

## **A Study of the Life of Elijah;**

### ***A Man Like Us.***

#### **Sermon # 2**

#### ***“When Your Brook Dries Up!”***

#### **1 Kings 17:2-7**

Last Sunday night we began a study of the life of Elijah. We noted that when we read about someone like Elijah, we sometimes want to believe such people are some how inherently different than ourselves because it makes us feel better about ourselves and gives us an excuse for when we don't live up to their example. But we noted James 5:17 blows that excuse out of the water because it says that, *“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.”* James reminds us that Elijah was a man with a nature just like ours! He was like you and like me. He was not some kind of super-saint, he faced the same feelings of inadequacy as all rest of us! Being called by God to a unique ministry did not exempt him from, incredible stress, crippling fear, and even being immobilized by depression. It was through dependence on the resources he found in his relationship with God that he was successful. And the *same resources* available to Elijah are available to us in the Lord's work in even more abundant ways in New Testament times through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

When we left Elijah last week he had walked into the presence of King Ahab and announced, *“As the Lord God lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.”* (v. 1)

The one thing that stands out in Elijah's pronouncement, is the word “years.” Israel could stand going without rain for a few weeks, perhaps even months but Elijah said, “years.” In a society dependant on agriculture the lack of rain is a life-threatening problem.

And just as quickly as he came in, he departed. It is a good thing he departed quickly for his message provoked great anger as messages against sin usually do. Obedience to God often provokes more hatred than honor from men.

Two questions must have been on Elijah mind as he quickly left the palace,

*“The king will kill me if he can, so where can I hide from the wrath of the king?”* And secondly, *“Where can I find food and drink during this time of drought and famine?”* God did not leave him wondering long, for in verse two we read, *“Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, (3) “Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. (4) And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.”*

God told Elijah exactly what to do, where to go, and how he was to survive once he arrived!

God had a three-fold purpose sending Elijah to the brook Cherith they were, the protection of his life, the provision for his needs and the preparation of his heart.

When the Lord told Elijah to go and hide himself by the brook Cherith on the east side of the Jordan, he promised to send ravens to feed him. I have no doubt that the prophet was not exactly thrilled with that promise.

Three things I want you to see with me about Elijah's Faith.

First, Elijah's Training In Faith

(1 Ki. 17:2-4)

Notice three things about this training in faith.

- *God's Protection of Elijah* (vv. 2-3)

God ordered Elijah to "*hide*" by the brook Cherith. The Hebrew word used here suggests the idea of concealment "*of being absent on purpose.*" When weeks, then months went by without rain, Elijah suddenly became Israel's most wanted man. King Ahab was so upset with Elijah when it became apparent that there indeed would be a drought as Elijah promised, he went to great lengths to try to find him. Obadiah one of Ahab's servants told Elijah in 1 Kings 18:10, "*There is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, 'He is not here,' he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you.*" Therefore Elijah did indeed need God's special protection for his life.

But consider the place that God sent him, the word "*Cherith*" is derived from the original verb (*Cha-rath*) which means "*to cut off or to cut down.*" It is used both ways in the Old Testament as in being cut off from others and also of being cut down, as one might cut down tall timber. A place in the middle of nowhere named "*to cut off*" does not sound very attractive.

- *God's Provision for Elijah* (vv. 4-6)

God used a very unusual method to provide for Elijah's needs. The Lord had said, "*I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.*" (v. 4) Ravens from a human standpoint, would certainly not have been the most likely nor most appealing creatures to bring his food. They are scavengers, considered an unclean animal in the Law of Moses and they were thought to be omens of misfortune, tragedy and death. The bird is so fierce that we have fashioned one of

our most forceful and repulsive words out of it – *ravenous*. But God can make men as well as animals to do things contrary to their natural dispositions, in order to supply the needs of his children.

Yet we have to recognize that God routinely chooses the despised things of the world in order to confound the mighty and he uses the foolish things to bring the strong down to nothing. Remember that Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 1: 26-29, *“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: (27) But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: (29) That no flesh should glory in his presence.”*

It is worth noting that “if” Elijah wants to experience the provision of God, he must go to where to God has directed or he will starve to death. Verse four had stated, *“I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.”* He must be *“there”* where God has commanded, *“there”* is the condition of the supply, God has not promised to supply it in any other place. If we are where God has directed us to be, He will provide for us.

- *God’s Preparation of Elijah*

(vv. 4-6)

God not only supplied Elijah’s need for protection and provisions for his physical needs He supplied his spiritual needs as well. Almost every person whom God has used mightily to accomplish a special task had gone through a time of preparation. And often that preparation required a time of solitude and isolation for preparation of the heart.

Moses is one example. In forty years in Egypt Moses had learned the skills of worldly leadership, how to be a leader of men. In “God’s School of the Desert” he had for forty years been taught the qualities of spiritual leadership: patience, maturity and sensitivity in listening to the voice of God. His forty year stay in the desert was not wasted. Moses had some rough edges in his life which had to be dealt with – such as his arrogance and quick temper. God used a time of isolation in Moses’ life, just as He does in our lives – to prepare us for some new sphere of service and usefulness.

Years later Joseph spent a number of years in an Egyptian prison because he been unjustly accused. But those years of obscurity, prepared him for promotion to Prime Minister of the Land. With the experience he had in his time in prison he would not have been ready for the task God had designed for him.

The Apostle Paul, following his conversion spent three years in obscurity in Arabia (Gal 1:16-18). While he was there God was preparing him to be the great missionary to the Gentiles, but without that time of preparation he would not have been ready.

Charles Swindoll points out, when Elijah entered his time of isolation he was a spokesman for God but he was not yet a man of God. In verse one he introduced merely as *"Elijah the Tisbite"* but by verse twenty-four as a result of his time alone with God he is addressed as a "Man of God." [Charles Swindoll. *Elijah: A Man of Heroism and Humility*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Co., 2000) pp. 23-24]

Secondly, Elijah's Step of Faith (1Ki.17:5-6)

*"So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. (6) The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook."*

To his credit Elijah did exactly as God directed without comment or question. A. W. Pink has observed, *"God does not grant fresh revelations until there has been a compliance with those already received."* It could be that if you are confused over the will of God for your life today, it may be the result of your not having obeyed the will of God yesterday.

God had the ravens to come twice a day, not three times; once in the morning and again in the evening. The ravens never brought enough to last a week or even for the next day. Just enough and nothing more! This is what Jesus meant when he taught the Disciples to pray, *"Give us this day our daily bread."* (Matt 6:11). The teaching of the Old Testament and the New Testament alike teach us that God is willing to provide only daily needs but only on day at a time.

Third, Elijah's Crisis of Faith (I Ki. 17:7)

In verse seven we are told that *"And it happened after a while that the brook dried up,"* *That makes it sound almost like it was by chance.* But the Hebrew phrase translated *"sometime later"* literally means *"at the end of days."* That means the brook dried up exactly at the appointed time by God.

What do you do when your brook dries up? When this happens to us sometimes we cry out, *"Lord what happened? Where did I go wrong? Didn't you tell me to come here and wait and you would provide for me? How can I be in the center of your will and my brook is drying up?"* The reason we think that is because we tend to think that we are in the center of God's will as long as everything is going great. Have you ever considered that you may just be in the center of His will when the brook dries up?

When our brook dries up we tempted to think that God's power has ceased. But drying brooks are not an indication of God forsaking us it is only an indication that God is changing the source of his supply. F.B. Meyer assures us that God knew exactly what he was doing for *"God's servants are often called to sit by drying brooks."*

*“Many of us have had to sit by drying brooks; perhaps some are sitting by them now – the drying brook of popularity, ebbing away as it did from John the Baptist. The drying brook of health, sinking under a creeping paralysis, or a slow decline. The drying brook of money, slowly dwindling before the demands of sickness, bad debts or other people’s extravagance. The drying brook of friendship, which for long has been diminishing, and threatens soon to cease. Ah, it is hard to sit beside a drying brook....”*

*Why does God let them dry? He wants to teach us not to trust in his gifts but in Himself. Let us learn these lessons, and turn from our failing Cheriths to our unfailing Savior. All sufficiency resides in Him!” [F.B. Meyer. Great Men of the Bible. (London, England; Marshall Pickering, 1990). pp. 345-346]*

Application - Several Lessons to Be Learned From this story;

1) God’s plan is seldom revealed in advance. Elijah had no idea what God is going to do next and neither do we.

2) We must be willing to be set aside to be used.

3) We must learn to trust God for our daily provision. We must be willing to trust God even when our daily provisions fail.