

God Prepares and Provides for His man in a Time of Crisis

I Kings 17

Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."

I. The man of God stands for God

A. The name Elijah means, *Yahweh is my God*. In the days when Ahab's government officially supported the worship of Baal and other gods, even the *name* of this prophet told the truth.

There shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word: This was a dramatic demonstration against the pagan god Baal, who was thought to be the sky god, the god of the weather. Elijah showed that through his prayers to the God of Israel, Yahweh was mightier than Baal. There is evil in the world today. God is greater than all the evil of the world combined. Our job is to be faithful to God and stand against the evil. But do not worry about what you cannot control.

B. Elijah was not merely the *prophet* of this drought-in the sense of prayer, he was *the cause of the drought*. He prayed and it happened. James 5:17-18 makes this clear: *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.*

Elijah's prayer was in the will of God. Prayer does not allow us to manipulate God. Prayer is to get our hearts in line with God. We do need to pray. God hears and answers our prayers. Sometimes God is ready to give and we do not ask. Persistence in praying purifies our heart.

C. *As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand*: The Lord was the source of Elijah's strength.

1) *As the LORD God of Israel lives*: Many acted as if the LORD was dead, but for Elijah the LORD lived. We serve a living God. We serve a risen Savior. We are indwelt with the very Spirit of God. God is ruling and God is reigning. An evil king and a corrupt government was no match for a man empowered by God.

2) *Before whom I stand*: Elijah stood in the presence of Ahab, but he was conscious of the presence of Someone greater than any earthly king. We must remind ourselves of the presence of God all throughout the day. God is greater than the virus. God is greater than the economy. God is greater than the government. We must stand with God. We must stand for God.

II. When The Man of God Closely Follows God - God Prepares His Heart

2 *The word of the Lord came to him, saying,* **3** *"Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. 4 It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there."*

God led Elijah one step at a time. He did not tell him to go to Cherith until he first delivered the message to Ahab. He did not tell him to go to Zarephath until the brook dried up at Cherith. God led Elijah by faith, one step at a time, and Elijah followed in faith. We must walk with God one day at a time. **God does not give you the whole map. God gives you one piece at a time.**

A. Hide by the Brook Cherith: Through this God taught Elijah the value of the *hidden* life. He had just become famous as an adversary of Ahab, so mighty that his prayers could stop the rain. At the moment of his new-found fame, God wanted Elijah to hide and be alone with God.

"We must not be surprised, then, if sometimes our Father says: 'There, child, thou hast had enough of this hurry, and publicity, and excitement; get thee hence, and hide thyself by the brook-hide thyself in the Cherith of the sick chamber; or in the Cherith of disappointed hopes; or in the Cherith of bereavement; or in some solitude from which the crowds have ebbed away.' " (Meyer)

God does not cause all our suffering, but God can use it for our good and His glory.

"Elijah could not be alone, so long as he had God and himself to converse with. [God's man] is never less alone, than when alone." (Trapp)

B. And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there: The escape to the Brook Cherith was for more than protection. It was also to train Elijah in dependence upon the LORD. In a season of drought, he had to trust that God could keep this brook flowing. He also had to accept food from **the ravens**, an unclean animal.

1) The name Cherith comes from the ancient Hebrew root meaning, *to cut away, to cut up or off*. This shows that God had some cutting to do in the life of Elijah during this period.

God is constantly shaping. A sculptor cuts away all that should not be there.

2) I have commanded the ravens to feed you there: There is an emphasis on the word **there**. God promised that the ravens would feed Elijah as he stayed at Cherith. Of course, theoretically the ravens could feed him anywhere—but God commanded that it be at Cherith. Elijah perhaps wanted to be somewhere else, or be preaching, or doing anything else. Yet God wanted him **there** and would provide for him **there**. We must not run away when God puts us into a difficult place.

It may seem dangerous to be in God's will. But it is a lot more dangerous to be out of God's will. But you are not free from danger in God's will.

Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch Christian who was imprisoned for helping Jews escape the Nazis, coined the famous phrase, "The safest place is in the center of God's will." Sadly, we've twisted a phrase that came out of great suffering into a Christian cliché—misunderstood to mean that we are somehow "bullet-proof" if we are obediently following Jesus.

Corrie ten Boom knew what it meant to follow Jesus into dangerous circumstances and suffer the consequences. She and her family were responsible for rescuing nearly 800 Jews through an underground network of safe houses.

But just after midnight on February 28, 1944, the Gestapo burst into the ten Boom house and arrested the whole family.

Corrie's 84-year-old father died soon after in prison. Corrie and her sister Betsie ended up in a concentration camp. Later that year, Corrie watched her beloved sister die with these words on her lips, "There is no pit so deep that He [God] is not deeper still."

[Being in God's will does not keep you from suffering – it gives you the strength to endure suffering and it gives your suffering meaning.]

You follow someone who was beaten, mocked and ultimately executed—and who invited you to take up YOUR cross. *Craig Greenfield*

III. God Provides for the Man of God

5 So he went and did according to the word of the Lord, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook.

Bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening: As faithfully as He provided manna for Israel in the wilderness, God provided for Elijah's needs. He came to trust more than ever in the miraculous provision of God.

"A little boy, having read this incident with his widowed mother on wintry night, as they sat in a fireless room, beside a bare table, asked her if he might set the door open for God's ravens to come in; he was so sure that they must be on their way. The burgomaster of that German town, passing by, was attracted by the sight of the open door, and entered, inquiring the cause. When he learnt the reason, he said, 'I will be God's raven'; and relieved their need then and afterwards." (Meyer)

God may want to use you to help meet the needs of others.

IV. The Man of God will Experience Hardship in the Will of God

1 Kings 17:7 It happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

A. Because there had been no rain in the land: This was the drought Elijah prayed for. He did not pray for rain to come again, even for his own survival. He kept the purpose of God first, even when it adversely affected him.

B. After a while that the brook dried up: Elijah saw the flow of the brook slow down until it dried up. His source of water was gone.

Meyer mentions different kinds of drying brooks we might experience:

- The drying brook of health, sinking under a creeping paralysis, or a slow consumption.

- 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.

"Why does God let them dry? He wants to teach us not to trust in His gifts but in Himself. He wants to drain us of self. He wants to loosen our roots ere He removes us to some other sphere of service and education. He wants to put in stronger contrast the river of throne-water that never dries." (Meyer)

We live in a broken world and at times we are asked to travel a difficult path. It is made harder by the fact that we are broken ourselves.

There is not a single shoe in this place that does not contain a foot of clay, a foot that drags, a foot that stumbles; but on just such feet we all seek to follow that road through a world where there are many other roads to follow. [F. Buechner]

The world of *The Lord of the Rings* is an enchanted world. It is a shadowy world where life and death are at stake and where things are seldom what they seem. It is a dangerous and beautiful world in which great evil and great good are engaged in a battle where more often than not the odds are heavily in favor of great evil. It is a world where enormous burdens are loaded on small shoulders and where the most fateful issues hang on what are apparently the most homely and insignificant decisions. And thus it is through a world in many ways much like our own that the road winds. [Frederick Buechner]

Tolkien developed his argument to explain that the story of Christ was the True Myth, a myth that works in the same way as the others, but a myth that really happened – a myth that existed in the realm of fact as well as the realm of truth. In the same way that men unraveled the truth through the weaving of story, God revealed the Truth through the weaving of History.¹

Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He calls us to follow Him on the way. Sometimes the way is hard. But the end of the road is sure. The Way of Jesus leads to life – eternal life – and wise are the ones who give their lives to following Him.

[Much of the commentary for this sermon came from David Guzik's notes on I Kings 17 in his commentary found online at Blue Letter Bible.]

¹ Joseph Pearce, *C.S. Lewis and the Catholic Church* (Charlotte, North Carolina: Saint Benedict Press, 2013), loc. 989. [This came from Andrew Wilson's paper at NOBTS]