

## A Sure Guide For A Difficult Pathway

By: Keith R. Keyser

Last week I had the privilege of speaking at a Bible conference far from my home in Pennsylvania. My family and I particularly enjoyed the warm, Christ-centered fellowship of the saints who attended. In conversing with various brothers and sisters, I was astonished at some of the trials they have experienced, as well as some of the difficult situations they are currently facing. One sister witnessed the brutal murder of her brother. Another lost two brothers in the Second World War. One brother told us of losing his ten year old daughter in a collision with a driver who was fleeing the police in a high speed chase. To add to the soberness of such past incidents, one of the attendees suffered a mild heart-attack during the week. Others who previously attended this conference were unable to attend this year due to business difficulties stemming from the recession. At least one brother at the conference recently lost his job. The meetings were a clear reminder of the variegated trials that the saints regularly encounter in this fallen world. Thankfully, they do not experience these hardships alone; the omnipresent Lord promises to be with them in all circumstances (Heb. 13:5.)

Elijah knew what it was to be discouraged by the Lord's enemies. After his tremendous victory over the idolatrous prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth on Mount Carmel, he prayed and God's blessing of rain was restored to Israel after a three and a half year drought (1 Kgs. 18.) Subsequently, the wicked queen Jezebel offered what was surely an empty threat against his life, for if eight hundred fifty false prophets could not vanquish him, what could her remaining servants do to him? Nonetheless, his psyche suffered a serious blow, and he immediately decamped to the wilderness in a fit of despondency. There the Angel of the Lord fed him, gave him rest, and encouraged him (1Kgs. 19:1-8.) The Angel's words are worth noting for our subject: " And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise *and* eat; **because the journey is too great for thee**" (v. 7, emphasis mine.) What followed was an enormously encouraging personal conversation with God regarding the true state of affairs in Israel (vs. 8-18.) The situation was not as dire as Elijah supposed - the Lord still had seven thousand who had not offered their adoration to Baal. Afterwards, he was given help in his ministry in the form of Elisha.

The Angel's diagnosis of Elijah's condition serves as an excellent metaphor for life in this world of suffering: the journey is too great for us. Even believers cannot handle the rigors of this life apart from the saving, preserving, and strengthening work of Christ. Mercifully, God's love in Christ is constantly with the saints and no power on earth can separate them from it (Rom. 8:28-39.) The journey is too great for us, but the Lord is our faithful high priest, securing and comforting us (e.g. Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 7:25-26.)