

Elijah's Mantle

Sermon #0730

Study by W. D. Frazee

“And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” 2 Kings 2:14.

Who is this that asked that question? Elisha.

Elijah had just gone to heaven. A chariot of angels had come for him. God had crowned his life of witness with this wonderful experience of translation. And now the man that as a young man at Abel-meholah had called by Elijah years before, who had followed him around over the hills and through the valleys assisting him as a helper, who had poured water on his hands, now he had been giving the privilege of seeing Elijah go to heaven, and he was taking back with him the mantle.

So far as we know Elijah didn't leave much property here in the world. His estate apparently didn't go through probate court. There was no quarreling over his property. As far as we know, he didn't leave a bank account. He left his mantle. And it was precious to Elisha.

It is an interesting thing that that very day on the way to this place where the miracle happened of translation, it is interesting that another miracle took place preliminary in which this mantle figured. You remember that they started from Jericho. As they came down there, the river Jordan flowed between Jericho and the place where they were going. Hundreds of years before, the children of Israel had been coming across Jordan coming the other way from the east side to the west side. God had worked a miracle and opened up the river for them you remember, in the days of Joshua.

It had been a long time since anything like that had happened. This day God did for two men what He had done for two million hundreds of years before. He opened up the river. The visible agency that He used to accomplish it was the mantle of Elijah. You will read that in the eighth verse.

But now Elijah has gone to heaven, and the mantle has floated down, and Elisha has taken it. He has torn asunder his own clothes, and he is wearing now the mantle of Elijah. He comes back to the place where that wonderful miracle of crossing the Jordan took place a few hours before. How is he going to get across back to the other side?

So he takes that mantle and he smites the waters just as Elijah had smitten them a few hours before. And he says:

“Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” 2 Kings 2:14.

Is God still around? Or does the fact that Elijah has gone mean that nothing miraculous can happen? Elijah raised that widow's son there at Zarephath, but Elijah is gone. Elijah brought the fire from heaven there at Mt. Carmel, but Elijah is gone. Elijah smote the waters, the Jordan opened, but Elijah is gone.

"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" 2 Kings 2:14.

Well thank God, Elisha didn't have long to wait to find the answer. And I am sure friends that he did not ask the question in doubt and uncertainty. In fact that is the very point that I wish to make clear that Elisha had come to a point of certainty. He knew when he smote the waters what was going to happen. There was no gamble with him. Nothing uncertain about it. He knew that it wasn't Elijah, but Elijah's God that had opened those waters before.

He knew that it was not Elijah, but Elijah's God that was there with him. So he didn't say, where is Elijah? He knew that Elijah had gone to heaven. Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Thank God the answer is, He is right here.

Elijah is on his way to heaven, but the God of Elijah is right here.

I want to read an interesting comment on this.

"When the Lord in His providence sees fit to remove from His work those to whom He has given wisdom, He helps and strengthens their successors, if they will look to Him for aid and will walk in His ways. They may be even wiser than their predecessors; for they may profit by their experience and learn wisdom from their mistakes"
Prophets and Kings, page 228.

Isn't that wonderful friends? I think that is a wonderful promise. Was that the experience of Elisha? Yes. Did he learn from the experience of Elijah? Yes. Did he learn from the mistakes of Elijah? I believe he did. For as far as the record indicates, he didn't repeat some of the mistakes of Elijah. You remember that experience where Elijah got discouraged and ran because his life was threatened.

Did Elisha ever have his life threatened? Oh yes. One morning he woke up and his servant came in and he said, master we are in a terrible situation here. The army of the Syrians is all around this place where we are, Dothan. A whole army after one man. Did Elisha get worried, or anxious? He just prayed a simple prayer and said what? Lord, open the young man's eyes.

What did the young man see? Why he saw chariots of fire and horses of fire, the angels of God all around about Elisha. Perhaps the same angels that had made the chariot that had come for Elijah sometime before. You see Elisha was going over some of that ground, and he was succeeding where Elijah had failed.

Now Elijah learned to turn his failures into victories, to turn his defeats into triumphs. That is why he finally went to heaven. Those who are translated today will have learned to turn their defeats into victories, their failures into triumphs.

“Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” 2 Kings 2:14.

Can you say, He is right here with me? I know He is here. The one hundred and forty-four thousand are going to share the experience of Elijah. Like Elijah, of course, they will be translated. Like Elijah they will have to stand as firm witnesses for God in a time of great apostasy. Like Elijah they will have their faith severely tested. Like Elijah they will learn to pray.

There is a particular experience in Elijah's life that finally prepared him for his closing work, and for that trip to heaven. I would like to have you notice as we follow through on this theme, where is the Lord God of Elijah? I want us to notice how Elijah learned that closer fellowship with God which was so much desired by Elisha as they parted on this memorable occasion.

We will go back to 1 Kings the eighteenth chapter. You remember in the seventeenth chapter we have the story of Elijah's coming from the mountains of Gilead to give the witness to Ahab that apostasy had reached the point where God was going to visit Israel in judgements. You remember his sojourn by the brook Cherith over beyond Jordan. Then finally, when the brook went dry, where did he go? To Zarephath.

Finally after the end of three and a half years, he came to Ahab. Elijah summoned Ahab and all Israel to Mt. Carmel. You remember that wonderful experience took place up there on the mountain where the priests of Baal were defeated, and the fire of God fell in answer to Elijah's prayer. When that day's test had closed in complete victory for God, and in complete vindication for Elijah, the prophet said to the king, you had better go now, and get home, because there is going to be a great rain.

We are told that when Elijah said this that the sky was just as devoid of rain and clouds as had been for three years. But Elijah's faith reached up to heaven and claimed the promise that when Israel repented, then there would come rain. But I want you to notice that when he gave that assurance to Ahab, he himself went up to the top of Carmel. The contrast between what Ahab did, and what Elijah did is suggested.

“And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees” 1 Kings 18:41-42.

What was he doing? Praying. What was Ahab getting ready to do? To feast. There is a time of course to eat and drink. There is also a time to pray. Thank God Elijah knew what time it was, time to pray. There on his knees at the top of the mountain he prayed. Again and again he sent his servant to look over the sea.

Finally at the seventh time, the servant came back, and he said, there is a little cloud like a man's hand coming out of the sea.

What did Elijah say? That is it.

The servant was sent to tell Ahab, "prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not." 2 Kings 18:44. By the time Ahab got going the rain was coming. And Elijah ran, in an act of service and recognition of Ahab's kingship, he ran before him all that way to Jezreel.

Elijah must have been a man of a strong constitution. He must have had a great deal of endurance. To think of him there on Carmel all day without food watching those priests, and going through that tremendous ordeal. And finally going down to slay the priests of Baal, then going up to pray, and now he runs before the horses all the way to Jezreel. Quite a man.

But when he gets to Jezreel, he lets Ahab go on to the palace, and he lies down outside to sleep. Think of it, it is raining friends. Raining, raining, raining! But he is not looking for some special favor. He lies down outside the city wall and sleeps. What a sleep that must have been.

Suddenly he is awakened. A messenger has come from Jezebel with the threatening that she is going to kill him tomorrow, because he killed the priests of Baal. What does he do?

Oh that poor man, that dear man awakened out of sleep. If you have ever been awakened suddenly out of sleep by some emergency you know sometimes it takes a while for the brain to get to working. And Elijah must have been very exhausted. It is an interesting thing to me, that while God can and does lift men above physiology he doesn't always do it. He had marvelously sustained Elijah during all that day. But his battery is way down. It is being recharged there as he sleeps. It isn't all charged yet.

Now don't misunderstand me. I am not trying to indicate that Elijah didn't make a mistake. He did when he ran. But I am also pointing out friends, that he was weak. It was to teach him the lesson of that very weakness, and to teach him what God was willing to do for weak men, and how God would use weak men, that God permitted him to go through the experience of the next few days and weeks.

You remember he ran for his life clear down to the south of Judah. He left his servant at Beer-sheba. And he himself went on out into the desert, and there he sat down under a juniper tree, and what did he pray for? He prayed to die. It is very interesting what he said to the Lord.

"It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" 1 Kings 19:4.

What do you conclude from that? And up to that time perhaps Elijah had thought what? Perhaps he was better than his fathers. And you and I looking back at the record would probably say, yes Elijah was a great deal better than his fathers.

But now he comes to the place to sense something of his weak undone condition. He has no boasting to make about what happened on Carmel. He is utterly discouraged with himself. Take away my life, O Lord, for I am not better than my fathers. He was so exhausted, he went to sleep. And I am sure friends that he would have been perfectly willing for that sleep to have continued on and on, never wake-up.

By and by he is awakened. The angel has come with something to eat. Oh how loving our God is friends, and how very practical. God didn't come to reprove him, although doubtless you and I would have said he needed some reproof. There is a time for that. God didn't come to argue with him, or rebuke him, or talk over the problem with him at all. He came to feed him, and give him something to drink. Oh that we might all learn the way of the Lord in dealing with souls.

The angel said arise and eat, and there he looked. There was something to eat and something to drink. He ate and drank and laid him down again. What is going to do this time? Sleep some more. Did he need it? Oh yes friends. Yes.

The second time the angel of God came, "and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee." 1 Kings 19:7. Again he ate and drank, and arose, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Mt. Horeb the mount of God. Again another wonderful endurance record.

Well he got there and went into a cave. I suppose he thought probably Jezebel or her agents could never find him there. And I'm sure they couldn't. Nobody could find him, but God did. And the word of the Lord comes to him as he is there in the cave.

What does God say to him? God is ready to talk to him now and Elijah is ready to listen. What are you doing here Elijah? I sent you to Ahab and you witnessed for Me. I sent you to the brook, and the ravens fed you. I sent you to Zarephath and the widow sustained you. I sent you to Carmel and answered your prayer, and sent the fire and sent the rain. I sent you to all those places, but Elijah, who sent you here? What are you doing here anyway?

It is very interesting, Elijah starts in to inform God of all that has been happening. He explains what the trouble is. He says Lord the children of Israel have done wrong, and I have been trying to hold up the standard, and I'm the only one left, and they are trying to kill me.

So God said, now listen, come out of this cave, and come out here on the mount. The eleventh verse tells us about three tremendous experiences that Elijah was taken through. The first was a great and strong wind which rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord.

Can you imagine a wind that would break rocks friends?

That was really a wind. But it says the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the

earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, a still small voice.

Whose voice was that? God's.

You know Elijah was more used to the idea of the wind, and the earthquake, and the fire. He was a man of action. It is a good thing to be a man of action. But God was trying to teach him a lesson that would get him ready for two things friends. Two things that you and I ought to be very much interested in. One was translation. That is what finally happened to him wasn't it? But he wasn't ready this day.

But shall I say even more important than that, God was seeking to get him ready to carry on the work of reformation which had been begun at Carmel. He was seeking to get him ready to carry on the revival of the schools of the prophets. He was seeking to get him ready to train Elisha. For all of these wonderful experiences he must have a preparation. And while God had taught him many wonderful things in Gilead, and by the brook, and at Zarephath, these thrilling experiences at Carmel, there was something that Elijah needed to learn friends. It was a very simple quiet trust in God.

Well you remember, he stood there in the entering in of the cave, wrapping his face in his mantle. Here is this mantle. And again the voice of God says to him, what are you doing here? All he knows is to answer as he has answered before.

What does God tell him?

God says, Elijah look here. I want to tell you some things. You think your work is ended, but I am telling you there is still a great work ahead. You think that you are the only one, but I am going to tell you that I have seven thousand that have never once bowed to Baal. It is seven thousand times better than you think it is. I have got some people back there in Israel that I want you to get in touch with. There is a young man on a farm in Abelmeholah that I want you to get in contact with. I want you to call him and prepare him to be your successor. This thing is not going down in defeat Elijah. It is going on and on to glorious figure.

So he went and did that very thing and called Elisha. Thus began a most wonderful experience of companionship, apprenticeship on Elisha's part, training on the part of Elijah, which brings us to that text that we began our study with. That wonderful scene by Jordan with the chariot taking Elijah and Elisha standing at the river's break and smiting the waters with that mantle of Elijah, and calling on God to do for him all that He had done for Elijah.

Thank God friends. Thank God for that wonderful story.

Now from this, I would like to have us, of the many lessons that might be drawn, just two or three that I wish to have us focus our thoughts upon for a little while.

First of all, there is such a thing as an experience of certainty. There is such a thing. Peter says, we have not followed cunningly devised fables. We know so.

Paul says, I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

Elijah's certainty on Mt. Carmel is a wonderful thing. He knew that God would send that fire, and he risked everything on it. He knew that God would send the rain, and he risked everything on that. And although he lost his courage that next night, yet out of it all God brought him around to these wonderful experiences that we are noting now.

My point is there is an experience of certainty. And thank God friends, it can be passed on to others. I do not mean it can be passed on as money is passed on. It can't be passed on by flesh and blood relationship, no, but there is such a thing as a spiritual fellowship and relationship in which these experiences can be shared.

Elisha developed in training with Elijah an experience of certainty so that the very day his master was gone, he didn't hesitate to come there to that river and ask God to do for him exactly what He had done for Elijah. Wasn't that a wonderful faith friends?

God is seeking to develop that experience of certainty today. He wants you and me to know that all that God did for men in past ages, He is waiting to do today.

I want to read a wonderful promise commenting on these experiences.

"The records of sacred history are written, not merely that we may read and wonder, but that the same faith which wrought in God's servants of old may work in us. In no less marked manner will the Lord work now, wherever there are hearts of faith to be channels of His power"
Prophets and Kings, page 175.

I like that expression, "in no less marked manner." God is anxious to do as much today as He did for Elijah and Elisha. Do you believe that? What is waiting for? Hearts of faith to be channels of His power.

Let's turn over to the New Testament to the epistle of James. I want you to notice something very interesting. A wonderful challenge, a glorious suggestion of the privilege that you and I can have.

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" James 5:16-18.

You know there are two things in this verse here in the New Testament that we are told that the Old Testament doesn't say anything about. Did you know that?

We are told that first of all Elijah prayed what? That it might not rain. The Old Testament doesn't tell us that, but that is the truth. James write it down by inspiration hundreds of years later. Just as true even though the record of it was written down so long after.

Whenever Jesus speaks friends, it is true. Isn't it? Some people are worried some times because they find some detail in these revelations of the present church that aren't recorded in the Bible that worries them. Do you know dear friends that there are literally dozens of things about Old Testament history that are found in the New Testament as far as the record is concerned?

Where do you find about Michael the Archangel disputing with the Devil about the body of Moses? Do you find that over there in Deuteronomy or Joshua? No. You find that in Jude.

And so here we are given some interesting things about Elijah. Another thing that is mentioned here is that it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. You look that up in the Old Testament and see where you find it.

Now I just throw that in parenthetically. I come back now to what James is striking at. He is talking about what God did for Elijah, and he is pointing out that Elijah was what kind of man? A man of like passions as we are. Did he get hungry? Did he get weak? Did he get discouraged? Yes. All those things happened to him. They happen to us sometimes.

But the point is this. Not that Elijah was a man of like passions as we are, but he did something. What was it? He prayed. He prayed. That is the way he got the experience. That is what happened before the rain quit falling. He prayed. James says so. That is what shut up heaven for three years and a half, the prayers of Elijah. Was that what opened it again?

"Prayer is the key in the hand of faith" *Steps to Christ*,
page 94.

Did the prayers of Elijah lock up the actual rain clouds of heaven? Did they open them up again? Yes. Yes.

Do you know what is going to open up the rain clouds for the latter rain, friends? It is the prayers of people who, like Elisha and Elijah, have learned to pray. Pray earnestly. I say there is such a thing as having an experience of certainty.

The other thought that I wanted us to meditate on is its for you. Because I read:

"The records of sacred history are written, not merely that we may read and wonder, but that the same faith which wrought in God's servants of old may work in us. In no less marked manner will the Lord work now, wherever

there are hearts of faith to be channels of His power”
Ibid.

Friends, I propose to take God at His word. What do you say? May I tell you that you must have this experience to be a success as a teacher. You must have this experience to be a success as a nurse, as a physician, as a medical missionary. You must have this experience to be a success as a soul-winner, an evangelist.

The experience of certainty of being able to kneel by the bedside of the sick, or to stand before your class in the classroom, or to talk to your children in the home, or out in the community to witness. To be able to speak with certainty about what God will do for those who come to him.

“Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” 2 Kings 2:14.

Can you say He is right here? Right here in the sickroom. We are told that physicians and nurses are to be able to say clearly by their very attitude, that there very atmosphere of their presence is to witness to the sick patient, God is here to save, and not to destroy.

Oh friends, our great privilege as Christian teachers as medical missionaries is to have an experience that we know that the Lord God of Elijah is with us every step we take. There is a sentence that has been blessing my heart in recent days and hours. Just a tiny little sentence about a line long.

“Nothing can stand in His way” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, page 10.

Now friends may I make this very practical. Do any of you ever have the temptation of complaining because something isn't getting done that you think ought to get down? And you wonder why somebody doesn't do something about it? Did you know that you could do something about it? Oh you say, that is the trouble, if I could do something about it I would. But I can't. Oh yes, you can do what Elijah did. What did he do? He prayed.

True, it didn't all take place in five minutes. It took several years of praying. Was it worth it? There is no problem that you and I can face, there is no problem that you and I can hear of but what we can do something about it if we will through this channel of prayer.

God had to let Elijah go down there to Horeb and witness the devastating effects of earthquake, wind, and fire, and let Elijah know that that wasn't what God was trying to do at all. Then He spoke to through what? A still small voice.

Do you know the greatest miracle that can happen today dear friends? The greatest miracle that can happen today is the development of some people that are quiet, and calm, and peaceful, and contented in the midst of a turbulent, restless, striving world. That is the greatest miracle of all.

God sent fire from heaven on Carmel, but do you know who is going to bring fire down today? The false prophet in Revelation thirteen. Is that correct? Yes.

We are not called upon to summon the multitudes to witness some marvelous outpouring of the lightning of heaven. No. But we are called upon for something oh so much more important than that could ever be. We are called upon to get an experience, and reveal an experience that comes through listening to the still small voice. And of knowing that it is the voice of God. And thus being willing to calmly, quietly take up the work of revival and reformation that Elijah and Elisha did together. Shall we do it friends?

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