

Trusting God

1 Kings 17:8-16

Introduction

Elijah holds in his hand a diploma from Dry Brook University. This prophet is on the run and has been camped out in the wilderness. He has trusted God to take care of him even in the most desperate of situations. He trusted God to send the ravens to feed him, and he trusted God to supply his water using the little brook Cherith. He watched as God met his needs day in and day out. But he also watched as God allowed his brook, the only source of water he had, to dry up before his eyes. Surely, enduring this kind of trial would count for something! Surely, things would get better for the prophet now!

Yet, when God speaks to Elijah, it is to send him into another difficult situation. You see, the prophet's training isn't over just yet. God is creating a man of God! Elijah may have graduated from Dry Brook University, but now he is about to enroll in Empty Barrel Graduate School. At Cherith God broke the prophet's flesh: He taught Elijah to depend on God. At Zarephath, God will break Elijah's pride. Here, he will learn that God, not Elijah calls all the shots of life. He will learn that things are never like they appear. He will learn that God can use the humblest of means to train His children for His glory.

Now, with that in mind, there are times when it seems that our trials come back to back to back to back. That is, it seems that before one trial can end, another begins! When these times come, we may be tempted to question the Lord as to what He is doing. Simply stated, God is getting us in a position where He can use us in a greater way. I will remind you that before He can mold us, He must first melt us! After all, God's goal for every saint of God is that we be made into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He will continue to mold us and melt us

Eph 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Therefore, let's join the prophet Elijah as he continues his training at Empty Barrel Graduate School. There are lessons here that we can glean from as well. These lessons will help us when we face our times of testing.

I. A Fresh Path

Ki 17:8 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

1Ki 17:9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which *belongeth* to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

1Ki 17:10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman *was* there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

1Ki 17:11 And as she was going to fetch *it*, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

A. The Call

Ki 17:8 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

As Elijah sat there beside that dried-up brook, it must have felt like he had been abandoned by God. Have you ever felt that way? It is a terrible feeling! However, God had not forgotten about Elijah! God knew exactly where he was. God knew all about that dry brook and God had something else in mind for the man of God!

Let me just remind you that the dried brooks of life are merely those things which God uses to move us along in His will. He will use the dried-up brooks you face to teach you fresh lessons of faith and obedience.

There is a lesson here for us, and it is a hard one to swallow! That lesson is this:

Genuine faith waits for God to reveal His plans.

It will sit by a dried-up brook forever, even if it means death, waiting on the will of God to be revealed. Friends, this is where we get into trouble! We have this tendency to run ahead of God and take matters into our own hands. Yet, God's will, is that we learn to wait on Him, even when He doesn't move on our schedule! If your brook is dry this morning, do not fear! God has not forgotten about you. He knows just where you are and when the time is right, you will hear His voice calling you to a fresh arena of service!

Isa 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.

We are action oriented people, but sometimes God's command is that we just be still and wait on Him,

B. The Command

1Ki 17:9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which *belongeth* to Zidon,

When the Lord does speak to Elijah, He commands him to go to Zarephath. This is a strange command considering the fact that Zarephath is in a Gentile nation. It is the country of Jezebel. It is a land of idolaters. It is a wicked place filled with wicked people. Yet, that is exactly where the Lord sends His prophet! To top it off, to get to Zarephath from Cherith, Elijah will be forced to march over 100 miles through territory ruled over by king Ahab, who is looking for him everywhere. It seems like this command of the Lord makes no sense at all! Of course, one of the reasons for sending Elijah to Zarephath was to vividly illustrate the impotence of Jezebel's wrath and power!

Again, there is a lesson for us in this verse:

Often, the life of faith will lead through difficult pathways.

Folks, God never promised that this way would be an easy way. In fact, just the opposite is true! God has promised us that life will be filled with trials and troubles.

Job 14:1 Man *that is* born of a woman *is* of few days, and full of trouble.

Job 5:7 Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.

Joh 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

But, that is the path of faith!

Even when the command of God makes no sense, faith simply obeys God without regard for the consequences.

You can see this truth displayed throughout the Bible.

- Noah and the ark - [Gen. 6](#)
- Abraham and Isaac - [Gen. 22](#)
- Daniel and the 3 Hebrews - [Dan. 1](#)

There are times when the commands of God seem harsh and strange. However, faith recognizes the voice of the Good Shepherd and follows obediently wherever He may lead!

C. The Challenge

1Ki 17:9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which *belongeth* to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

Notice that again Elijah is told to “*dwell there*”. He is to go to Zarephath and stay there until he receives new instructions from the mouth of the Lord. Often, God's times of testing do not come with a time limit attached! He merely sends unto it and leaves us there until His work in us is finished!

However, the real challenge is in what God told the prophet next, “*behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.*” That must have been a serious blow to the pride of the prophet. You see, in those days, widows were the poorest of the poor! In times of drought and want, the widows were the first group to die off.

Instead of God telling Elijah, “*I have a widow over there in Zarephath and I want you to go take care of her.*” God says, “*Elijah, I am sending you to another place of testing where you will have to look to me for all you receive, every day.*”

For Elijah, Zarephath was a place that would live up to its name. The name *Zarephath* means “*smelting furnace, or refining*”. It refers to the furnace into which metal is placed so that it can be heated up and have any impurities removed.

Cherith was the place where Elijah had been cut off and cut down. *Zarephath* would be the place where he would be refined. It would be here that the last vestiges of Elijah's pride and self-reliance would be stripped away.

Romans 1:17 tells us that the just shall live by faith. But we are a self-reliant people aren't we? We seem to cling to the old blue collar mentality.. We always want to believe that we can “*handle it*” ourselves. We would like to think that we are in control of our lives and that we are calling all the shots. However, when the Lord begins to work in your life to reveal Himself in you more clearly, He will send you to a Zarephath where you have to depend on nothing but Him. I seem to remember the Pastor telling us of how the Lord sent him to Colorado.

The point is though, when you have been brought to the place where you can lean on nothing but God, He has brought you to the greatest of places that life can afford. For it is in that place that you will learn Who is in control. That is the challenge we all face in our faith life. We all face the challenge of getting to the place where we are trusting God and Him alone for all the needs we have in life! That my brothers and sisters, is where He wants each and every one of us.

D. The Comfort

1Ki 17:10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman *was* there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

1Ki 17:11 And as she was going to fetch *it*, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

When Elijah receives this command, he does not hesitate, he just gets up and goes where God tells him to go. When he arrives at Zarephath, he sees “*the*” widow picking up sticks. Evidently, the Lord lets him know that this is the vessel He has chosen to sustain him. When Elijah sees her, he calls to her to fetch him a drink of

water. It must have been a comfort to him to see her turn to fetch his drink! It must have appeared like God had things lined up for the prophet.

There is a lesson here as well. We would do well to remember that:

Our God is a God Who works on both ends of the line.

Let me illustrate.

- *When Jacob and his sons needed food, God provided a Joseph in Egypt.*
- *When the children of Israel sent their spies to Jericho, God gave them a Rahab.*
- *When the Jews faced a Haman, God raised them up an Esther.*
- *When an Ethiopian Eunuch needed salvation, God sent him a Philip.*

Phillipians 4:19 says, “**But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**”

When your time of need arises, rest assured that your Father has already gone ahead to spread the table of provision in your behalf.

II. A Fantastic Promise

1Ki 17:12 And she said, *As* the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I *am* gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

1Ki 17:13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go *and* do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring *it* unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

1Ki 17:14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day *that* the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

1Ki 17:15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat *many* days.

A. A Doubt

1Ki 17:12 And she said, *As* the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I *am* gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

When Elijah asks the widow for a cake of bread, her fear is brought to the surface. God had already commanded her to care for His prophet, we saw this in verse 9, but she is trapped in the fear of faithlessness. She has her eyes on the circumstances and not on the God Who controls the circumstances!

This is the place where many people are living this morning! When we look at our problems and our needs, we feel like we are trapped in a hopeless situation. We are guilty of looking at the ***problem*** and not at the ***Provider!*** As much as Elijah was sent to Zarephath for his benefit, he was also sent for the benefit of this widow. She needed to learn the value of faith in God.

Are you trapped in doubt this morning? Does it appear that your situation is hopeless and that you are helpless to do anything about it?

The answer lies in looking beyond your problem and getting your eyes on the Provider.

Heb 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Heb 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

If you are saved, then you are in the family of God. God is your Father and He has promised to take care of you.

Mat 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Mat 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Mat 6:27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

Mat 6:28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

Mat 6:29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Mat 6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith?

Mat 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

Mat 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek;) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

Mat 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Mat 6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.

Therefore, when you doubt, you are saying that God cannot do what He has promised to do! Is He God or isn't He? Your doubt says that God is dead! Your faith recognizes His power and position!

It must have been a discouragement to Elijah to hear the widow express her lack of faith. If he had focused on first impressions instead of on the word of God, then he might have lapsed into despair. However, he believed God more than he believed even what he saw!

Real faith knows that God is greater than what the eye can see. Real faith knows that God can make the impossible possible.

Heb 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

B. A Demand

1Ki 17:13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go *and* do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring *it* unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

1Ki 17:14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day *that* the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

When Elijah hears the widow's sob story, he makes what appears to be the coldest demand in the Bible. He tells her to go ahead and fix her last supper, but to feed him first! On the surface this appears harsh and cruel, but it was, in fact, a plea for faith and surrender to the will of God.

Notice what this demand involved:

- **It Involved Encouragement** - “Fear not!” Elijah comforts her heart in this matter. She is told that she can trust God.
- **It Involved Enlightenment** - “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel.” She gets a direct word from God concerning her situation. She has God's word that she will be taken care of.
- **It Involved Excitement** - “Neither the barrel of meal nor the cruse of oil will fail until God sends rain upon the earth. This widow hears the news that she is about to be center stage for a miracle designed to care for God's man. She is about to be caught up in a manifestation of the power of God.

The point here is that God's call on our lives often make demands that are difficult to understand.

- Why would He call me to do that?
- Why would the Lord allow that to happen?
- Why this and why that?

However, when God's demands are accompanied by a clear word of God, then we need have no fear, but we can respond in faith, knowing that God will take care of us. Remember Abraham? He was called on the sacrifice his son Isaac. It must have been the most difficult demand he faced in his life! Yet, he responded in faith and came to know God in a brand new way. Abraham learned that God is *Jehovah-Jireh!* That is, He is the *Lord Who will see to it!*

C. A Decision

1Ki 17:15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah:

When this widow heard the word of God, she went and did as Elijah had commanded her. It must have taken great faith to use the last little bit of meal she had to prepare bread for a total stranger. Yet she did it by faith!

This is the place that God wants to bring us all to. He wants His Elijahs and His widows to learn to trust Him in every circumstance, regardless of what outward appearances may suggest. Have you reached that place in your walk with God? If not, then don't be surprised when God's paths lead through dark valleys and uncertain ways. He is in the process of training His servants. We can do no better than to learn to obey Him promptly, just like Elijah and the widow did!

God wants us to get to the place where we can give it all away!

Legend has it that a man was lost in the desert, just dying for a drink of water. He stumbled upon an old shack—a ramshackled, windowless, roofless, weatherbeaten old shack. He looked about this place and found a little shade from the heat of the desert sun. As he glanced around he saw a pump about fifteen feet away—an old, rusty water pump. He stumbled over to it, grabbed the handle, and began to pump up and down, up and down. Nothing came out.

Disappointed, he staggered back. He noticed off to the side an old jug. He looked at it, wiped away the dirt and dust, and read a message that said, "You have to prime the pump with all the water in this jug, my friend. P.S.: Be sure you fill the jug again before you leave."

He popped the cork out of the jug and sure enough, it was almost full of water! Suddenly, he was faced with a decision. If he drank the water, he could live. Ah, but if he poured all the water in the old rusty pump, maybe it would yield fresh, cool water from down deep in the well, all the water he wanted.

He studied the possibility of both options. What should he do, pour it into the old pump and take a chance on fresh, cool water or drink what was in the old jug and ignore its message? Should he waste all the water on the hopes of those flimsy instructions written, no telling how long ago?

Reluctantly he poured all the water into the pump. Then he grabbed the handle and began to pump, squeak, squeak, squeak. Still nothing came out! Squeak, squeak, squeak. A little bit began to dribble out, then a small stream, and finally it gushed! To his relief fresh, cool water poured out of the rusty pump. Eagerly, he filled the jug and drank from it. He filled it another time and once again drank its refreshing contents.

Then he filled the jug for the next traveler. He filled it to the top, popped the cork back on, and added this little note: "Believe me, it really works. You have to give it all away before you can get anything back."

That is the essence of genuine faith! It is not a risk, but it is a challenge to human reasoning.

Faith will call on us to do the unthinkable so that we might receive the impossible!

II. A Fabulous Provision

1Ki 17:15 *And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.*

1Ki 17:16 *And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.*

The Bible tells us here that until the rains returned to the earth, the meal barrel and the jar of oil did not run out. Every time the widow went to get meal and oil to prepare a meal, there was more to be used. *When she decided to bake that cake for Elijah, she traded the certain for the uncertain and received the impossible in return!*

A. The Grace of It

Because this widow took God at His Word and prepared bread for Elijah, God allowed the widow, the widow's son and Elijah to enjoy plenty while all around them hundreds starved to death. That is grace! The difference in the widow's home was the she learned to live by faith and she was supplied by the hand of God. God honors faith because faith honors God!

B. The Greatness Of It

For years, until it rained, every meal time was a miracle. God worked a miracle in that barrel and in that jar every single day. He took nothing and made it last until it was no longer needed. Friends, we serve a God Who specializes in doing the impossible! It may look hopeless to us, but we must never count God out! He can take the little that is dedicated to Him by faith and multiply it to enormous proportions! Remember guys, 5 loaves and 2 fishes fed a multitude.

C. The Glory of It

The glory of this story resides in this fact: that barrel of meal and that cruse of oil were never full! Elijah and the widow were taught to live day by day. Every day she scraped the bottom of the barrel and everyday there was just enough meal to fix their food. Every day she watched the last drop of oil drip from that jar, but the next day there was always more. The glory in the story lies in the fact that Elijah and the widow were taught to trust God day by day! As the days passed, their faith was strengthened as they saw the Lord provide! You see, the difficulties of life are to faith what barbells are to muscles. They will strengthen its very fiber!

When God has brought you to the place where you are forced to trust in Him for today's provision, He has brought you to the best place you can be. He has blessed you beyond words! You may not think so at the time, but when His path leads to a greater trial, it is a blessing to know that God always takes care of His children!

Let me close with this:

George Mueller, born into a German tax collector's family, was often in trouble. He learned early to steal and gamble and drink. As a teenager, he learned how to stay in expensive hotels, then sneak out without paying the bill. But at length he was caught and jailed. Prison did him little good, for upon release he continued his crime spree until, on a Saturday night in 1825, he met Jesus Christ.

Mueller married and settled down in Bristol, England, growing daily in faith and developing a burden for the homeless children running wild and ragged through the streets. At a public meeting in Bristol on December 9, 1835, he presented a plan for an orphanage. Several contributions came in. Mueller rented Number 6 Wilson Street, and on April 11, 1836, the doors of the orphanage opened. Twenty-six children were immediately taken in. A second house soon opened, then a third.

From the beginning, Mueller refused to ask for funds or even to speak of the ministry's financial needs. He believed in praying earnestly and trusting the Lord to provide. And the Lord did provide, though sometimes at the last moment. The best-known story involves a morning when the plates and bowls and cups were set on the tables, but there was no food or milk. The children sat waiting for breakfast while Mueller led in prayer for their daily bread. A knock sounded at the door. It was the baker. "Mr. Mueller," he said, "I couldn't sleep last night. Somehow I felt you didn't have bread for breakfast, so I got up at 2 A.M. and baked some fresh bread." A second knock sounded. The milkman had broken down right in front of the orphanage, and he wanted to give the children his milk so he could empty his wagon and repair it.

Such stories became the norm for Mueller's work. During the course of his ninety-three years, Mueller housed more than ten thousand orphans, "prayed in" millions of dollars, traveled to scores of countries preaching the Gospel, and recorded fifty thousand answers to prayer.

As this sermon closes and the invitation opens, I have to ask.

Where does this message find your faith? Does it seem that God is moving you from one hard place to another? Does it seem that things just get harder and harder for you as you journey through life? You must remember that God is refining you! Just like fine wine is transferred from vessel to vessel to remove the "*lees*", God will pass His servants from one difficulty into another to remove from our lives those things that are not pleasing in His sight. Don't fight Him! Our best course of action this morning is to surrender to His will now!

Others of you are lost, you need to be saved today. Some are not walking in close communion with the Lord, you need to be restored. Whatever the need, know that we are here for you and there is help to be found in Jesus. Will you humble yourself and trust God for whatever your need may be?