

From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

ELIJAH

(Preservation In Discouragement)

Text: I Kings - Chapter Nineteen

IN PREVIOUS MESSAGES, we have already considered God's preparation and presentation of Elijah for the national spiritual conflict at Carmel. Today, we will reflect upon God's preservation of His prophet who has now gone down into the Valley of Despair.

Let us not forget that Jezebel, and not Ahab, is the key figure in the drama of spiritual decline. Upon learning of the destruction of her prophets, she is filled with wrath against Elijah. Swearing in the name of her gods, she threatens to slay God's prophet before another day can pass.

The now exhausted Elijah is unable to withstand the wrath of the wicked queen. Filled with fear he turns and flees. How are the mighty fallen! And what sad moment it is when such a great man falls. We who have seen Elijah's greatness at Carmel can hardly understand this scene before us now. We have seen him used as an instrument in the hand of God, but here we behold his human form and remember that he is but dust. But we can learn from this text how God preserved his discouraged prophet from dejection, delusion, and defeat.



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Having fled past Beersheba at the southern extent of the Promised Land, Elijah travels yet a day's journey into the wilderness. Here, he stops to rest beneath the shade of a juniper tree. Here, far from the scene of victory at Carmel, we behold the utter dejection of this man of God. Crying out, "It is enough," he pleads with God to take away his life. Strange that this man who is destined never to die should pray now for death. But being physically exhausted, Elijah can only think of the wrath of Jezebel and his travel-wearied body.

THE DIVINE PROVIDER and Preserver has not forsaken his dejected prophet. The Angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him. Behold the angel now prepares the prophet's meal! A cake is baked upon the coals of fire, and a cruise of water is placed by the head of the sleeping Elijah. We have seen the prophet's needs met through the ravens and the widow's small supply, but now a supernatural visitor comes to share this crisis in his life. A Theophany! How greatly Elijah needs God, and God is here to meet the prophet's need.

Do not the people of God, today, sometimes fall into similar moods of dejection? Are there not times when fear rather than faith controls our lives? Let us even then remember that though we forsake Him, He does not forsake us. He will minister to us in mercy and nurse us back to faith again. Such was God's care of Elijah, such is God's care of His own.

Let us now follow Elijah to Mt. Sinai for we will learn there how God preserved Elijah from harmful delusions. There are fixed misconceptions behind his dejection and these must be corrected. While lodging in a cave at Sinai, the word of the Lord comes again to Elijah, saying, "What doest thou here Elijah?" This question is directed to the prophet who is apparently out of God's will. We might interpret it to mean, "Why have you left Israel to whom you were sent to come to this cave?"

YOU WILL REMEMBER that Sinai was a spiritual center during the wilderness journey of Israel. Here the Law had been given to the people through Moses. Now, however, it is not a center of importance. The need for the prophet of God is not at Sinai but at Samaria! Elijah is in a good place but not the right place.

Many Christian people fall into the same error today. Oh, no, we do not set up house-keeping in some cave or retire to the seclusion of some monastery, but we do often give up act-

ive participation in God's service. Too often when the battle against evil is raging and God needs us most, we are willing to be spectators from the pew on Sunday morning. But you dare not forget that God is in need of workers; personal evangelists, teachers, missionaries, ministers, singers, and a host of other Church workers. Let us never think of becoming spectators while God has need of our talents in His Kingdom.

Notice now Elijah's answer to God's question, "What doest thou here Elijah?" In his answer there is much of truth, but the last statement, "I, even I, only am left," has become with him a strong delusion. He feels that he is alone in this battle against idolatry. Now, God would have him to know that there are seven thousand in Israel who have never bowed the knee to Baal nor kissed his image. Elijah must learn that these also are accomplishing the will of God.

ANOTHER APPARENT misconception of Elijah, was his too great faith in the outward display of God's power. He had learned of the miraculous power of God, but here at Sinai he will learn of "the still small voice." Commanded by God to go out upon the mount, he is awed by a fearful display of force. The mountain was racked by wind, earthquake, and fire, but God was not in these. Then came a still small voice. Elijah immediately threw his mantle about his face. He was conscious of the presence of God.

What Elijah had to learn at Sinai long ago, we still need to learn today. God's justice is tempered with mercy. He is not only the God of Sinai, but also the God of Calvary. He is not only the God of power, but He is also the God of love. There is a place for both in the economy of God. Elijah was tempted to place too much emphasis on the justice and wrath of God, perhaps we are tempted to dwell too much upon His mercy and love.

ONE OF THE MOST remarkable movements in our time is that of the return of mass evangelism. Thousands of people are crowding into stadiums, and other public places to hear the Gospel proclaimed. Such gatherings might remind us of the great convocation that gathered at Mt. Carmel long ago. We are glad to learn of such gatherings, but we do not forget that God is also working through thousands of Churches in city, town, and hamlet. Let us not despise one method of evangelism and hold strictly to another lest we be guilty of a like delusion as that of Elijah. LET US NOT LIMIT GOD. He sometimes speaks through a national prophet of judgment, but he also has thousands through whom He speaks with a "still small voice." And therein we do rejoice.

Standing in the entrance of the Cave, Elijah again hears the words, "What doest thou here Elijah?" The cause of God is not defeated. You are not to remain here at Sinai in defeat. And, so, again comes the commission of God to Elijah. "Go, return on the way to the wilderness of Damascus." On his way he is to anoint Hazael as King of Syria, Jehu as King of Israel, and Elisha as prophet in his stead. Through the work of these now anointed by Elijah, Baal worship will be exterminated from among the people of Israel. Thus God preserved His prophet from dejection, delusion, and defeat. And as ever, the truth of God marched on.

WE, TODAY, share in like experiences with Elijah. The struggle against evil can be just as discouraging today as then. At times, we hear the acclaim of the crowd; at other times, we stand alone in the Valley of Despair. But of this we can be sure: "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even forever more."

Ministers, Please Note!

WE ARE REVISING our Church Directory in order to add churches not now included and to up-date information on churches listed previously. We would appreciate all ministers in this area with predominantly colored congregations to assist us in this endeavor. If your church has not been listed, please let us have the DENOMINATION of the church, the NAME of the church, the NAME of the pastor, a PHONE NUMBER where the pastor may be reached, and the ADDRESS of the church. If your church is incorrectly or incompletely listed in any of these respects, please send the necessary changes or additions to: Las Vegas VOICE, 958 West Owens Ave., Las Vegas, Nev. Thank you.

City Of Hope In Tribute To Judge

THE HONORABLE Roger T. Foley, Sr., retired Judge of the U.S. Court will be honored as Man of the Year by the City of Hope, Sunday, January 23, 1966 at Convention Center's Gold Room.

The evening's festivities will begin with a no-host cocktail party at 6:30 p.m. with Dinner scheduled for eight o'clock. Tickets are priced at \$7.50 per person and can be purchased at Tabic's Sewing Center, 419 Las Vegas Blvd., South. . . Call 382-5144 for reservations or additional information.

Local Business Woman No Stranger To Our Town

MRS. JEANNE DIAMOND, who was formerly known as Jeanne Norman, was a former business agent for the Culinary Union in the late forties and early fifties. She has been a resident of Las Vegas for the past thirty-five years, and is largely responsible for the organization of the maids in this city.

Diamond's Second Hand Store, which is owned and operated by Mrs. Diamond, has been in existence for the past five years. Her husband, Mr. Al Diamond, has run his own sheet metal shop for the past five years.

The Diamonds have one girl, Vicki, and two lovely granddaughters.

Diamond 1417 So. Commerce Phone: 382-7258 Second-Hand Store

CARPET SAMPLES - 25¢
HEADBOARDS - \$3 Up
3 BOOKCASES - \$4 Each
TV TABLES - 50¢ Each

METAL UTILITY STAND - \$2
ELECTRIC SEWING MACHINE - \$30

KNIFE, FORKS, SPOONS - 5¢ Each
ELECTRIC MIXER - \$9.50

PANTS STRETCHERS - 4/1.00

Last Call For Talent

JANUARY 14 is the final deadline for all entry applications to be submitted for participation in the "Search for Talent Contest" sponsored by the Las Vegas Recreation Department; the first Annual City-Wide Amateur talent contest to be staged here.

ALL ENTRY FEES and application forms must be submitted to Recreation Supervisor Nick Sylvester by 5 p.m. on January 14. Application forms will not be accepted on nights of auditions.

An added highlight of the talent contest will feature all winners, in each age division, on the Dolly Elliott TV show, KORK-TV Channel 2, after the individual trophies have been awarded.

Judging for the auditions to be held on January 17-18 at the Valley High School Little Theatre will be done by the Recreation-sponsored dramatic group, "The Las Vegas Curtain Timers." Final judging on January 23 will be handled by Ted Quilan, KORK-TV and Radio personality, Dolly Elliott, and John Cronan of the "Dolly Elliott" TV program, Keith Macdonald, Superintendent of Recreation, Jim Jensen, Dula Center Director, Jeanne Roberts, Recreation Advisory Commission member, Mr. Charles Nizet, president of ATF Film Productions, Las Vegas VOICE Editor, Alice Key, and a top name in show business.

ALL CONTESTANTS in the age division of 9-12 and 13-15 years will audition Monday night, January 17 at 7 p.m. Competitors ranging from 16 years and up will audition January 18 at 7 p.m. Finals will be held January 23, Sunday afternoon at 1 p.m. at the Convention Theatre, Mezzanine floor of the Mint Hotel.

Entry forms can be obtained by either calling Nick Sylvester at 385-1221, ext. 374, or by coming to the City Hall Annex.

Auditions and Finals will be open to the public and no admission charge will be made.