

## CRITICAL AND HOMILETICAL NOTES.

We have in this lesson an illustration of a strong man turned into a weakling. Elijah could withstand the wrath of Ahab, but fled like a craven before the threat of Jezebel. He trusted to the power of God to deliver him in one crisis, but his confidence was shriveled up in the face of another. Under ordinary circumstances the achievement of a great victory strengthens the heart for other triumphs, but the vindictive enmity of Jezebel dried up the sources of Elijah's courage, and so filled his heart with terror that "he went for his life," and sought refuge, like a hunted criminal, in the desolate wilderness, and continued his cowardly flight until he reached Horeb.

**Verse 1. All that Elijah had done.** This must have aroused Jezebel's ire, because it indicated the defeat of Baal, the triumph of Jehovah, the turning of the people from her, the slaughter of the false prophets, and the general disruption of her cause. It is clear that Ahab was subservient to the will of Jezebel. She was the real ruler, Ahab was humiliated over these recent events, but Jezebel raged in her overwhelming chagrin, and sought to be avenged. The awakened sinner is either repentant or rebellious.

**2. Sent a messenger.** It seems strange that she should allow Elijah to escape in this way. It was hardly likely that "it was nothing more than a scheme for ridding herself of the presence of Elijah." More likely it was a case where consuming wrath "o'erleapt itself;" or may there not have been an overruling Providence in it all that made the fury of the queen contribute to the deliverance of the prophet from impending danger?

**3. Went for his life.** Was Elijah's flight justifiable? Whether for the moment he lost faith in God, or in his own call as a prophet, or in the ultimate triumph of his cause, it is difficult to determine. But that he fled in the face of immediate danger and sought self-protection is a fact. But it is not necessary or wise for a prophet to court martyrdom. He may have interpreted Jezebel's threat as an indication from God that his work there was finished for the time, and that there was something to do elsewhere. Had he remained and subjected himself to the queen's fury, he would have been slain, and she would have triumphed, and the work done at Carmel, with its peculiar and far-reaching significance, would have been rendered futile. Then it must be remembered that Jesus said to his disciples, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another;" that when the Pharisees "held a council against him, how they might destroy him," "he withdrew himself from thence;" and

that when Paul was persecuted by the Jews in Damascus," and "they watched the gates day and night to kill him," "the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket."

**5. An angel touched him.** Some will claim what Elijah needed was physical refreshment, and that after a good sleep his spirits revived. This was probably true, but there is no good reason for attempting to eliminate the supernatural here. If God was guiding his prophet, why should not an angel minister unto him in his hour of physical and spiritual depression? If our eyes, which are so frequently "holden," could be always open, we should see many helping messengers of God who are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

**9. What doest thou here?** These words seem to convey reproof, but they are rather an intimation that the time had come to resume the active prosecution of the Lord's work. Elijah had hidden in the cave long enough, and while it was a delightful place in which to be, just as the Mount of Transfiguration was to the three disciples, yet the work assigned to him could not be performed in such a place. He needed a fresh baptism for this work, and when he went forth and stood upon the mount and saw the various manifestations of God's power that spiritual renewal came to him, and with it new commands for the new work.

**18. Seven thousand.** Discouragement narrows one's vision. Elijah complained, "I only am left," but he was in ignorance of or had forgotten the thousands of faithful souls of whom God had kept record. Christians frequently fall into discouragement because the cause of Christ seems to languish and that of Satan seems to triumph. The trouble is that the range of spiritual vision has been restricted by the descent into the valley of discouragement. One needs to stand on the mountain top to notice the progress of the kingdom and to read the signs of the times aright. Elisha's servant saw the city compassed with horses and chariots, and he was frightened. But when his eyes were opened in response to Elisha's prayer "he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

## Thoughts for Young People.

## Spiritual Depression.

**1. We are all at times tempted to dejection.** Even the greatest and best of men are apt to have seasons of discouragement when they are sorely troubled by temptations.