

Come Near Unto Me

And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down.

– 1 Kings 18:30 –

Despite the fact that God is not very far from every one of us, due to sin, mankind lives at a moral distance from Him. And because in His design sin shall not be eradicated completely until we reach eternity, even God's own people are ever vulnerable to backsliding. The old hymn prays against this nagging propensity...

*Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love
Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above!*

There are many avenues toward spiritual declension. It is therefore incumbent upon the believer to recognize this reality and, as Isaiah captured it, to "stirreth up himself to take hold of [God]." (Isa. 64:7) If we learn to do this – to consciously and consistently activate our hearts toward continually apprehending our Lord – we begin to separate ourselves from the masses of wanderers, growing comfortable in our place in our Master's business, and bearing a confident faith that inspires encouragement, revival, or even regeneration in the hearts of others. Such was the case on Carmel with Elijah.

Elijah's victory on Mount Carmel against the prophets of Baal teaches many lessons, but one of the most profound is the confidence and authority of a vibrant and active faith. After the prophets of Baal exhausted themselves in attempting to gain their god's attention, Elijah steps forth in the power of determined trust and begins to draw a wayward people back to their God. He calls them to "come near unto me", as if to say – "Watch now, and remember. I will remind you of our God. I will show you our God. See this altar? I am taking twelve stones to rebuild it, representative of the twelve tribes of Israel, our special nation that God covenanted with our father Abraham to build and use to show the world who He is. Come near unto me – and see how I lay the sacrifice upon the altar, the way God outlined specifically for His people to approach His holy place. Come near unto me – and behold the depth of the trench, the saturation of the sacrifice, the genuineness of this initiative, the impossibility of sleight of hand in what is about to happen, and the depth of my confidence that the same God who called our fathers remains the living God who will answer us today. Come near unto me – and listen and learn how to pray, how to address the Almighty, how to draw His ear, how to gain His attention, and how to incite His response in things pertaining to our welfare and His glory."

An entire nation remembered that day that "The LORD, he is God!" because of the bold, resolute faith a single man. Brethren, a world of lost men and women and an American church filled with backslidden Christians are unwittingly awaiting confident believers to stand forth and proffer them a similar challenge. "Come near unto me," and see a risen Christ who is wholly alive, wholly faithful, wholly true, and wholly active in the hearts and lives of those who dare to stir themselves up to take hold of Him. Let us resolve to consistently seek His face that we might possess the authority He intends for us to wield as His ambassadors, inciting others to find their way back to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.