith, so Elijah asked next for a morsel of bread and the first cake at that. Now it looked as though there would be only one cake, so here was a real test for the widow woman. Alas, we give GOD the crumbs, not the cake; the scraps and fragments and leftovers of time and thought and talent and money. Malachi reproved the Jews in his day who kept the good animals given them for sacrifice and gave the Lord the sick and crippled. How he might thunder at us today who give GOD the crumbs from our tables and eat the cake ourselves!

The widow woman was fearful, but Elijah reassured her: "Fear not... for thus saith the LORD..."

GOD had promised to provide and that was enough.

"In some way or other, the Lord will provide. It may not be my way, it may not be thy way, And yet in His own way, the Lord will provide." Of course, GOD did not fill the barrel, as we Americans would demand; He simply supplied enough. He has promised to supply our needs, not our wants (Philippians 4:19). So long as we are in His will, we shall have health enough, time enough, work enough, money enough to do what He wants done. Why should we want any more And He never asks us to do more than we can do by His grace. He may seem to ask the impossible and we may be sure that we are going to fail, but if we are willing to fail for GOD, we won't fail. Nobody ever failed who was honest with GOD.

How we do let circumstances blind us to the all sufficiency of GOD! I think of the morning when Elisha's servant must have walked out on the back porch and discovered an army sent to capture the great prophet. (In those days GOD's preachers were such troublemakers that they sent the militia after them.) The servant was horrified to see soldiers to the right of him, soldiers to the left of him, soldiers before him, soldiers everywhere. But Elisha came out calmly, and instead of bothering to look around him, he looked higher and saw angels to the right of him, angels to the left of him, angels before him, angels everywhere, for the angels of the Lord were encamping round about him who feared GOD to deliver him. No wonder Elisha could pray for this frightened servant's eyes to be opened that he might see! And we need such an eye opener today.

Yes, when we are "THERE," in the place of GOD's purpose, we are in the place of His power and provision. ARE YOU "THERE?"

A little girl in a Midwestern city came forward one night after I had preached from this text and whispered in my ear, "I'm here but I'm afraid I'm not THERE." Many of us are "here," among those present, but we are not "THERE," in the place of His choosing. We may be "THERE" the moment we resign the right to our own lives and let Him take control. Do not grow uneasy if guidance does not come in a moment. What He wants is your yielded will, and the minute you give Him that, you are "THERE," although it may be some time before He shows you just where it is geographically.

May I relate to you a chapter out of my own experience? I began to preach when I was a boy. After four years of preaching, I went away to school and in the period that followed I became unsettled in my beliefs. I felt, under modernistic and liberal influences, that I should adapt the Gospel to the modern mind, which, by the way, is not very modern and not much mind. There came a day when my ministry failed and I returned to my old country home in the hills. That winter my father died and I was left with my mother, having only a country grocery store as our support, and that was robbed and burned to the ground in the following spring! During those months the Lord spoke to my soul and led me to see that if I returned to the old Gospel and preached it, He would clear the track for me. So I renounced the "new approach" and got into the Cherith and Zarephath of GOD's will for me. First, I had to return to the church where I had preached the "new position" and give them the message GOD had given me. The way has not always been easy, but I can testify that GOD had gone before and made arrangements. I have found "THERE" to be the place of His abundant power and marvelous provision. The years since that experience have been one continued story of "meal in a barrel."

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