

**Sermon Series**  
**Elijah, A Prophet for Our Times**  
**November 8, 2020**

**Title: From Ravens to a Gentile Widow**

*Subject: The Lord's Means, The Will of God, The Lord Provides, The Sovereignty of God, Elijah, A Widow, Gentiles, The Word of the Lord*

**Theme Text: 1 Kings 17:7-9 (ESV) <sup>7</sup> And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land. <sup>8</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to him, <sup>9</sup> "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you."**

**Theme Illustration:** Elijah is God's servant and available to His will in whatever capacity the Lord has assigned him. The Lord has assigned a dangerous, emotionally, and physically arduous task to perform. That task is to inform King Ahab of Israel with the news that the King and his kingdom were under the Lord's rebuke utilizing a drought in the land. Elijah was then given instructions as to his next assignment, and that is to flee to a ravine east of the Jordan river, in a desert, and hold up there until relieved. The Lord told the Prophet how He was going to provide for him through a mountain brook and feed him through God's means of ravens. Elijah certainly knew that this brook was intermittent and would in a drought eventually dry up. And dry up it did. Most of us would say that this is God's signal to move. The question I will ask is if Elijah is following God's will where is he to go? The now dry stream prepared Elijah to be anticipating further instructions from the Lord. Elijah did not move until He did receive those instructions. God's instructions are to journey 75 miles across the desert and during this drought to gentile territory, the very domain of Ahab and Jezebel and he will be nourished not by ravens but by a widow. God did not tell Elijah how to identify the widow. The Lord sovereignly chooses His means, and we are not to question. The Lord's means often will challenge our humility, faith, and obedience.

***Read: 1 Kings 17:7-10***

**Introduction:** We need to observe that Elijah was supernaturally supplied after he obeyed God and not before. The promise always follows the condition. This reminds us that most of God's promises are conditional. The Lord's command to hide at the brook Cherith supplied a real test of Elijah's faith and humility. Solitude in itself is a severe test of faith. Though Elijah was cut off from the support of fellow believers, he was not cut off from the Lord. It seems that no matter the command, Elijah was willing to obey.

Let's compare Elijah with another prophet to the northern kingdom, Jonah. We know that Jonah fled from the word of the Lord. Jonah was swallowed whole while three days and nights in the belly of a great fish or whale. While I Elijah passed directly into heaven without dying. Had God so pleased, He could have fed Elijah by angels rather than ravens. Though God may not today employ ravens to supply His people, He often works just as miraculously in using unbelievers to assist His own people, **Proverbs 21:1 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> **The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.**

We need to be reminded why Elijah is here at a place called Cherith in the first place. The prophet informed King Ahab of the northern kingdom of Israel that there would be a drought in the land. The Lord commanded Elijah to depart from the northern kingdom and go east of the Jordan River and hide in this particular ravine fed by this particular brook. The name Cherith means drought. He told Elijah that he was going to drink from the water of this brook and be fed by ravens.

**Transition:** But we live in a physical world of time and space. God's purpose continues to move on and so must His prophet because:

**1. Providence Moves: 1 Kings 17:7 (ESV)** <sup>7</sup> **And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.**

We know the drought lasted three years. The Lord's enforced separation of Elijah and the resulting isolation was an incredible test of faith in the molding of God's spokesman. Our text tells us the brook dried up. After all, Elijah probably anticipated this as this brook would dry up because it was an intermittent stream. No doubt Elijah was observing that the flow of water was getting less and less and less. If this were one of us no doubt we will have probably decided it was time to move. But Elijah was not one to move without the Lord's word. This reminds us that at times the Lord supply by one means dries up. After all, we're living in a world of decay. God's people are not exempted from these kinds of tests of faith. Now Elijah is feeling the drought himself. The water slowed to a trickle did Elijah's composure and faith slow to a trickle? Or did Elijah think God that the brook lasted as long as it did? Even though Elijah was right in the middle of God's appointed place he was not spared the necessity of discipline in his life of faith. And neither are we. The Lord was training Elijah to trust in Himself and not in His gifts. Has Elijah trusted in the brook or God?

**Transition:** We know that Elijah trusted God more than the brook. We know this because Elijah did not move until he was:

**2. Directed to Move: 1 Kings 17:8-9 (ESV) <sup>8</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to him, <sup>9</sup> "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you."**

Doesn't this bring to mind that in the wilderness Israel journeyed at the command of the Lord? As long as the cloud stayed where it was so they stayed even until they were without water. These things are recorded for our instruction. God had not forgotten God would not withhold the needed instruction when the time arrived to move. This we do know, when the Lord's words came, both the prophet's faith and patience had been tried.

We need to believe that when a person acts under God's orders, they are under His care. So it is with us. Where God places us, there we must stay until so directed, **1 Corinthians 7:20 (ESV) <sup>20</sup> Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called.**

The place where Elijah is now ordered, Zarephath, means refining. Elijah is now facing further refining. Has Elijah been refined enough? Have we in our present circumstances been refined enough? The root of the word for Zarephath means a crucible. A crucible is designed to separate the dross from the precious metal. God orders Elijah to go to Zarephath, a distance of 75 miles, across the desert in a drought. We are not told how God supplied the prophet in his journey, but we know He did.

Zarephath was in Sidon, a territory of the Gentiles outside of Canaan. This was the very home of Jezebel and Ahab. I believe God was mocking Jezebel by hiding His servant right under her nose. It is also instructive to observe the means that God has chosen to care for Elijah in that place. The means He chose was not a rich person but it was a poor widow, desolate, and dependent.

This is God's way. It is God's way to place honor upon the weak and the foolish things of this world. Imagine how humbled Elijah was to receive food from ravens and now from a destitute gentile widow? How this truth is visually illustrated here by having to accept supply from a Gentile widow! Here is an application for us. Of course, we don't know what tomorrow will bring except that tomorrow will bring tomorrow's God, **Isaiah 41:10 (ESV)**  
**<sup>10</sup> fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.**

We need to notice that the Lord is sending Elijah to another brook, not a river. He was not sent to some wealthy person with unlimited resources to a poor person with limited means. The Lord will have us as His welfare recipients. These orders were opposed to Elijah's natural feelings, spiritual training, and inclinations. He was now going to be dependent upon a Gentile and a heathen city. He was commanded to leave God's country and live in the headquarters of Baal worship. These instructions required unquestioning obedience. Those who walk with God must not only trust Him but be regulated by His word.

How could Elijah dwell where he did not know anybody? The Lord had decided for him. Now, this does not mean that the widow was aware of the Lord's arrangements. We are told that God appointed this meeting, and He would affect it by His providences. When God calls a person to go to a place rest assured, He has fully provided for him. God secretly disposed of this widow to receive and sustain God's servant. This goes directly counter to our human sensibilities. How many times in your life have you been helped by strangers? Again, Elijah's humility was put to the test. He was called to accept charity from a destitute widow. How humbling it is to be dependent upon the poorest of the poor. How deadly this is to self-confidence.

**Transition:** God's appointed widow did not even appear to have the means for her own needs. Let me introduce you to:

**3. The Poor Widow: 1 Kings 17:10 (ESV) <sup>10</sup> So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink."**

Elijah gave proof that he was God's servant because he went to Zarephath. This isn't the first time Lord has supplied his servant from the means of the needy. Remember, these people who the Lord appointed to minister to his son Jesus, **Luke 8:2-3 (ESV) <sup>2</sup> and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, <sup>3</sup> and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.**

The path of service is always the path of obedience. The disruptions of providence are necessary for our spiritual lives to prosper. And we need to be aware of them so we can make adjustments to what God is doing.

Also, notice that God gave Elijah no detailed information as to the person to whom he was to go. The only thing that he knew was that it was to be a

widow at Zarephath. Again, whether an individual believer or church, we must be guided step-by-step. Rarely, the Lord reveals much beforehand. Beloved, the path of faith is not the path of common sense. And we dishonor God and rob him of his glory by substituting common sense for faith.

Elijah could tell that the woman was a widow by what she was wearing. The woman was gathering sticks. She was so poor she didn't even have any fuel. And Elijah asked her to get him a drink. Doesn't this remind you of Jacob when he journeyed to his uncle's house trying to find a bride and his test was to ask the women to draw him some water from the well? The woman who drew the water was the woman he married. Might Elijah's question have been occasioned by his knowledge of the word of God?

Elijah didn't even know her name know where her house was. Elijah trusted God to give him further light when he arrived. The Scripture simply says that a widow was there. Here we go with Providence again. Do we even believe enough in Providence to respond to it? **Psalm 37:23 (ESV)** <sup>23</sup> **The steps of a man are established by the LORD, when he delights in his way;**

**Conclusion:** Saints, it is unbelief that disconnects the ordinary things of life from God. All of our circumstances and experiences are directed by the Lord, **Romans 11:36 (ESV)** <sup>36</sup> **For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.** Cultivate the holy attitude of seeing the hand of God and everything that happens to you. When God works, He always works at both ends just like he did with both Elijah and the widow. If Jacob is being moved to move to Egypt, Joseph is being pre-positioned to be there to supply for them. If the spies are sent into Jericho, a Rahab is being pre-positioned to shelter them. If the Ethiopian unit is desiring of understanding the word of God, Philip is sent to preach it to him. Where have you been missing God's activity in your life? The world and the life of the believer are alive with the glory of God. Take off your blinders and enjoy Him.