

Christ's Medical Missionary Work for Elijah

#0698

Study given by W.D. Frazee—February 15, 1964

Well, this morning I have an interesting subject to study with you. If you'd like to put a name down for it, it's "Christ's Medical Missionary Work for Elijah." "Christ's Medical Missionary Work *for* Elijah"—not *through* Elijah, but *for* Elijah.

And, of course, as medical missionaries, you and I are interested in God's way of doing medical missionary work. We often study the life of Christ here on earth, and we reflect upon the fact that during His public ministry, He devoted more time to healing the sick than He did to preaching. But this morning we're going back several hundred years *before* the incarnation, and we're studying some medical missionary work that Jesus did for one of His servants back then in Old Testament times.

You may turn to 1 Kings, the 19th chapter, and while you're turning, remember that the apostle Paul tells us in Romans 15:

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" Romans 15:4.

So these things in the Old Testament scriptures are written down for us today, and it is God's intention that as we read these stories, our hearts shall be filled with faith and hope and comfort. And somehow, this week I've gotten a wonderful blessing out of this experience that came back there to Elijah.

Now, before we read the narrative in 1 Kings 19, it will be well for us to review the setting in the two previous chapters. You remember that the 17th chapter opens with Elijah coming from the mountains of Gilead, east of Jordan, over to Samaria, the capital of Israel, to give the king a message that because of the idolatry—the Baal worship of Israel—God was going to withhold the rain. And so, at the word of Elijah, for three and a half years there was no rain.

For a while, Elijah was out there in the mountains and the ravens were feeding him. He drank from the brook. When the brook went dry, did God have a plan for him? Oh, yes. He sent him clear across to Zarephath, and there a widow miraculously was given supplies, a day at a time, to feed the prophet as well as her own household.

But the day finally came when God saw that the judgments had done their work and it was time for a decision. So Elijah journeyed to Samaria and gave the word to Ahab to call all Israel together; and there at Mount Carmel, decision-day took place. All

Israel saw the priests of Baal all day long pray to their god and cut themselves and try to get fire out of heaven to consume the sacrifice. And you remember, of course, it was utterly futile. And then at the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah prayed a simple but earnest prayer, and the fire came down and consumed not only the sacrifice, but the water and the wood and even the stones. What a wonderful demonstration of God's mighty power!

All the people fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, He is the God. The Lord, He is the God." And Elijah thought a wonderful reformation was about to take place. He thought the victory was right there. He had the people take the prophets of Baal, and with his own hand, he slew them at the close of the day.

He told Ahab to get ready for a rain was coming. Elijah went up to the top of the mountain and prayed earnestly, you remember, seven times. And when he saw the cloud, he said, "That's enough." That little cloud was to him the evidence of the great rain that was coming. And he told Ahab, "Hurry now, get on your way for there's a great rain." And sure enough, the rain came.

And Elijah, after all that busy, heavy, exhausting day, *ran* before the chariot of Ahab, as a servant, to show his respect for the king and his loving interest in that poor man that had been so deluded by the Devil.

Well, when they got to Jezreel where the king went home to his wife, Jezebel, Elijah stopped outside the city gates and lay down on the bare ground to sleep. I've been pondering about it: I don't know whether he was sleeping in the rain or whether there was some kind of shelter, but we're told it was on the bare earth.

Now imagine, friends: there he lies, the prophet of God. The *prophet* of God! And his name is on 10,000 tongues this night, for at *his* word, rain has been held back for three and a half years, and now, at *his* word, the rain is falling in torrents. At *his* word, the fire has fallen from heaven and consumed the sacrifice. But he hasn't been put up at the best hotel in Jezreel. He's not being entertained at the king's palace. He's lying outside somewhere, on the bare ground, exhausted and weary.

Suddenly, he's awakened! Somebody's shaking him to give him a message. (Were you ever awakened suddenly at night?) And the message is given by the messenger, who quickly departs. The messenger is a servant of Jezebel's, and what does he say? "The queen says to tell you that by tomorrow at this time, she'll make *your* life like one of those prophets of hers that you killed today. That's what you're going to get."

And what does he do? He who has braved the wrath of king and prophets and multitudes, *runs*. Well, let's read the story:

"And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then

Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there” 1 Kings 19:1-3.

If you were looking at a map, you’d see Samaria up here in the north part of the map and farther north, Jezreel. That’s where Elijah is. But Beersheba is way down at the south part of the map. Elijah *ran*, and he ran a *long* time before he stopped. He was *fleeing* from the wrath of Jezebel.

He didn’t stop to ask the Lord what to do. He didn’t stop to think that the God who had protected him from the wrath of Ahab those three and a half years could protect him now. He didn’t stop to think that the God who had heard his prayer that very day and sent the fire from heaven could hear his prayer once again. For the moment, utterly fearful and discouraged, he took matters into his own hands and did what he thought was the sensible thing—he fled. From a human standpoint, it was a sensible thing, wasn’t it, friends? Sure.

So on and on he ran. But now notice: when he went to Beersheba—clear down at the south end of the map as you usually see it on the map of Palestine—he doesn’t stop there. Oh, no. He left his servant at Beersheba:

“But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and

strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but 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. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus..." 1 Kings 19:4-15.

(If you look at the map, Horeb is way down south, clear below Beersheba. Damascus is way to the north, the other end of the map.)

"...And when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" Ibid., verses 15-18.

All right. Let's look at it a little. There's Elijah, fleeing from the wrath of Jezebel, and he comes to Beersheba, leaves his servant, hastens on, *drives* himself on. I want you to think of how exhausted he must have been, friends. Think of that day of anxious watching of those priests of Baal (he didn't have any time off for lunch, I can tell you that), and then that gruesome, gory work of slaying those 450 prophets at the close of the day with his own hand (we're told he did that exhausting work as the executor of God's judgment), and then *running* from Carmel to Jezreel, ahead of leaping horses, a chariot; then being awakened in the night after a brief interval of sleep. Shaken with fear, he rushes on and on and without pause, on and on and on to Beersheba, and then on out into the desert. One wonders how the human frame could take so much. There he lies, exhausted, under that juniper tree.

Is he in the path of duty? No, he's not in the path of duty. He's clear out of the path of duty, *miles* off.

And now an angel came and that angel awakened him. He starts. He's been shaken before: that messenger from Jezebel. Is this one of his enemies that has caught up with him? No, it's an angel of the Lord.

What does Jesus do, friends, as He sends His angel? Does he scold him? What would *you* have done? What would you've done with this runaway? It's *very* interesting to contemplate. The angel of God doesn't even discuss the thing with him. He *feeds* him. He feeds him.

Oh, I think this is *wonderful*, friends! Here's a man clear out of his way, miles from his duty, and yet the love of God reaches out to that poor, discouraged, disheartened man! And He, who like a father pities His children, who knows our frame and remembers that we are dust (Psalm 103:13-14), sets about His medical missionary work—He feeds him.

To be very practical, friends, Elijah needs some calories in him. He has exhausted his bank account. His blood sugar was probably very low. He needed supplies of both. And so the angel of God feeds him and gives him something to drink, for probably his tissues were quite dehydrated. He hadn't had anything to drink, and he had run and run and run. That's not only exhausting; it's dehydrating.

And so with food and drink, his supplies are built up. But ah, he goes to sleep again. And he *needs* sleep. And God doesn't shake him and say, "Wake up here while I tell you what's wrong." No. Exhausted nature sleeps, sleeps, sleeps... Sleep—nature's gentle nurse that knits the raveled sleeve of care—takes over, and the healing, restoring work goes on.

And again he's awakened. What for? Another feeding. Isn't that what it says? Yes. He needs some more *food*; he needs some more *drink*. And oh, the pity, the mercy, the pathos of the angel's words, as awakening him that *second* time and setting before him his tray, shall I say, he says:

"...Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee"
Ibid., verse 7.

Not once does he talk to him of his failure. Not once does he mention his discouragement. He deals with the practical realities—the *need* of the moment, that need which must be met.

As Jesus, hundreds of years later, that afternoon on the hill slope near Galilee, watched those moving multitudes and said to the disciples, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" and by a miracle, supplied their needs ere they returned to their homes "lest they become weary," he said, "and faint by the way"—that same dear Heart in the long ago was thinking of His servant, Elijah the prophet. And He fed him and let him sleep and fed him again. It says:

“And he arose...and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God” Ibid., verse 8.

Think of it, friends: 40 days he journeys on. Whether he walked at night or slept at night, I do not know. I *do* know, friends, that it was strength from God that sustained him, not only from that food that he’d eaten, but through miraculously multiplying it through that time. Do you agree?

Why would God do that for a discouraged soul that was out of the line of duty? Ah, friends, the love of God does not answer to our narrow views. The love of God reaches down to the needs of poor, weak, discouraged souls.

And so we find that Elijah at last arrived at Horeb. How much time he had had to think during those 40 days—no one to mar his meditations, to interfere with his thoughts! And you notice that all this time, God does not interrupt him. God does not stop him.

What direction is he going? Still south, south, south—*away* from that woman, *away* from Jezebel, *away* from Ahab. Yes. On, on, on, on... Did *God* send him there? No, but God gave him breath to keep on living. He gave him food to keep strengthening him. And He gave him the guidance and guardianship of His angels lest Satan should take his life in that discouraged state. Oh, the mercy of our Lord, my friends!

Finally, God comes to him in the cave. And I want you to notice the tact and the wisdom and the skill with which God starts in to talk with him. “It’s time to talk now...” There *is* a time to talk, you know, and a time to keep silent. We’re told:

“It is the very essence of all right faith to do the right thing at the right time” *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 6, page 24.

May I say, friends, if there’s anybody that needs to know when to speak and when to keep still, it’s the medical missionary worker. What a sad thing it is when a nurse, or a helper of any kind, is so adept at saying the right thing at the wrong time—a perfectly good word, but out of season. And I would have you meditate this morning on the *restraint* of God who, for a month and a half, protects and nourishes and takes care of that prophet and never a *word* of reproof the whole time—not one, not one.

And now, how gently (and yet clearly) He comes to the point! There in the cave, the silence of weeks is broken, and that Voice which he had known in Gilead and Zarephath, at Samaria and Carmel, speaks:

“...What doest thou here, Elijah?” 1 Kings 19:9.

Not scolding, but oh, the question! How it must have probed the depths of Elijah’s heart. You would think he would have said, “Why, Lord, I hardly know. I know I’m not where I belong. I’m sorry. Help me get back on the track.” But no, no. This

was a hard case, a very hard case, but God tackles hard cases. The great Physician is at work.

So notice how gently and yet with all, how *determinedly* He probes right down to the *heart* of the problem: “What doest thou here, Elijah? How did you get here? What are you doing here? Who sent you here? What is your mission? What is your purpose? What do you expect to accomplish?”

And how Elijah’s hard thoughts of weeks boil out and boil over: “Oh,” he says, “I’ve been very jealous for you, Lord. I’ve been fighting for You all these years. And the children of Israel, they’ve forsaken You, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets, and I’m the only one left, and they seek *my* life to take it away.” In other words, things are at the bottom. Everything is defeat and it’s no use to go any further.

Notice how God refrains from argument with him. But He doesn’t leave him there in the cave. He says, “Elijah, come on out of the cave.” Thank God, Elijah was not so rebellious that he wouldn’t do that.

And there at the mouth of the cave, a great *wind* came, a wind so mighty that it just broke the rocks and smashed them one against another! Somehow Elijah was made conscious that it wasn’t the Lord that was talking to him in that wind, that that was not *God’s* way of dealing with the problem. Then came an earthquake, and how the rocks must have come tumbling down *from* all directions *to* all directions! But protected by the Lord, Elijah stood there. And again, he was made conscious that it wasn’t the Lord. Then a fire, a terrible fire, swept over! And again, protected, he listened and he watched the devastation. The hot blast was felt by him, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a still, small voice, as if to say, “Elijah, God moves in a mysterious way and He has a work to accomplish, a gentle ministry in quiet ways. Elijah, you need to learn that lesson of quiet submission, full surrender, depending on Me.”

So in the silence of this moment, God comes right back to the question. *Again* He probes: “What doest thou here, Elijah?”

How thankful God would have been if Elijah had said, “Well now, Lord, I see, and I’ve learned my lesson. I was *wrong* to run away from Jezreel. I was *wrong* to rush on from Beersheba, on down into the desert and on and on and on. Now, Lord, what do you want me to do?”

But do you notice that word for word, syllable-by-syllable, Elijah’s answer is precisely the same? I fancy that he had gone over that again and again those 40 days from the juniper tree to Horeb. I fancy that this was a chorus that he knew by heart for it had gone over and over in those brain cells. “What I have *tried* to do... And it’s all a failure. *I’m* a failure, *Israel’s* a failure—nothing left.”

But about that time, and thank God, friends, he hit bottom. He didn't go any further south and he didn't go any deeper down in discouragement. He had poured out his heart—he was empty—God was ready to fill it.

What are the next words of God? "...Go, return..." 1 Kings 19:15.

Ah, my friends, the patience of God waits a long time, but God *never* forgets what the goal is and that's to get us back on the track, back on the track. And I want to tell you something, friends: God protects many a man on a detour, but the soul is never fully satisfied until the feet are back on the track. Back on the track. And I want to tell you something, friends. God protects many a man on a detour, but the soul is never fully satisfied until the feet are back on the track. Back on the track.

So God says, "Go, return, on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus, anoint Hazael, anoint Jehu, and anoint Elisha. And remember, Elijah, as you take up your work again, remember this: you thought you were all alone, that everything was lost. Take heart. I have 7,000 left: 7,000 families where the name of Baal has never been mentioned in worship; 7,000 men that have never bowed their knees to that heathen idol; 7,000 homes where Jehovah is still worshiped morning and evening at the hour of sacrifice."

"Oh, is that *really* so?"

"Yes."

"All right. I'm on my way."

And on his way he went, and read the rest of the story. As he comes up to that farm at Abelmeholah, he anoints Elisha as his servant and successor, and takes him with him in an apprenticeship of reformatory educational training, reestablishes the schools of the prophets, and finally goes in a chariot to heaven, the second among men to be translated without seeing death. And isn't this a type of that wonderful group, some of the members of whom, I trust, are sitting before me here this morning?

Well, friends, it's a wonderful story, isn't it? A wonderful story. I thank God, as we read at the beginning:

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" Romans 15:4.

God is watching over all. He never leaves a sick soul, a tired heart, a discouraged mind.

There is an Eye that never sleeps
Beneath the wing of night;

There is an Ear that never shuts
When sinks the beam of light.

There is an Arm that never tires
When human strength gives way;
There is a Love that never fails
When earthly loves decay.

That Eye unseen o'erwatcheth all,
That Arm upholds the sky;
That Ear doth hear the sparrow's call,
That Love is ever nigh.

There is an Eye That Never Sleeps, James Cowden Wallace

I thank God that He loves me that much. Don't you? He *loves* you, and He loves every tired, discouraged, weary one. And ever He's seeking, as the great Medical Missionary, to meet the need, to meet the need—whether that need is in the bloodstream or the brain stream; whether it's in the body or the mind; whether it's in the muscles, or whether it's in the thinking processes—God is seeking to meet our needs.

Oh, let us pray morning by morning that our lips shall be so anointed with grace that we shall have the word in season to speak to him that is weary; that we shall know how to say the right thing at the right time; that we shall know how to postpone some things until the soul is ready to meet the crisis.

On the other hand, dear ones, this lesson, if it teaches anything, teaches us that *sooner or later* we must meet the issue of life—we may run from Jezebel at Jezreel; we may flee at Beersheba; God may wait for us under the juniper tree and feed us and let us rest, and feed us and strengthen us; we may go on to a rendezvous at the cave—but *sooner or later*, we must *face* the issue. We may run and run and run and run, but somewhere, sometime, we must *face* the issue.

God will be patient with us, friends. He'll feed us. He'll love us. With *infinite* tenderness, He will guard us. Somewhere, sometime He must bring us face to face with the question that we slipped up on. The *very* thing that we failed on: *that* very thing we must come and face.

With what great wisdom, with what tact and love, those who stand with Christ as medical missionaries must watch the divine signals to know *when* to feed and let the dear ones sleep awhile, and *when* to bring the issue in the cave at Horeb, for only God knows, my friends.

But remember, *sooner or later* we must meet that issue. There is no way to skip it. There is no way to detour around it. If we will not meet it at Jezreel, we must meet it, at last, at Horeb. And remember, when we meet it in Horeb, we cannot say, "Oh, Lord, now I've gotten here, and it's miles and miles and miles and miles from up there. And

there would be so many problems; why not just skip it?" No. What is the word? "Go, return."

And I want to tell you something, friends: we are never cured until we can meet our problems. We are never cured until we can meet our problems. And when you stop to think that nine-tenths of the diseases from which men suffer have their source in the thinking of the mind—in grief, anxiety, discouragement, fear, worry, anger, hatred, envy, discontent, rebellion (whatever those processes of the mind that are out of harmony with God)—believe me, my friends, they set up disordered processes in the physical body. What the mind thinks is reflected in ulcers of the stomach, or pain in the joints, or coronary attacks, high blood pressure—any one of a thousand physical manifestations.

Remember, friends: no matter what is done by the medical missionary to deal with the body, as Christ dealt with the body under the juniper tree, *sooner or later* the problem must be faced. *Sooner or later* the mental quirk must be straightened out. *Sooner or later* the rebellion must be put away. *Sooner or later* the disharmony with God must be discovered and remedied. *Sooner or later* the soul must stand and hear the voice of God and be reconciled to duty. *Sooner or later* the heart must say, "Yes, Lord, where Thou leadest, I will go. I will not put my little will against the will of Omnipotence. I will no longer cross God's will. I will go *with* God, not across His will."

And when that lesson is learned, friends, we are cured. We are healed. And that therapy which began under the juniper tree with a tray ends, thank God, in a fully cured, fully healed, fully obedient prophet on his way to the north to begin again that glorious work of reformatory education which leads at last, in *his* case, to the chariots of fire and horses of fire and the trip to the New Jerusalem.

He's up there this morning. Do you suppose he heard this sermon? I wonder. Perhaps he did. Wouldn't it be wonderful to hear *his* story of the trip? We can hear it soon. What a joy it will be some Sabbath afternoon, under the tree of life up there in the jasper city, to seek out Elijah and say, "Elijah, tell us your story, will you? Tell us about the time when Jesus was your physician and the angel was the nurse. Tell us about that tray that came from heaven's diet kitchen. Tell us about... I was about to say 'the psychotherapy.' (I hate the word for its background, but oh, let's find a better word!) Tell us about that 'true mind cure' that the Great Physician worked *with* you and *for* you there at the mouth of the cave at Horeb." And Elijah will tell us, and how our souls will rejoice.

And won't it be wonderful if we can tell him some experiences, too, of how God has worked for us and healed us, and in turn, how God has used us to help discouraged ones? How He helped us to know *when* to bring the tray and *when* to give the treatment and *when* to speak and *when* to keep silent?

Shall we bow our heads?

Blessed Lord, we thank Thee for the scriptures through which comfort and hope come to weary hearts. Speak to each of us this morning, not through earthquake or

wind or fire, but through Thy still, small voice. And may our heart's response be not to argue with Thee, but to agree with Thee, and to gladly go where Thou dost call. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

Who has a word of response that Jesus would like to have you express this morning?

[A testimony service follows.]

Is there a burdened heart here this morning that desires, that needs, that longs for a special blessing from Jesus ere you depart, and you'd like to be remembered in prayer this morning? Just raise your hand. Yes. Thank God for every one, friends. There's a blessing, a blessing for you.

Loving Lord, with joy we listen for that still, small voice, and although surrounded with a world of turmoil—of earthquake shocks, of tempest and fire—we thank Thee that those who listen hear Thy sweet voice and are calmed and strengthened and blessed. Teach each one of us to lay aside our human complaining, our human reasoning, and let Jesus guide our lives. We ask it in that dear name of Christ who died for us, Amen.

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