

1st Kings 17: 2-6; “The Hiding of Elijah”, Message # 2 in the series – “Elijah the Tishbite”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 25th, 2021, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

The life of a prophet of in Old Testament times was a life of hiding and of being revealed according to the will of God. Concerning John the Baptist who was the last of the Old Testament prophets, it says in Luke 1: 80 – “So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation (of his revealing) to Israel.” At this time we want to think about Elijah’s life of hiding, for three and a half years. And I trust that we will learn lessons which will be helpful to us, in the times in which we live. For we are living in a public-driven age where because of instant media coverage, it is hard for any Christian to hide themselves away from anything, good or bad, for any length of time. I would like us 1st of all, to think together about the Reasons why Elijah was told by God to hide himself away. 2nd – The Unusual Means by which God provided for Elijah during that time of hiding. And 3rd – The Obedience of the prophet, to the Lord, in regard to this matter.

1st of all – The reasons why Elijah was told by God to hide himself away.

Verse 2 says – “Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, ‘Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan.’” This commandment from God was to hide himself in a very obscure place. When we ask why God would have him to do this, we would probably draw the natural conclusion that it was so that His prophet could be protected from evil Ahab’s attempts to take his life. Yes, that would be the natural conclusion. He had boldly come to Ahab and delivered the word to him – “As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.” But now he is being told to hide himself because Ahab and Jezebel would have been angry and upset that Elijah’s word was coming true.

Elijah would be safe in this place of retirement, where it was unlikely that he could be found. But it is necessary for us to ask: Why, if Elijah had this great gift of prophecy which had been given to him by the Lord, would he be told to hide himself so that none of the people who would benefit by his ministry to them, would not hear him at all during these days? The reason is that the whole people of Israel were under the judgment of God; not simply Ahab and Jezebel. Look over at Deuteronomy 11, verses 10-17 – “For the land which you go to possess is not not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot, as a vegetable garden; but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.”

“And it shall be that if you diligently obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil.” “And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.” “Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the Lord’s anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you.”

You can see here how sovereign, how much control that the Lord personally exercises in relation to the prosperity of any country; especially this case, over the land of Canaan, which the Israelites were entering. If they obeyed God’s commandments, to love the Lord and serve Him with all of their heart and with all of their soul, then they would receive the rain in its season; the early and the latter rain, that they might gather in their grain, new wine and oil; that they might have grass in their fields for their livestock, and that they might eat and be filled. But if they

would not take heed, and they allowed themselves to be deceived, and worshiped other gods, then the Lord's anger would become aroused and He would shut up the heavens, so that there would be no rain; and thus no produce, and thus the people would perish.

God had determined the length of this judgment as three and a half years, and it would be fulfilled. But the judgment was not simply the lack of rain as great a judgment as that was. It was the drought of hearing the word of God that was even worse. Let us understand that when God is displeased with a people that he will sometimes remove His faithful ministers as well; hide them in a corner so that they will not be heard, and so that this spiritual affliction will be even worse for the people than the physical drought. Indeed the physical drought in this case was to be the picture of the spiritual drought.

Turn with me over to Amos chapter 8, verses 11 and 12. "Behold the days are coming, says the Lord God, that I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" "They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find it." You can see here that a physical drought is a very good picture of the spiritual drought which comes to people's souls, if God withdraws godly preachers and teachers from the influence that they could have in the public sphere, if God would ordain it. And the Lord does ordain the measure of the feeding and quenching of spiritual thirst that comes to any person or people, in connection with the ministry of His word through godly men.

If you will look over at Isaiah chapter 30 and verses 15-17, and you will see what sin does to a people; it makes them increasingly weak as they continue in it, but with repentance will come God's greatest blessings, of the hearing of God's word. "For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.'" "But you would not, and you said, 'No, for we will flee on horses' – therefore you shall flee!" "And 'We will ride on swift horses' – Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift!" "One thousand shall flee at the threat of one, at the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left as a pole on top of a mountain. And as a banner on a hill." You can see here that their continuance in unbelief in relation to the hearing of the word, and rejection of God's good way looking at things in terms of righteousness, brought upon them the judgment of being pursued and overtaken in judgment. But let's now see what repentance and obedience to God's commandments brings.

"Therefore, the Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you." "For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him." "For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; you shall weep no more." "He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you." "And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers." "Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, this is the way, walk in it, whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left."

But this is why Elijah was being told to go and hide himself by the brook Cherith. It was because God did not want to be gracious to this people. His intent was to judge them; and yet to show mercy to those who would separate themselves from idolatry. Look with me at Proverbs 28: 28 – "When the wicked arise, men hide themselves; but when they perish, the righteous increase." The call to hide was a call to separation. Listen to A.W. Pink on this. "It was both for God's glory and the prophet's own good that the Lord bade him "get thee hence... hide thyself." It was a call to separation. Ahab was an apostate, and his consort was a heathen. Idolatry abounded on every side. Jehovah was publicly dishonored. The man of God could have no sympathy or communion with such a horrible situation. Isolation from evil is absolutely essential if we are to "keep ourselves unspotted from the world" (James 1:27): not only

separation from secular wickedness but from religious corruption also. “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” (Ephesians 5:11), has been God’s demand in every dispensation. Elijah stood as the Lord’s faithful witness in a day of national departure from Himself, and having delivered His testimony to the responsible head, the prophet must now retire.

To turn our backs on all that dishonors God is an essential duty.” I would say to you, that as we feel that there are times in which we need to hide, let us also pray that God would awaken many to righteousness in the communities that we live in, so that He would bring them to hear the word of the Lord. Now, it is amazing isn’t it? We live in a very small community, but we have sort of a platform here for the truth. And we are going to preach the truth here, and we have been preaching the truth, and we will pray that more and more people will hear it. But we need to understand that sometimes when God is judging a nation, that righteous people have to hide themselves, and they almost have to hide, in order to be separate from the sinful acts of men in society.

2nd – The unusual means by which God provided for Elijah during that time of hiding. (verse 4 and 6)

“And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.” “The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook.” It was a very private place to which Elijah was commanded to go. No man could bring anything to Elijah; he could not go out and come back bringing supplies in for himself; but God would totally provide for all of his needs right there in that place. God would provide for him there, in this very usual natural way; by simply drinking from the brook, and this other very unusual supernatural way; by His commanding ravens to feed him there.

Let us think together about this for a few moments. God knows how to provide for all of the real needs of His dear people in whatever situation that He calls them to be in. He is able to bring them to the place where their needs will be met by His directing them to the place where His creation in nature will supply their need. And He is able to direct nature itself to come to their aid when He purposes to do so. In the case of these ravens, God commanded them to bring Elijah bread and meat twice a day, even when it was against their nature to do so. If we were to take a look at Leviticus 11: 15 we would find that they were unclean creatures, and for the Jews under that dispensation, were off-limits as far as eating them, but here in this case God ordained that these unclean birds were to feed the prophet.

He was fed bread and meat by these birds. Where did they get it? God would direct them where to get it. They probably stole it from the wealthier persons in the kingdom who might have let the bread sit out fresh baked, and the meat in a place where it could be easily absconded. God ordained and coordinated all the circumstances and the delivery. It is interesting to note that it was not the supernatural supply that ran out during this time of hiding; it was the natural supply of the brook drying up. I like what F.S. Webster says on this: He says – “It was the natural, not the supernatural, provision that came to an end. That for which the prophet looked upward morning and evening continued steadily. That which had been flowing at his feet all day long began suddenly to diminish. When a trouble comes straight from heaven we are more likely to see God’s hand in it, and to submit patiently and trustfully. When, however, the trouble seems to come quite naturally, we are tempted to look at secondary causes, and to forget that God is behind them all.”

The lesson that we should learn from these ravens is that the God is not limited to natural means to provide for His prophets or his dear people, while he would have them to be hidden from the world. In order to be hidden from the world, and thus preparing ourselves for future usefulness in service to God, God knows that He Himself must feed us spiritually. We must be

willing to humble ourselves to receive whatever the Lord would have for us according to His providential appointments. We must not despise those means which the Lord makes use of, but work together with them. We must receive those difficult truths of His word, the meat, and the everyday nourishing truths of His word, the bread, as they come to us in relation to all the difficult providences of our lives, and in relation to the Lord's judgments upon the society and nation in which we live.

The Ravens represent those creatures and people which would not naturally show us any kindness or provide for our needs. We ask ourselves: What could we receive of them that would nourish and profit our souls? And yet God can appoint them to bring a good nourishing portion of spiritual food for us to feed on; and bring it to us each and every day if there are particular lessons to be learned. Ravens are very unlikely birds to have been used for this work because it says in the book of Job chapter 38: 41 that they do not by nature provide very well for their own. "Who provides food for the raven, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food?" Psalm 147, verse 9 says: "God gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry." And yet here we see here a more amazing thing yet. God appoints a Raven who is in every way unsuitable to bring food to Elijah, not only to bring it to him once, but morning and evening with regularity for 6 months or so, period of time. Even so, when we will hide ourselves from evil, God will provide for our needs by very unusual means.

And 3rd – We see the Obedience of the prophet, to the Lord, in regard to this matter. (verse 5)

"So Elijah went and did according to the word of the Lord, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith which flows into the Jordan." Elijah was showing his submission to the Lord's will for his life. He was going to learn the lessons of solitude; what God would show him when he was completely alone and isolated from the world and other people. If you will look at the Bible, you will see that this is what God often does with those men and women whom He decided to greatly use in His service. They were willing to learn the lessons of solitude; the lessons related to God's working in their heart to prepare them to do great things for Him.

This is what He did with Moses on the back side of the desert before he was called to deliver the children of Israel. It is what God did with David, when he had him keep sheep in the fields for his father for quite a long time before he was sent by his father with bread in his hands to give to his brothers on the line of battle. It was there that all of his good time of solitude with God paid off; for he who had had to fight with the lion and the bear, could now come up against Goliath the Philistine. The apostle Paul did not confer with flesh and blood, after he was converted, but went off to Arabia for about 3 years. (Galatians 1: 16 and 17) Even our Lord Jesus was kept in obscurity for 30 years before he began His public ministry.

Let us treasure up the times of solitude that are given to us; improving all the time of preparation that is given to us, so that we might be most effective in the Lord's service. Let us take to heart the words of Psalm 23: 1-3 – "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." "He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me bedside the still waters." "He restores my soul." And also the words of Psalm 91, verses 1 and 2 – "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." "I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.'" When we cultivate this secret life of solitude with God, He will be preparing us for future usefulness to Him if we improve upon all that He gives to us.

