

## OBEDIENCE.

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\* The word of the Lord is with him."  
2 Kings 8 : 12.

THE text is taken from a scene in the life of the prophet Elisha. You remember in a previous chapter we had an account of the ending of the work that God had given Elijah to do,—the manifestation of Elisha's power as a prophet, and the blessing that was to remain with him as a prophet. We come to-day to talk for a little while about this prophet whom God had honored and whose memory, under the power of the Spirit, is as fresh to-day as when he walked the earth and gave testimony to the wondrous power and manifestation of God's love.

We read in the account of the doings of the kings of Israel that there was trouble with one kingdom and another, one trying to overcome the

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other, and thus to increase in wealth and territory. The king of Moab declared, "I will no longer pay tribute to Israel." "While it is just, perhaps, that I should do it, yet I will do it no more." And so he sent word to the king, "I will not pay any more tribute to you." He took his position, he defied the king. Then the king of Israel, with the king of Judea and of Edom said, Let us unite against the king and possibly we can overthrow him and bring him to repentance, that again he may pay tribute. So they started out against the enemy, marching seven days without water. It seemed as though the heavens were shut against them, as if God had left them to their own resources, until from the king of Israel came the despairing cry, "Alas, that the Lord hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab." For the first time the thought of God came, when destruction and fear came upon the king and his people. Three

kings with their armed hosts; but paralyzed by fear.

O, how many people are beset with fear! Fear of one another; fear of what may happen; fear of sickness; fear of loss of property; fear of circumstances. The world is full of fear. Yet here is the declaration of His word, "Perfect love casteth out fear." We have even a command—"Thou shalt not fear what man can do unto you;" "Fear not," saith the Lord. "Be of good courage and He shall strengthen thine heart." The promise waits on the command. Only let us be upon God's side, where he calls us to be, and then stand for the right at any cost. You remember, doubtless, at the battle of Waterloo, when it looked as if the French would conquer, and position after position had been taken from the British, that grand old man, the Duke of Wellington, conscious of his own strength, met the couriers who came one after another, declaring it was impossible

to hold the position, with the simple word of command,—"Stand your ground." "We shall be destroyed, sir." "Stand your ground." And they stood their ground. Thousands of men were slain, but the day was won.

How ready we are to fall out by the way, overcome by circumstances that look adverse. God's power and love are forgotten—clouds overshadow—no remembrance of blessing brightens the pathway. O, be courageous! strong in the Lord and the power of his might. God is overhead.

Princes and kings cannot overthrow when God gives his word. So, however hopeless the condition may seem, look into the face of Him who said, "I will never leave nor forsake you," and stand firm for God.

In their extremity the king of Israel cried, "Alas! that we should be left to be destroyed." Then Jehosopha, king of Judah, bethought him, saying, "Is there not here a prophet of the

Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him?" And one said, "There is Elisha." They had almost forgotten him. And as the three kings stood together they thought of that prophet upon whom Elijah's mantle had fallen; they thought of the wondrous work he had accomplished, and the goodness of his character and the uprightness of his life, so they went to Elisha—the three proud kings—a man whom perhaps under other circumstances they would not have thought about. How true it is to-day when trouble comes we begin to look outside of self for help. When sorrows come, we look up to Him who alone can carry our griefs and bear our burdens. It is when we are perplexed on every side and have no one to comfort us, we look to Him, the Man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief. Then we hear the answer to our cry, "I will never leave you;" "Certainly I will be with thee!" "Fear not!" O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom

and the knowledge of God. Here is the rock upon which we rest! Again and again we take to our hearts this impregnable word! We declare our trust and will declare it, though the heavens fall.

The kings went to the prophet, who questioned at first as to whether he would have anything to do with them. He knew their lives were not right,—that they had forgotten their God. But he remembered the people. So Elisha calls for the minstrel who shall play to him, and under the power of divine music the Spirit of God came upon him and he said, "Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches." He did not say with water, but, fill this valley with ditches. They had been seven days without water; these hosts of people, these armies of the kingdoms, and in their extremity the prophet says, "Dig this valley full of ditches." And then he said, "Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water." Men like ourselves, we

can almost hear those kings answer, "What is the use of digging the ditches if there is to be no rain? We cannot wait to dig ditches, the people are perishing for water. It is perfectly useless to dig ditches in this valley where there has been no rain for these seven days." We can imagine they laughed and shouted at the words of the prophet, as simply ridiculous. "If you have any power, Elisha, why don't you send rain?" "Let clouds gather and burst upon this people and this valley and pour rain upon us!"

The possibilities of faith are beyond human foresight. The possibilities of God's grace are illimitable. Obedience, unquestioning obedience, is the way marked out for every child of God, be the command small or great. Does the thing appear useless to me? God commands. I will do. Such a thing is not agreeable to me, I do not like to do it. "WHATSOEVER HE SAITH UNTO YOU, DO IT," was the word which came to the mother of Isaac when they said there was no

wine. They simply did it and the result came, plenteous, rich and full. So we see in the command the highest love, and in obedience our choicest blessings.

The work was begun and the ditches dug. And lo! with not a drop of rain from the heavens above, water came pouring down the valley into the ditches! Water in abundance, satisfying man and beast! Not one failed of an abundance.

Oh, the sparkling water! What rejoicing there must have been through the whole extent of the army—dip, dip and drink. How the hearts of the famishing, thirsty soldiers must have swelled with gratitude. At last, at last our thirst is quenched! An officer who served during the civil war told me that many a time when the soldiers encamped for the night as best they could, away from water, that they would dig in the mud and in the sand to get just a little; then, again, they would be encamped beside a running brook and

drink to their hearts' content, and lie down in the night to dream of the old oaken bucket at home.

The promises of God always bring an abundance. We limit God's power, and question as to whether He will do quite enough; when He gives, He gives abundantly the great riches of His grace, and not according to our mean conception of his bounty.

The word was not, these *valleys* shall be filled water—but, *this valley*. The word of God makes everything personal. The abundance of His gifts is to you—to me. You remember when the disciples toiled all the night and caught nothing, and there was no food for them to eat, the Master came and stood on the shore and asked, "Have ye caught anything?" They said, "We have toiled all the night and have caught nothing; nevertheless, at thy word we will let down the net." He told them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, and they drew in such a multitude of fishes that there was not room enough in

the boat to contain them. That is the way God supplies. That is the way He takes care of His children, for His power is unlimited, His grace is abundant. And so there came on these people of old the blessings of God, not merely to show to us what He could do in supplying His children with water, but to honor Elisha His servant, to make true what he had trusted his God for. As He had honored Elijah so would He honor Elisha, and so will God honor every one of His children to-day, who trusts Him. In the assurances of His love, in the majesty of His beauty. He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever; my Lord and your Lord, my King and your King!

Through the word of Elisha victory came to the kings of Israel, Judah and Edom, and Moab was discomfited.

“Come and let us return unto the Lord, for He hath torn and He will heal us. He hath smitten and He will bind us up.”