

# ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

by

F. W. Krummacher, D. D.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### THE PARTING

Our Saviour, Mark, 16:14, upbraided even own disciples with their unbelief: and what does he in general speak more strongly against? For unbelief is the occasion of all sin, and the very bond of iniquity. It does nothing but darken and destroy. It makes the world a moral desert, where no divine footsteps are heard—where no angels ascend and descend—where no living hand adorns the fields, feeds the fowls of heaven, or regulates events. Thus it makes nature, the garden of God, a mere automaton, and the history of Providence a fortuitous succession of events, and man a creature of accident, and prayer a useless ceremony. It annihilates even the vestiges of heaven that still remain upon earth, and stops the way to every higher region.

But faith sees an invisible world dawning upon the visible, and beholds this earth as a theatre of divine wonders. It everywhere traces the footsteps, operation, and government of the triune God. In the winds it sees messengers commissioned by Him; in the lightnings it beholds ministers sent forth in his service. It has eagles' wings for a worm in the dust, and opens the regions that He beyond us.

Unassisted by faith, the mind of man, however bold may be its flight of thought, cannot soar beyond the limits of the visible world. For this purpose we must become as little children, sitting at the feet of Jesus, denying ourselves, and living by faith on his word. The poor and longing soul has then a place where it may find repose and shelter in the storms of this life, and becomes assured that whatever it loses of the blessings of Christian friendship by the stroke of death, shall be restored to it hereafter in tenfold excellence, to be lost no more.

**“And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces”** (II Kings 2:12).

#### **I. Elijah having now shaken the dust of earth from his feet, Elisha, his faithful companion is left alone in the wilderness beyond Jordan**

Who can describe the feelings of the forsaken man! Is he really awake? Is it only a vision he sees? No, he is certain of the contrary. He sees the mantle of the ascended prophet floating down from the sky, and his own hands take it up from the ground. It is all reality to the senses.

His friend, his spiritual father soars yonder in the chariot through the air, as really as Noah in his ark was borne upon the waters of the deluge; as really as Moses and the children of Israel passed dryshod through the Red Sea. Rut, O, who had ever seen such a sight as this! In truth, he needed a divinely supporting hand to keep him from sinking beneath the overwhelming feelings which he must have experienced at this solemn moment of his life.

Blessed was he to whom it was given to witness such a scene! But more blessed still is it to see by faith at present those things which are hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. For verily there are those who, though endued with much strength of natural intellect, are, in spiritual things, as men without understanding; who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not.

Elisha must have been now filled with adoring wonder. New hopes and consolations must also have been suggested to him to allay his fears, and console him upon his loss of such a friend. His heart, however, was full, and he cried after the ascending prophet, **“My father! my father! The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.”**

Probably the name of father had never before been pronounced on earth with stronger emotion or more affectionate tenderness. It is as if he would still draw back his departing friend from heaven. Elisha knew his worth. He had known him in private as well as in public life. He had found it good to be with him, and to enjoy the benefit of his intimate friendship. For he had shown himself, doubtless, in private life, what God had publicly owned him to be, a true servant of the Lord; and thus had exhibited more than common disinterested love.

Though habituated to so much that was elevated and supernatural, he had shown himself attentive even to the smallest matters which could give real happiness to others around him: and if at one moment he had stood terrible in the scene of conflict, with the drawn sword of the Spirit in his hand, he had been ready the next moment to gather the little ones, the humble and teachable, under the wings of love; to cheer the timid with the most fatherly kindness.

How much then had Elisha lost in this one man! The happiest and most important hours of his life had been spent in his society. O, what recollections would now hover about his soul! What surges of desire, affection, gratitude and regret are poured out in this exclamation, **“My father! my father!”**

**“The, chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!”** or “thou wast Israel’s artillery and cavalry;” its glittering legion and its invincible host. What a majestic testimony! Yet what is there in this testimony that is not true of the man whom God had made as an iron bulwark about Zion, and as an armed host against Israel’s foes?

- Think only of the fire from heaven which this prophet, in his zeal for the house of the Lord, called down upon the adversaries of God and of his people;
- Think of the dreadful defeat, which, as with a waving of his hand, he brought upon the destroyers of his people at Mount Carmel;
- Think of the awful thunder which he bore upon his lips for the blasphemers of the Lord;

- Think of the mighty overcoming power which he was wont to exercise against the proudest, the strongest, and most daring of the Lord's adversaries.

He spake, and the horse and his rider stood as if the thunderstruck. He threatened, and tyrants shrank back, pale and silent, at his rebuke. He commanded in the name of God, and fire and sword united their force to destroy from the earth a whole royal race, both root and branch, because it had taken the fit against the kingdom of the Lord. He was wroth in spirit, and his anger became a blazing flame, which consumed a whole host of lying priests from the land of Israel.

And what a wall of protection was this man about the believers in the land!

- How did he encourage the trembling and scattered flock by word and deed!  
- How did he stand for them in the breach, that their faith might not fail!

What encouragement was afforded them, both in precept and pattern, by this champion of the Lord!

And Elijah was not only their champion and standard-bearer, but he was, at the same time, as a Shield round about them in the name of the Lord. More terrible was he to Ahab and to Jezebel, in his invisible armor, than a whole host of Syrians and Philistines. Such was the man who had now departed! This phalanx of Israel and its bulwark was now removed! What would be the consequence? Who would now take the lead in the cause of God, and oppose his breast to the foe? O thou invaluable Elijah! alas, that thou hast left us so soon! **"My father! my father! The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!"**

It is long since the church of God has seen such men as this language imports; while, on the other hand, the kingdom of darkness is in no want of champions. Yet still, according to the promise, Zechariah 10:3,5, we wait for a time when **"the Lord of hosts shall visit his flock, the house of Judah, and make them as his goodly horse in the battle; and they shall be as mighty men who tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets."** But until that time, it must be said, **"Herein is the patience of the saints."**

In a certain sense, however, the honorable appellation of **"the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof,"** belongs also, even now, to all the faithful and the righteous, and especially to those who, in the spirit of the New Testament, are mighty in patience and prayer.

Why was the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah so long suspended? Was it not because of the prayer of one righteous man? For, behold, what is testified of him. **"I cannot do any thing,"** saith the Lord, **"till thou be come thither."**

Who was it that interceded for Israel when they fought against Amalek? Was it not Moses, the servant of the Lord? When he held up his hands in prayer, Israel prevailed; but, when he let down his hands, Amalek prevailed. It was not their own sword then that helped Israel; it was not the prayer of Moses, the man of God.

So, in like manner, did Samuel pray; and an inconsiderable band, under Judah's banner, discomfited their enemies; for, when **“the children of Israel were afraid of the Philistines, they said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hands of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.”** (I Samuel 7:7-10). Thus was Samuel Israel's artillery and armed force.

Behold, my friends, such help and deliverance can praying believers obtain for their fellow men! For faith takes hold of the promise, and takes hold of the divine strength in the promise, and thus can do great things. So, doubtless, at present, the faith of God's elect restrains many a vial of wrath; and happy is the place where such praying believers reside. They are of greater service to such a place than walls of brass and ramparts of rock.

Happy the church whose pastors are the **“chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!”**

- They are Israel's chariots, when, like Moses once, they ascend with you on the fiery wheels of intercession through clouds and darkness, to the throne of grace.
- They are Israel's horsemen, when they send their arrows into your hearts, exclaiming, **“Thou, thou art the man!”**
- They are Israel's chariots, when, with a holy courage, they thresh every mountain amongst you, and it becomes a plain, that Christ alone may be exalted.
- They are Israel's horsemen, when, in the armor of God, they take the field in prayer for you, day and night, against the power of Satan and his seducing spirits.

Pray, my friends, for your own sakes, that God may anoint your teachers to be such men, and that you may be able to say of them, when they are gone, **“The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!”**

## **II. Elisha's eyes would still follow his master's triumphal car; but it is soon out of sight, and he is now left alone**

Well might he now utter the lamentation of the Psalmist, **“Woe is me, that I”** must still **“sojourn in Mesech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar!”** He rends his clothes, exclaiming, **“My father! my father!”**

We are not in a situation fully to understand and sympathize, with Elisha's grief, because we have never had to mourn over the departure of an Elijah. We must have stood at the grave of a Luther or a Calvin, or at that of a John Arndt, a Franke, or a Bengel, in order to know something of it.

We must imagine what it is to lose a beloved father, or a tender mother, out of a family; and then apply this to the whole church of the saints.

But how different is the end of the ungodly and profane from that on which we have now been meditating, and which, in substance at least, is the earthly end of all the Lord's saints! The day of grace is, however, yet continued to us.

We still hear the voice of God calling us to repentance, saying, and **“Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die? As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should repent and live.”**

We still behold the open arms of a deliverer, which are kindly extended toward us. But, as everything has its time and its season, therefore **“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”**

**“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.”**

One of two events must follow our pilgrimage through this world; either an ascent to heaven, or a descent to hell. There is no middle state in eternity. Therefore, “O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sin of world, have mercy upon us. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, receive our prayer.” Amen.

~ end of chapter 25 ~

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