

"I only am left."

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It does not bespeak a very good condition of soul when Elijah made his petulant complaint against Israel thus; "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" (1 Kings 19: 10).

In the main, Elijah furnishes us with a fine example of faithful testimony for God in an evil day. In the midst of widespread apostasy he stood out boldly for Jehovah, caring little whether he was supported by many or by few. None would question that he had been truly jealous for the honour of Jehovah, and that he had earnestly sought to uphold it in the face of all opposition. But at the time that he made his complaint at Horeb he had become unduly occupied with himself and his testimony, and had come to regard himself as the sole pivot on which everything turned. For the moment God had been displaced by *Elijah* in his soul's vision. *Elijah* seemed to be the great indispensable factor, and his life was in danger; what would become of the testimony then? To his mind it appeared that all true testimony for God was at an end in Israel, and that Satan had become absolute master of the situation.

How painfully self-assertive are these poor hearts of ours! The best and truest of the servants of God are not proof against the snare. True it is that He can sustain a lonely man, and make him a power for testimony in a dark scene, as in Abraham's case; "I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him" (Isa. 51: 2). It is equally true that he can so strengthen the feeble one that he may become as David (Zech. 12: 8); but let not the witness regard himself as indispensable, or disaster will immediately result. Communities are as liable to fall into this error as individual witnesses. If a company of saints, few or many, seek diligently to recover for practical use principles of truth that have lapsed, their zeal and obedience will unquestionably turn to a testimony, and God may be relied upon to be with them for their sustainment and blessing. But let them get occupied with themselves as witnesses, let their testimony to others become more important in their eyes than their own spiritual condition; and God will no longer support them, but give them over to disaster and shame. Has not the truth of this been made painfully apparent to many of us?

Elijah's occupation with himself led him to entertain highly improper feelings towards the erring people of God around him, "Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel" etc. (Rom. 11: 2). Intercession *against* Israel! Speaking well of himself and ill of God's people! Is this the true part of God's witness? In speaking thus was he faithfully expressing the feelings of that heart which bears long with His people, and, in spite of all their waywardness and sin, never gives them up? Moses spake very differently; it is most refreshing to listen to his touching intercession to God for Israel after their worship of the golden calf (Ex. 32, 33.) Though he felt strongly the affront to Jehovah, yet in His presence not a single ill word escaped his lips concerning them. On the contrary, he persisted in reminding Jehovah that they were His people notwithstanding their grave sin, and that the honour of His great name was bound up with their blessing. Rather than they should be overthrown he was willing that God should blot him out of the book that He had written.

Let us note this principle well, for it is greatly needed in this day. Self-inflation, occupation with our own faithfulness in testimony, breeds censorious feelings in our hearts toward the people of God around us, and puts us quite out of the place of intercession with God for them. Need we be surprised, also, if our improper airs draw forth from others the sarcastic remark, "No doubt but ye are the people,

and wisdom shall die with you" (Job 12: 2).

In Elijah's case his complaint had quite different results from what he anticipated. We may pass by at this time the lessons taught him by the wind, the earthquake, the fire, and the still small voice, and dwell a little on the actual words of Jehovah to him. "And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus, 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 Abel-meholah, 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" (1 Kings 19: 15-18). Did He wish the people of God to be chastised for their sin? He Himself should anoint the executors of God's judgment — painful work surely for one who really loved the people. Did he consider himself indispensable as a witness? Then he must go and anoint his successor — Elisha the son of Shaphat. Did he regard himself as the only faithful man left in the land? Then he must learn his mistake in the startling announcement that Jehovah had still 7000 loyal hearts among Israel's tribes.

Serious lessons these, happy for us if we learn them thoroughly. To magnify our own importance in testimony is to be set aside as witnesses altogether, that others may take our place. Has not this happened, to our deep sorrow? Have not some of us been accustomed to hear many saying, "We are in the place of testimony, we are Philadelphia, and nearly all else is Laodicea," with the painful result that when we look around for the special operation of God's Spirit, we observe it not amongst those who speak thus approvingly of themselves, but amongst others possessing far less spiritual light and knowledge of the letter of God's Word. It is the inevitable result of allowing ourselves to displace God in our minds and hearts. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Cor. 10: 17-18).

What comfort that even in the darkest hour God has this true-hearted 7000! If they do not come out so boldly in public separation from evil as we would desire, it is nevertheless joy to us to know that they sigh and groan over the sins of the times, and seek to keep their affections right towards their Lord and ours. "Thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy" (Rev. 3: 10).