

Cave Dwellers

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Study by W. D. Frazee—January 21,

You and I are especially interested in Elijah, for he was translated to heaven. He is only one of two who experienced that.

"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" 1 Kings 19:9.

Elijah didn't belong there. God didn't send him to that cave. That wasn't where he was supposed to be living, but he had moved in.

The wonderful thing is that God didn't leave him. God didn't say to the angels, Well, if Elijah ever makes up his mind to get out of that cave and come back to where he belongs, you will be waiting for him.

No. God went and looked for him, and found him in the cave. While God had not forsaken him, neither did God acquiesce in Elijah's location. God didn't approve what Elijah had done.

Elijah had taken things in his own hands. There he was in that cave. He had his reasons. In fact, he was so convinced that what he was doing was the only thing to do that he even argued with God on the matter. But God has His way of convincing Elijah that the cave was not where He wanted him.

God began by saying, What are you doing here, Elijah?

Elijah had his reason, like I said. Those reasons I am not concerned with. They don't bear upon my subject. What I want to study with you is the cave. If Elijah had been the only one who lodged in a cave we wouldn't need to study it. But there are modern cave dwellers. And God is in the business of calling people out of the cave as He did with Elijah.

"And He said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD" verse 11.

Get out of that dark, damp cave, Elijah. Get out here in the sunshine and stand on the mount before the Lord. I have something to tell you, and I have something for you to do.

I am so glad Elijah got out of the cave, for it is written:

"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?" verse 13.

Again Elijah gave his reasons which in his mind justified his location. But notice that after God listens patiently to Elijah's explanations and apologies and reasons the Lord said unto him:

"Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus" verse 15.

Then God gave Elijah several jobs to do.

Friends, if there is anyone in a cave this morning, God is calling us out of the cave and giving us a work to do.

I would like to talk about the cave of seclusion. As I was meditating on this text my mind went to this interesting statement:

"God does not mean that any of us should become hermits or monks, and retire from the world, in order to devote ourselves to acts of worship" *Steps to Christ*, page 101.

There are two things that God said He hasn't asked anybody to do. One is to become a hermit, and second is to become a monk. Then it explains that it means to retire from the world in order to devote ourselves to acts of worship.

When Jesus left this world He gave His church a commission to spread the Gospel. For the first few decades the church was on fire and alive with activity. They went everywhere preaching the Word. Within forty years or less Paul said the Gospel had been preached to every creature under heaven. They went at that thing very earnestly. But as time went on and the apostasy began to develop we catch pictures of men retiring off into the mountains, living there in caves like Elijah did. In those caves they sought to become holy men.

It is a wonderful thing to have the desire and urge to become holy. But the only way we can become holy is to wholly follow the Lord.

Jesus did not give us the example of retreating to some cave spending weeks and months and years in isolation and seclusion in order to keep from the corrupting influence of the world. In the last prayer Jesus prayed, He said:

"I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil" John 17:15.

The lesson is of tremendous importance. We are told that this prayer comprehends more and includes more than any other chapter in the New Testament. And we are to make this prayer our first study.

If you were praying, and you knew God would hear your prayer, what would you pray for yourself and your loved ones? Would you pray to be taken out of the world? I am afraid some of us would. We get weary with the world. We get tired of dealing with the wickedness of the world and the temptation of the world. There is nothing wrong with that.

But we must never forget that the reason God sent Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden is because Eden no longer furnished the conditions necessary for the development of character.

Adam and Eve had to go out into a difficult world where the thorns and thistles they met would represent the difficulties they would meet in making a living, and in dealing with temptation, perils, and problems of all kinds.

Somebody says, Brother Frazee, what are you talking about? I thought we were supposed to get as far away from the world as possible.

Well, that's what I am studying about this morning. How far away from the world are we to get? Not as far as Elijah got down there at Horeb.

On this particular point Enoch is a better example than Elijah. Elijah finally got hold of this lesson and learned to do what Enoch did.

I am going to read a little about Enoch:

"As God's commandment-keeping people, we must leave the cities. As did Enoch, we must work in the cities but not dwell in them" *Evangelism*, pages 77,78.

It would have been a hard thing to find a city within working distance of Elijah's cave. Very difficult. In fact, it took Elijah forty days to walk there from the juniper tree where the angel found him in the desert.

A contrast is made between Enoch and Lot. Did Lot work the cities? Oh, yes. He preached. His righteous soul was vexed from day to day with the ungodly deeds of the Sodomites. But did he accomplish very much? Did he win very many converts? Not very many.

"Yet Lot could have preserved his family from many evils had he not made his home in this wicked, polluted city. All that Lot and his family did in Sodom could have been done by them, even if they had lived in a place some distance away from the city." *Ibid*.

Some people are wondering today how certain things in medical missionary work, and medical evangelism, and evangelistic training can be done unless people

live right down in a city. Well, that's why this instruction was given to us. It is very clear that we are not to live in the cities. Yet we are not to get so far away that we make the mistake Elijah did.

"Enoch walked with God, and yet he did not live in the midst of any city polluted with every kind of violence and wickedness, as did Lot in Sodom" *Ibid.*

"The cities are filled with temptation. We should plan our work in such a way as to keep our young people as far as possible from this contamination.

"The cities are to be worked from outposts. Said the messenger of God, 'Shall not the cities be warned? Yes, not by God's people living in them, but by their visiting them, to warn them of what is coming upon the earth' *Ibid.*

So there is a middle road on this. By the way, the road you and I want to keep in is the middle of God's road, not the middle of the world's road. Not the middle of the road that many people are walking in, but the middle of God's road. What do you say?

And it is very clear that if we are living in a city trying to reach the city, then we are doing like Lot. This indicates that is a mistake, especially in this time of the world's history.

On the other hand, if we get way over here in a cave somewhere that is so far removed from people so that there is little or no missionary work we can do, then that is the ditch on the other side.

But in between the road is where everybody can walk in. That is the road where we have retired locations, but not in a cave down in Horeb. No, close enough to get to people who need this message. And we sally forth as did Enoch, from his mountain retreat to the cities, to give the message, to find people and bring them back to the place of refuge. I thank that is a wonderful plan and program. Don't you, friends?

If any of us have ever had any idea of being a hermit, or getting into a situation so secluded and removed from temptation that both we and our children have no problems along that line, let's remember that if we should get into a place like that God would doubtless say to us, as He did to Elijah, What are you doing here? Who put you here? Who sent you here? Who gave you this commission. I told you to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

And if we begin to say like Elijah, Oh, Lord, I have told them and nobody will listen, and I am the only one left and they are trying to kill me, God will say, Go. Return. I have seven thousand loyal ones you don't know anything about. And one of your jobs is to find a few of them and encourage them, and doubtless they will encourage you some too.

It is wonderful that God finds His people and challenges them with the commission of doing something for Him. I am glad that God found Elijah, and that Elijah entered again into his commission. Aren't you?

That isn't the only cave I want to talk to you about. I want to talk to you about the cave of depression.

I was reading an article Sister White wrote in the *Review and Herald*. She quoted a text in James 1 and commented on it.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, or the crown of righteousness. Look up. Come out of the cave of unbelief and stand with God. If you dwell upon your trials you will have a hopeless life. If you look beyond the shadow to Jesus, your only hope, you will see the bright beams of the Son of Righteousness" *Review and Herald*, September 1, 1891.

Sure enough, God is calling us out of the cave. That's what it says. And in the issue just before that one comes this statement:

"When tempted to go into the dark cave of doubt and despair, sing: Arise my soul, arise, shake off thy guilty fears; The bleeding sacrifice in my behalf appears. Before the throne my surety stands, My name is written on His hands." *Review and Herald*, August 25, 1891.

You can see that the thought of getting people out of the cave was on Sister White's mind. She was echoing God's word to Elijah.

Elijah, what are you doing here in this cave?

Elijah said, Oh, I feel so bad about the way the children of Israel have done to You and me. They have forsaken You and they are threatening my life. The only way I can be safe is to be out here in this cave.

The Lord said to Elijah, Come out of that cave. Come out here on the mountain.

Elijah ventured out to the entrance of the cave. God showed him some things, and said, Get out of the cave and never come back.

Did Elijah ever come back? Thank God, no.

I wonder if there are any cave dwellers here this morning? I wonder if there is anybody who is troubled with doubts, discouragement, depression? God loves you just like He loves Elijah. He is not going to scold you. But He would like to encourage you to get out of that cave, and to quit thinking that is the place to run.

I have noticed some of these ground squirrels. They are out on a bright, sunny day feeding. But when the slightest thing happens they dart for that hole. That is all right for them, but it isn't the thing for you and me to do. God never intended that we should take refuge in a cave of darkness and depression and discouragement.

I wish that every soul here could be lifted out of that cave forever. Think what a wonderful blessing it would be if every one of God's children should leave the cave forever. Believe me, when Jesus comes He is going to find some people like Elijah who have learned this lesson and are talking courage. Talking faith. Talking hope. That is our privilege.

Somebody says, But I feel so bad.

Sure. But the wonderful thing is that God has made arrangements for us even when we feel bad. He doesn't want us to run to the cave. When tempted to go into the cave of dark despair, sing.

But I don't feel like singing today. I could sing yesterday. I hope I can sing next week. But not today. This isn't the day to sing.

Yes. This is the day to sing.

Why?

Because we feel like going to the cave. And instead of going to the cave we need to sing.

That servant tapped Elijah on the shoulder while he was sleeping and said, Jezebel is going to kill you by tomorrow night. It would have been a wonderful thing if instead of running Elijah had sung:

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" Psalm 46:1.

Could he have sung it. He probably knew it by heart. David had written it two hundred years before. But Elijah didn't stop to do that. He ran for his life. He kept going until he finally got to that cave.

Is the cave a happy place to be? No, it is a mournful place to be. I think of the bats in caves. Nothing very encouraging in there.

Bunyan pictures the same experience as a deep dungeon in Doubting Castle. Christian and Hopeful had gotten on the ground of the giant of Despair by doing what they were not supposed to. The giant found them and put them in that dungeon. For several days and nights they endured all kinds of torment.

But in the middle of the night Christian said to Hopeful, I have just thought of something. I have a key here in my breast which I believe can open every lock in Doubting Castle. Its name is Promise.

Hopeful said, Well, if that is so why not try it. Get it out of your breast.

Christian took it and put it in the lock, and sure enough the door of the dungeon opened, and out they went. They came to another iron gate that was locked. Christian put the key in that lock, and the gate opened. Then they came to the last gate that lay between them and freedom. That one opened hard, but they got out. The giant heard them, but they had gotten far enough away that they could get out of his grounds.

It is wonderful to get out of the dungeon. It is wonderful to get out of the cave and be in the sunlight of God's love.

"Satan is ever seeking to destroy. He is casting his hellish shadow between our souls and the light of the Son of Righteousness. When you talk doubts, and distrust your heavenly Father's love, Satan comes in and deepens the impression, and that which was only a shadow is made the blackness of despair. Your only hope is to cease talking darkness. In dwelling on the dark side you cast away your confidence in God, and this is just what Satan wants you to do. He wants to sift you as wheat, but Jesus is making intercession for you. His love is broad and deep. Perhaps you will say, How do you know He loves me? I look where you may look to the cross of Calvary. The blood shed upon the cross cleanses from all sin" *Review and Herald*, August 25, 1891.

Do you see in what I have read that the soul's future hangs on whether you will talk your doubts or quit talking. Will you speak out the darkness Satan tries to put into your mind, or will you seal your lips on that point?

You say, If you knew how I felt you would say something too.

No. God says, Keep still. Don't talk your doubts.

"Never allow yourself to talk in a hopeless, discouraged way. If you do you will lose much. By looking at appearances and complaining when difficulties and pressures come, you give evidence of a sickly, enfeebled faith. Talk and act as if your faith was invincible" *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 147.

Talk that way. Talk faith.

I want you to see a wonderful statement on what to talk about:

"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of Thy terrible acts: and I will declare Thy greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness" Psalm 145:3-7.

There are things to talk about. These are thrilling things, precious things, life-giving things.

If we should hear that some member of our church was smoking cigarettes, or using whiskey, or frequenting the theaters and nightclubs, how burdened we would be. And if they were here this morning, wouldn't we be anxious that they could find the Lord and start getting the victory over those things?

If they had been in the habit of yielding to tobacco once a day we would hope it wouldn't happen more than once a week?

Would we talk that way? No. When would we expect them to stop? Now. Could God help them to do it? Did God ever help any of us to quit that kind of life? Can God get us out of the cave? I think the cave can be just as disastrous as a nightclub. It is a kind of a nightclub. And the dear Lord says, Come out of the cave and don't go back. Return on thy way.

God has a work for us to do. And if we are busy doing what God told us to do, and witnessing of His mighty acts, and telling others of His love, we won't have much time to go to the cave. We will come out into the sunshine of God's love. We will come out and stay out.

"If you look beyond the shadow of Jesus, your only hope, you will see the bright beams of the Son of Righteousness. Look up. Look up. Come out of the cave and stand with God. If you trust God you will see more reason to trust Him. As you talk of His goodness, you will see more of His love to talk about"

If you are in the cave and turn around you will see at the entrance of the cave a little light. As you go toward it you will see more light. Finally you will be out of the cave. And you can have that experience today.

Never allow yourself to talk about anything that is discouraging and depressing, and darkening. That pleases the enemy, and we don't want to please him.

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