

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

by

F. W. Krummacher, D. D.

Copyright © 1880

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

NONE BUT JESUS

It is much to be lamented that the Saviour is so little known to many, who yet are not utter strangers to him. Our acquaintance with him increases with the consciousness of our necessities; and the more we become acquainted with him, the more will the divine nature be expanded within us.

Man is from his birth a degenerate being, blind and naked, alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him, and a willing servant of sin. He neither knows Christ, nor feels his need of him. He cries "**Peace! peace!**" to himself and to others, when "**there is no peace.**" Erroneous ideas of God and of himself lull him into carnal security; but there are seasons when he has many misgivings, and when God appears to him in the light of a jealous God, a consuming fire. By the grace of God, many in this disquieted state begin to inquire in earnest after peace. They hear or they read of Christ. They find some consolation in the news of a Saviour, but not of the true and right kind.

They betake themselves to many means of amending their lives; but, alas! instead of trusting wholly in Christ, they lean on their own performances. "They make vows and good resolutions, and soon break them as easily as they were made. Thus they discover their own insufficiency and helplessness, and this teaches them to found all their hopes on Christ. By and by, however, they learn again that their faith, though real, is still very weak, by reason of their still looking partly to themselves.

Some assault or trial of their faith serves to convince them of this. Temptation of some kind has proved too effectual; and now they begin to perceive that all their strength is in him; that they must maintain perpetual communion with him; that they must abide in him, or else they will bear no fruit, but wither. At last they learn to depend entirely on him, and thus their strength is confirmed, and their path becomes as the shining light. Thus do our necessities, from time to time, serve to promote our spiritual advancement; and thus the knowledge of Christ is found to keep pace with the sense of our own wants. It is great gain to suffer the loss of all things, that we may learn depend on Jesus alone.

"And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only" (Matthew 17:6-8).

We are now arrived at the closing portion of this remarkable part of sacred history. The particular history of Elijah here loses itself in that of our blessed Lord. It now remains for us to consider,

- I. The awful impression which the voice from the Shekinah made upon the three disciples;
- II. The relief which Jesus gave to their minds;
- III. Their subsequent experience.

I. The solemnity and sublimity of the transfiguration scene reached its height at the moment when the bright cloud overshadowed our Lord, with Moses and Elias, and when the voice of the Father's testimony proceeded from it.

Up to that moment the disciples had felt indescribably happy on the holy mount. But no sooner is their Lord and Master, under whose wing they had hitherto felt secure, enveloped in the cloud, and the voice from the excellent glory sounded from it, than their comfort is instantly at an end, and their rapture is changed into fear.

They fall on their faces as if thunderstruck, and are sore afraid. So awful is the approach of Eternal Majesty to the sinner. **“Let not God speak with us!”** cried Israel at the foot of Sinai, **“lest we die. For who is there of all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?”**

“When I saw his face,” says Daniel, **“and heard the voice of his words, there remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I sank on my face to the ground.”**

When Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord, he expressed his amazement by saying, **“Woe is me, for I am undone! for I am a man of unclean lips.”**

And even the disciples, whom Jesus loved, at beholding the unveiled glory of the King of kings, fell at his feet as dead, and the arm of Omnipotence was needed to lift him up, otherwise he would have sunk under it. What is the reason of this terror in man, as soon as he perceives the nearness of God? Does it not betray alienation? By nature we are disposed *practically* to deny him. Our natural terror, therefore, at the thought of his presence, is but too evidently founded on our consciousness of being guilty in his sight.

We think we are something; but when God's excellent greatness becomes suddenly discovered to us, we sink before it. Besides, our present sphere of vision and conception is very limited. All our thoughts are earthly, and all our conceptions of spiritual things are derived from this world of sense; so that, when we behold such things in their real nature, it threatens, us it were, to break down the whole fabric of our ideas and notions.

Hence it is no wonder that extraordinary manifestations of the invisible things of God should overpower us with amazement and terror.

But how could the disciples be so terrified, seeing they knew the Father, by having believed on him, and possessed in Christ their Head, such a fulness of glory, that they could easily bear the loss of their own?

We answer, that if self had been utterly annihilated in them in the presence of Eternal Majesty, they would have risen up only the more gloriously in Jesus; but as this was not the case, so, in more senses than one, Jesus was to them behind the cloud. Their insight into his mediation did not yet reach so far as to enable them comfortably to hear such a manifestation of God as this.

The full import of the words, "**Who is he that condemneth?**" had not yet entered their hearts. But how shall they, who have not yet learned the wondrous art of beholding and finding themselves in Christ alone, stand without terror in the immediate presence of the divine Majesty.

A word from his mouth, to the mightiest amongst us who is not thus prepared, is as the voice of the Lord which breaketh the cedars, and maketh Lebanon and Carmel tremble. Were he only now to exclaim from the skies in the hearing of the whole world, "**I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last!**" what a vast change would it instantaneously occasion in human theories and opinions!

How different would be the view which men would immediately take of their present state of existence, and how different also the manner of life of many millions! A host of blasphemers would be, as it were, bound with the terrors of the Almighty. Well, this will one day come to pass. "**Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen.**"

But at present, it is in the way of faith that God chooseth to be found of them that seek him. He will not thus forcibly manifest himself, till he shall come to the last judgment.

It was not only the voice from the clouds, and the unexpected approach of Divine Majesty, which so terrified the disciples upon the mount; but even in the testimony itself there was something awful, though it did not exactly tell them anything new. For though they had themselves confessed that Jesus was the Son of the living God, and had just seen his divine glory on the mount, still this confirmation of his sonship, as coming to them immediately from the excellent glory, might add to their belief in God incarnate, such vivid clearness of sensible demonstration as to overwhelm them with amazement and awe.

All this is perfectly natural; and if the Lord were now suddenly to remove from our minds the shade with which our spiritual light is so greatly intermingled, and to elevate our faith to that clearness of demonstration which would amount almost to sight, the consequence would be, that even the truths which we already believe and embrace would overpower us beyond measure, for instance, the truth, that the babe once laid in the manger at Bethlehem is God incarnate, and the truth, that the Son of God was ignominiously nailed to the cross for our sakes. For we at present behold all such truths in an attempered light; we see them only as in a glass darkly, or, as it were, through a veil with which God moderates the overpowering effect they would otherwise have upon our present weak frame and faculties.

Such things are far too wonderful, supernatural, and excellent for us to behold, except as through a veil; without which, in our present state, they would fail of producing the effect which God designs by them.

II. The three disciples fell to the ground as dead and could not venture to lift up their eyes, as long as they felt the immediate presence of the Eternal

But their Master again approached them, and at his approach **“every valley shall be exalted.”**

He, like a wise masterbuilder among fragments and ruins, or like a skillful artificer, who forms vessels of honor from clay trodden underfoot.

“And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.”

There was doubtless new vigor imparted by it, besides its natural adaptation to human feelings. The Sun of righteousness hath healing in his wings.

Remember the poor woman, mentioned in Matthew 9, and the believing language of her heart; **“If I may but touch his garment I shall be whole.”** Her confidence, you know, was not put to shame. A touch of Christ is the only means of our spiritual restoration. This must be obtained by faith in him, and fervent prayer in his name.

This touch is, in other words, the work of his Holy Spirit upon our hearts and minds, producing inward peace and personal holiness, love, humility, meekness, self-denial, and activity to arise and labor for the glory of God and the good of man.

III. No sooner had Jesus touched the terrified disciples, and spoken to them these encouraging words, “Arise, and be not afraid,” than they are immediately delivered out of all their fears, and peace again takes possession of their hearts

“And when they had lifted up their eyes,” relates the evangelist, **“they saw no man, save Jesus only.”**

Moses and Elias have returned in the bright cloud, to their heavenly abode, to relate to their companions in glory the things they had seen and heard on the holy mount. The holy angels resume their ministrations before the throne, and their praises are increased. The divine luster which, beaming forth from the Lord of glory, enlightened the darkness of the night, has withdrawn itself behind the veil of his servant’s form; and it becomes again upon the mount, as it had been before, dark, solitary, and silent.

The wind plays in the rustling foliage; the stars twinkle silently in the firmament; but in the hearts of this little assembly it is different. The divine Redeemer, after his conversation with the heavenly messengers, anticipates more cheerfully the bloody baptism which awaits him.

The glorified spirits approach with an increased measure of holy boldness to the throne of Glory and Majesty; and the three disciples—oh, how did they now rejoice more than ever in their Lord and Master.

However brief are generally the moments which we may be permitted to spend in the mount, beholding the King in his beauty; they are moments which we justly reckon among the best and happiest of our lives. Though they may only momentarily enlighten our darkness, they are not lost upon us; a blessing remains from them which attends us in our path; a secret ministration of strength which is not soon exhausted; a light that lives in the storm, and helps to cheer the gloom of much temporal and spiritual conflict.

“And when the disciples had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.”

This circumstance serves to remind us of that state of mind, which, in the more immediate sense of the word, may be called gracious and *evangelical*. Oh, how desirable is it to have our distracting thoughts so banished and subdued as to see **“Jesus only.”**

Without this we cannot be vigorous, practical Christians. Learn, then, to look away from yourself entirely, and to **“stand fast in the Lord.”** Divest thyself of all anxious care about the future, for that is safe in his hands.

Yea, having committed **“the keeping of thy soul to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator,”** thou hast no occasion to tremble even at death itself.

Think of those words, **“I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.”** Oh the blessedness of that peaceful position of mind in which everything that is seen by us is seen in Christ; seeing nothing in the winds or waves, or in ourselves, but only in Jesus.

The disciples seeing no longer Moses or Elias, but Jesus only, may serve further to suggest to us instruction with respect to viewing Jesus as the true Lawgiver, and the true Restorer of all things. Oh, happy is it, when the sinner at length perceives that he has his sufficiency in Christ alone, and needs no other support. He then walks at liberty, keeping Christ’s commandments with his whole heart. The peace of God which passeth understanding, now keeps his heart and mind by Christ Jesus. The terrors of the law no longer appall him, and yet he now learns to keep the law universally, and more steadfastly than ever.

“Jesus alone!” Yes, when the day shall have arrived that the **“Lord shall be king over all the earth; and there shall be one Lord, and his name one”** (Zechariah 14:9); then that which we have considered as spiritually significant on the holy mount, will be substantially realized. The whole world will then behold Jesus alone, as **“fairer than the children of men,”** and will have his name written in their foreheads.

All will bear his image; and everything will be dedicated to his praise. The very forms and creations of art shall glorify him; the halls of learning will be beautified with the wisdom which is from above; and the Lord alone will be the center and focus of all the sciences.

The Lord alone will be exalted in that day; his love will form the sacred and inviolable bond of nations.

Oh! How should we earnestly pray for the dawning of that happy day: “**Hallowed be name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.**”

We thus close, for the present, our meditations on the history of Elijah; hoping to resume the one day more effectually in the city of our God.

Let us be thankful for every word of consolation and edification which we have derived from these meditations; for to divine grace alone is all such benefit to be ascribed. It was that the precious name of Jesus might be glorified in our souls that we began and have continued these discourses.

May the Almighty graciously so dispose us all, that it may be said of us, in a blessed and spiritual sense, “**When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only!**”
Amen

~ end of book ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
