

Elijah's Mantle

By Judson A. Sanders

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Who was the maid, matron, or mother who wove Elijah's mantle? No man knoweth. It looked a little faded now, and a trifle worn, but a lesser piece of cloth would have by now been in rags. Yonder lay the field where Elisha had been plowing, the day that Elijah, walking by, had thrown his mantle over Elisha's shoulders. Gilgal lay behind. Yonder on the hill the Bethel School of the Prophets. Running out to Elisha, they cry, "Knoweth thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head today?" "Yea," he answered, "I know it. Hold ye your peace."

Then Elijah says to him, "Tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho." And Elisha replied, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. At Jericho the same things are said, and now they are pressing on towards Jordan."

There is a new sense of triumph and expectancy in Elijah's long swinging stride, but Elisha's feelings are hard to describe. One thing he wanted, and the tide of his desire was brimming at the flood. At Jordan, Elisha folded the mantle, smote the waters, and a supernatural force divided the waters, and they walked over dry-shod. Then Elijah turns to Elisha and says, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee." Elisha turned a glowing and expectant face to Elijah and answered, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy Spirit be upon me." And he answered, "Thou hast asked a hard thing, nevertheless if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee, but if not, it shall not be so." And they went on together and talked, and suddenly there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder, and this mighty prophet, who had three times called fire down from heaven, ascended by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha cried out "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." And a long time he stood there gazing up into the sky. But Elijah's mantle fell from him, and Elisha picked it up, and we can imagine these words burst from his lips, "Oh, Man of God, I saw thee, I saw thee when thou wast taken up; and a double portion (a worthy portion, the portion of the firstborn), is upon me. I am now as thou wast. Almost as long as he could remember, he had longed for this, and now it was his.

Later, on Mount Carmel, he sat and brooded happily on all the events since that day the mantle had been flung on his shoulders. He felt again the thrill he had known when Jordan's waters parted for him, when he smote them with the mantle, he also remembered the miracle of the salt waters fountain sweetened, and now, in the light of sunset, he was seated on the very spot that Elijah had stood when he called down fire from heaven. It was but a short prayer, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again." Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the

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HOW TO KEEP SANCTIFIED: WITNESS TO IT

God calls us to be witnesses (Acts 1:8). This is why the early Church grew so fast. Paul was not too scholastic to testify before kings and high officials. Satan hates this, hence works a subtle trick which succeeds better than any other, especially with beginners. He suggests not to be too definite, lest you might not hold out, and this would hurt the cause; better live it first, then tell it. Sometimes preachers and relatives will join in with the old "deceiver." As surely as you listen to them and cease witnessing, it will not be long until you will have nothing to tell. God's method is both to live it and to tell it. Even the saintly John Fletcher failed here several times before he became established. He feared the opinions of men.

Wesley advises: "Avoid all magnificent, pompous words; rather speak of particulars which God has wrought for you. You may say, 'At such a time I felt a great change I cannot express; since that time I have not felt pride, or anger, or any evil temper, but a fullness of the love of God.' When you thus speak in humility, you will be strengthened, others convinced, and God glorified."

—Heart and Life

THE DANGER OF "BIG PREACHERITIS"

By Horace G. Hammett

Early one Sunday morning on my way to a distant preaching engagement, I stopped at a filling station to get a drink of water. Someone asked another, "Are you going to church?" "Yes," he said, "a big preacher is to be there today." I thought to myself, "He ought to go every Sunday, every service, because worship is necessary to the redeemed man. In fact, God is always there."

Here is the cropping up of a deadly disease—"big preacheritis."

But who started it? Who keeps alive this idea? We all do. Let there come along an occasion of any kind that calls for a speaker or preacher, and what do we say?—"Let's get a big preacher."

Thus we are in danger of promoting irregular attendance at worship services by encouraging people to come only when they can hear a so-called big preacher. Of course, any church should benefit occasionally by having an outstanding preacher, if such can be found! But why, oh why, every time say, "Let's get a big preacher."

A big preacher! He's right there in the pulpit every Sunday. Who? Your pastor, of course! Every true preacher of the Gospel is a great preacher. He has a great call, a great message, great convictions, and great results. Certainly it was the right kind of layman who said recently, "I had rather hear my pastor preach than any other preacher in the world." That kind of faithfulness will make great preaching.—"Baptist News."

FOR ALL

All those who journey, soon or late,
Must pass within the garden gate;
Must kneel alone in anguish there,
And battle with some dark despair.
God pity those who cannot say,
"Not mine, but Thine;" who only pray,
"Let this cup pass," and cannot see
The purpose of Gethsemane.

—Fellowship News

WHY GOD DELAYS ANSWER TO PRAYER

J. A. Wood

"O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save!" This was the prayer that Habakkuk, under the pressure of spiritual need, cried to God. The question suggested by these words is: Why does not God more readily answer prayer? Very likely there are many reasons why prayer does not more generally receive immediate answer.

It may be because so many fail to see the plague, or spiritual ailments of their hearts. Acceptable prayer must come from a heart sensible of its individual iniquities, and that lies in the dust with humility before God. When the heart, conscious of its defilement, and humbled, supplicates with "strong crying and tears," God will hear, and lift him up, and enable him to come boldly to the throne of grace, and obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need. The hindrance to successful prayer is never with God, but always with ourselves. "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss."

Delays in answer to prayer may be occasioned by littleness of prayer. He who prays but little or seldom, disobeys God—and He will not hear him when he does pray. We are commanded to pray without ceasing, and to pray with all prayer and supplication. He who prays but little not only displeases God and grieves His Spirit, but loses the spirit of prayer—and he fails to pray effectually or fervently. It is the effectual and fervent prayer of the righteous that availeth much.

The delay in receiving answers in many instances may result from a lack of dependence upon Christ. God can hear and answer our prayers only through Christ; and when we fail to feel our dependence upon His merits and intercession, we pray in vain. God answers prayer for Christ's sake, and Christ is the only way of access to the throne of grace. The Name of Christ may be used in our approaches to God from mere habit; when this is the case, our prayers will receive no answers.

Delays in answer to prayer may result from a disobedient life. Disobedience blocks the work of God, and puts an embargo on the whole religious life. If we would have God hear and answer our prayers more readily, we must obey Him more fully. He pays no man a premium for disobedience. Disobedience cuts the sinews of faith, and renders evangelical faith impossible as conscious confidence (faith) and conscious rebellion cannot co-exist. One excludes the other.

It should never be forgotten that the faith that justifies and sanctifies is inseparable from an obedient spirit. God hath joined them together, and no man can put them asunder. Acceptable prayer without faith is impossible, and faith without an obedient spirit is impossible.

When our prayers are examined in the light of the inspired Word of God, it is not difficult to see why so few are answered, and why our loving Heavenly Father delays to bestow much that is sought at His hand. When Christians see the plague of their hearts, when they are willing fully to obey God, when they pray without ceasing and stop trusting in means and measures, and when they feel properly their dependence upon Christ, then God will hear and answer and pour them out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.—Sunset Echoes.