

Guest Preacher - Rev. RJ Campbell

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Preacher: Rev. RJ Campbell

[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's help and blessing, let us turn to the Old Testament and to 1 Kings chapter 17. 1 Kings chapter 17.

And we'll read from verse 2. And the word of the Lord came to him, depart from here and turn eastwards. And hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan.

You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there. So he went and did according to the word of the Lord. He went and lived by the brook Cherith, that is east of the Jordan.

And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening. And he drank from the brook. And after a while, the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

As we saw this morning, Elijah had just delivered a message of judgment to King Ahab. A judgment that the Lord was going to bring upon Israel because of their idolatry and wickedness.

[1 : 23] But what was to happen to Elijah after he had delivered his message to King Ahab and declared to him the judgment of the drought?

Well, here we are told that the word of the Lord came to him. Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan.

You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there. Undoubtedly, the Lord's instruction for Elijah would be for his protection, because his life was going to be in danger from now on.

But I think there is a lot more happening here than just a mere physical or bodily protection.

Although it is true that the Lord provides physical or bodily protection.

For instance, in Psalm 91, we read, However, I think here there is not only that physical protection, but there is also a spiritual training or spiritual schooling going on.

[3 : 04] Elijah's physical and material needs are met at Cherith, but Elijah also has spiritual needs. And both need to be met if he is going to continue serving the Lord.

The Lord not only takes care of our body, but he also takes care of our soul. The Lord sometimes leads us into paths that we would never have chosen for ourselves.

And yet upon reflection, we can say that it was good for us to have trodden those paths. For instance, Joseph would not have found it easy as he was sold as a slave into Egypt by his brothers. He was wrongly accused. He was in chains in the dungeon. And yet here was his verdict, And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to keep alive for you many survivors.

So it was not you who sent me here, but God. In Psalm 105, we read, What we have there is the story of Joseph, And among other things that is shown to us there is the sovereignty of God.

[4 : 47] That God in his sovereignty is going to work out his own purpose. Going back to Elijah, We are also made aware of the sovereignty of God.

That God is in control. And this is a lesson that Joseph was taught, And that Elijah has been taught, And every child of God has been taught that lesson.

That God is sovereign, And that God is in full control. To human reasoning, The word of the Lord that came to Elijah seems bizarre, It seems strange and weird.

Hide yourself by the brook Cherith, Which is east of the Jordan. You shall drink from the brook, And I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.

Now, this was not a place of Elijah's choosing, But it was a place of the Lord's choosing. The Lord says through his prophet Isaiah in chapter 55, For my thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways my ways, Saith the Lord.

[6 : 03] For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are my ways higher than your ways, And my thoughts than your thoughts. The words of Psalm 46 could be applied to Elijah at this time, For they will read, Be still, And know that I am God.

Elijah believed in the sovereignty of God.

He knew that God was in control, And he knew that the Lord's way is always perfect. Yes, to human reasoning, It may have sounded strange and weird, But he knew that the Lord was sovereign.

He knew that God was in control, And he knew that the Lord's way is always the perfect way. Elijah did not doubt or question the word of the Lord.

He did not begin to argue or to offer other suggestions, Which I and you might have been prone to do. He did not say, Lord, What in the world are you doing with me?

[7 : 37] I have just stood before wicked King Ahab, Putting my own life in danger, Giving him your words of judgment for their wickedness, And now you are telling me to go to Cherith, The place of seclusion.

But you notice that Elijah did not complain. Elijah did not argue. He simply obeyed. In Psalm 37, we'll read these words, The steps of man are established by the Lord When he delights in his way. When he delights in his way. Who is it that delights? I think that the he can be referenced to both God and man.

Elijah's steps were truly ordered by the Lord, And the Lord found delight in the way of Elijah. But at the same time, Elijah delighted in the way of the Lord.

Although he could not reason it out, He could not understand what was happening, Yet he delighted in the way of the Lord. The evidence for us to say that Elijah's obedience, For we read, And so he went and did according to the word of the Lord.

[9 : 01] He obeyed because he delighted in the way of the Lord. He was so sure that this was the way that the Lord was leading him.

Although he couldn't reason it out, Although he couldn't understand it, Yet he obeyed because he knew and was assured in his heart That this was the way that the Lord was leading him.

Elijah, this man of action, Who had just stood in a king's court, And pronounced God's judgment upon the land of Israel. The Lord was sending him to Cherith, Which was the place of seclusion. He would be isolated there. He would be lonely there. But Elijah knew that however bizarre or strange this was, That God would be with him there.

You know, sometimes the Lord leads us into situations and circumstances, Which is the exact opposite of what would be natural for us to desire.

[10 : 14] We often prefer to be in a more affluent surroundings and circumstances. But the Lord takes us aside and puts us into the place of seclusion and isolation, And into a lonely place.

Cherith, as we have already noted, Was not only the place of the Lord's protection for Elijah physically, But it was also his school of spiritual learning.

Cherith was going to become, for Elijah, A school of spiritual learning. And sometimes the Lord leads us into situations and circumstances That seems to us to be so bizarre, so strange.

And yet for us, it also becomes a school of spiritual learning. At Cherith, Elijah would come to know more of the Lord's protection and care.

And it was the place of the Lord's groundwork for Elijah, So that he could serve him in the future. We often see this throughout the Bible. And if we reflect upon our own life, And upon our own Christian experience, We can also see such.

[11 : 36] Moses spent 40 years on the backside of the desert To become equipped to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. David spent much of his time alone in the wilderness, Shepherding his father's sheep Before he became king to shepherd Israel.

It was a profitable time for him. For in his solitude, He learned lessons that have been passed on to us, Especially in the book of Psalms.

For instance, the psalm that we have just sung. Psalm 23. The shepherd learned that he had a need of a shepherd To guide and to protect And to take care of him And lead him home.

The shepherd saw his great need Of shepherding for himself. How often that psalm has become a comfort for us.

And yet, It was spent not in the royal court, But out in the hills, And in the valleys of Palestine. Out in the wilderness of Palestine.

[12 : 46] Paul, we believe, Spent some time alone in Arabia Before getting started on his great missionary journeys.

In places of solitude, Many a Christian has found themselves nearer to God Than in the midst of a great crowd.

Solitude. We are not at all promoting us to become recluse, Like to have recluse lifestyles. But the Lord sometimes puts us on our own.

But solitude is not forever. Neither was it going to be for Elijah. It is only a means to an end. It is like a refuelling station.

A time to prepare the heart for the future. Cherith was an arrangement For what we later on find In the experience of Elijah When he came to Mount Carmel.

[13 : 50] Elijah has just come from An amazing performance Before wicked King Ahab. He has done something that 7,000 in Israel Dared not to do.

And he could so easily have become puffed up with pride. But the Lord is going to protect him From becoming proud. So he sends him to Cherith.

Cherith was a place of protection. Cherith was a place of spiritual learning. Cherith was a place that taught humility.

It was a place that taught Elijah To wait upon the Lord. Elijah was made to trust in the Lord. He was made to trust in the Lord's promise.

You shall drink from the brook And I have commanded the ravens to fit you there. So he went and did according to the word of the Lord. He went and lived by the brook Cherith That is east of the Jordan.

[15 : 01] Elijah was a man who lived his life By the word of the Lord. The word of God was the standard By which he lived.

He was a man who trusted in the Lord's sovereignty. Who trusted in the Lord's protection. Who trusted in the Lord's care.

Cherith was a humble place. It was a brook, not a river. The Lord sometimes gives us a brook Instead of a river.

In order for us to be more dependent upon himself. If he had given him a river, Perhaps Elijah would not have been so dependent upon the Lord.

But it was a small brook, not a river. It was a brook in order for Elijah to be dependent upon the Lord.

[16 : 00] And the Lord sometimes gives us a brook. In order that we will become more dependent upon him. Sometimes he gives us a cherith in our experience.

In order that we will become more dependent And lean upon the Lord more and more. If Elijah was to experience the Lord's promise, He had to be where the Lord wanted him to be.

God will supply all our needs. Paul could write in the New Testament, But my God shall supply all your need According to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus.

But he will supply all our needs. Not without responsibility. On our part. The Lord's word to Elijah was, You shall drink from the brook.

And I have commanded the ravens to feed you there. Note the word there. I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.

[17 : 10] This is the stipulation or condition of supply. In order for me to take care of you, You must be found there.

In that place. In that place. The ravens were to feed him at cherith. Not in Samaria.

Not in Jerusalem. But by the brook. Cherith. The shallowness and the leanness found in our spiritual life.

It's due to the fact that we are very often found outside the place of God's appointment. For God wants us to be.

We so often complain of disappointments and dryness and barrenness in our spiritual life. And it is all due to the fact that we are found outside God's appointed place.

[18 : 14] The Lord wants us to be exercised in his word. He wants us to be exercised in his word and reading and studying and listening.

But sadly we become so distracted by other things. Or perhaps we feel that we know better ourselves. When we are where God wants us to be.

If we are found where God has appointed us to be. We shall see God working for us in wonderful ways. For Elijah.

That meant cherith. Cherith was not only a place where to learn humility. But it was also a place where he was to learn to wait upon the Lord.

It was also a place of testing. A place of humility. A place of waiting upon the Lord. And a place of testing.

[19 : 23] It is not revealed to us how hard it was for Elijah to stay at Cherith. But it could not have been easy for him. His life was in danger.

Ahab was looking for him. But Cherith was the place of God's appointment. And he knew that God would be with him there.

For we read here that he came to Cherith. And that he dwelt there. It is always to our good.

To dwell in the place of God's appointment. As we have already noted. Let us never look down upon places of God's appointment.

Especially in regards to the preaching of the word. Going from place to place. That never brings a blessing. Going from place to place will bring spiritual leanness upon the soul.

[20 : 25] It is really a sign that we are not happy with the place of God's appointment. And can the Lord be delighted with such? Elijah at Cherith was in the place of God's appointment.

And he stayed there. For he knew that God would stay with him. Was Elijah trusting in the brook and in the ravens?

Was he putting his confidence in the brook and in the ravens? No, he wasn't. He was not trusting in the brook or in the ravens.

But he was trusting in God. In the God who made the brook. He did not put his confidence in the ravens. But in the God who sent the ravens.

His confidence was in God. He was taught at Cherith. Not to trust in the outward circumstances of his provision. But in the God who provides.

[21 : 40] From a human standpoint. Ravens would certainly not be the most likely creatures to bring one his food. But God chose such to supply the needs of his servant.

Don't we read in Psalm 50. For every beast of the forest is mine. The cattle and a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills. And all that moves in the field is mine.

And this is a vital lesson for us to learn. God is not limited in sources from which he can meet our needs.

Here we read, And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning. And bread and meat in the evening. And he drank from the brook. Now ravens were scavengers.

And according to the law of Moses, The raven was an unclean bird. Here was a bird who acted contrary to their natural disposition.

[22 : 42] And they brought bread and flesh to Elijah twice a day. In the morning and in the evening. And seeing they were scavengers, Peter would not think anything as they saw them flying away with bread and with flesh.

Later on we shall see that Elijah was better fed by the ravens than the hundred prophets. He was hidden by Obadiah in a cave. For they only had bread and water.

But he had bread and flesh. You know, if we are obedient to the word of the Lord, if we are found in the place of God's appointment, then the Lord will provide for us.

And he may do so in unexpected ways. Elijah had to believe that God would provide for him morning and evening according to his word of promise.

God had promised. And God will not go back on his promise. And Elijah believed that the ravens would come in the morning and in the evening because God had promised.

[24 : 06] The food brought by the ravens were suddenly miraculous. For the Lord said, I have commanded the ravens to feed you there. But you also notice that if Elijah was to survive, there was also work for him to do.

He was not forced into a time of inactivity. The Lord did not work a miracle to supply water for Elijah. The brook was beside him.

And from that brook, he was to draw water. The Lord's provision for Elijah did not mean that Elijah was released or excused from activity.

He had to go to the brook. He had to draw the water from the brook. And drink from the brook. And so we read, And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the

evening, and he drank from the brook.

We know that if we are to see a revival in the church, or an awakening in the community, that it is only the Lord that can bring such about.

[25 : 24] We are totally dependent upon his spirit to work such a work, not upon human devised gimmicks.

We are to be dependent, and show our dependency upon the spirit to work such a work.

Nevertheless, we are not instructed to fold up our hands and do nothing. We have a responsibility to evangelize the community.

We have a responsibility to gossip the gospel in the community. Elijah was dependent upon the ravens as commanded by God, in accordance with his word and promise, to bring bread and flesh. But it was the responsibility of Elijah to draw water from the brook. Elijah was the kind of man that he was, because he was still conscious, as we saw this morning, that God is a living God, and that God always keeps his word, and keeps his promise.

[26 : 45] Here at Cherith, his faith was being tested. His faith was being tested. Each morning, he would look out to the sky, and he would wait, and wait, and wait, until he saw the ravens coming to Cherith, and dropping what they had for him, God's provision for him, the flesh, and the bread.

His faith was being tested. But his faith was to be tested more. For we read here that after a while, the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

Now this was a severe test to his faith. At the beginning, all was well, but slowly, for a brook does not dry up overnight, but slowly, the water was dwindling away, day by day, by day.

Soon it would just become a trickle, and one morning, there was nothing at all. The brook had dried up.

Although God had worked a miracle, and commanded the ravens to bring him bread and flesh in the morning and evening, God did not work a miracle to keep the brook flowing.

[28 : 21] One commentator says, why did God let the brook dry up? And he answers in this way, he wants to teach us not to trust in his gifts, but to trust in himself.

It was a way of God bringing Elijah to lean upon him more and more, to become more dependent upon him, more and more.

The Lord often brings his people through a brook, drying experience. But drying brooks, however, is not an indication of God forsaking us.

It can be a very hard lesson. It can be a difficult situation to experience. But there is no drying up at all of God's power and God's health.

Maybe Elijah became complacent, self-satisfied. And that is something that can happen to us so easily.

[29 : 34] We are the children of habit. Every morning and evening, the ravens came. And each day, he went to the brook to draw water. And he may have concluded, this is the way it will continue.

And he may have taken his eyes off the Lord. Is that not true of you and of me? We enjoy the gifts of God physically and spiritually.

The brooks of daily living and the brooks of spiritual living as we go on, as if it is, this is going to last. And there is a possibility that we will become less thankful as time goes on.

Maybe Elijah was a man of like nature to us. We read that this evening from James chapter 5. And maybe because the ravens came every morning and every evening and dropped their provision to Elijah and the brook was there with water, and maybe he did become complacent and self-satisfied. Maybe he did become less thankful as time went on. Is that not true of me and you? That we can become so complacent as we reflect upon our lives in the years that went by when there was so much of gospel prospering and flourishing in our midst.

[31 : 06] You know, we may have become complacent and self-satisfied. And maybe we weren't as thankful as we ought to have been for those days when people crowded to the gospel and the churches were being filled.

People were being converted. People were coming to trust in the Lord. Families were coming out to hear the gospel. But what have we seen in our day is a decline in those things.

Less people coming to hear the gospel. Less people, less families coming to hear the gospel. So few being converted.

So few coming to commit their lives to God. And maybe it is because we became complacent, self-satisfied, satisfied, and less thankful to the Lord as time would dawn. But the Lord is going to teach us. And he will make the sauce dry up so that we shall become more focused upon himself. That was what was happening to Elijah.

[32 : 19] The Lord was going to teach Elijah. He was going to dry up the sauce from which he was receiving his water so that he would become more focused on God himself.

And I do hope that our own situation, in our own age, in our own time, in our own day, is making us to become more focused upon God.

That is making us understand how dependent we are upon the Spirit of God to come and to work among us.

And not be dependent upon human gimmicks that we can introduce into the worship of God, but to be dependent upon the Spirit of God, to be dependent upon God himself, to be focused on God himself.

Well, that was a great lesson that Elijah was here learning at Cherith. The brook dried up because there was no rain. This was Elijah's message to King Ahab.

[33 : 38] As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives before whom I stand, there shall be neither June or rain these years except by my word.

This was God's judgment upon the land because of their Baal worship. And although Elijah was a prophet of God, he was not going to be exempt from the suffering which the drought brought upon the land of Israel.

It reminds us that when God judges a nation because of their sin, God's people are not exempt. If the Lord brings a plague upon a nation because of their sin, God's people are not exempt from suffering and death.

However, as the brook dried up day after day, Elijah did not go looking for a new source. He did not leave Cherith, but he waited upon the Lord.

[34 : 47] It's not Elijah a good example for me and for you. To wait at Cherith, to wait upon the Lord.

When we feel that a spiritual brook is drying up, there is always a danger that we go wandering looking for new sources of supply instead of waiting upon the Lord.

Such impatience that we also often allow ourselves to fall into is a sign of the weakness of our faith. When the brook dried up, Elijah stayed at Cherith because his faith was strong. His faith was in God, the God who had promised.

He was in the place of God's appointment. And therefore, he stayed at Cherith. Elijah waited upon the Lord.

[35 : 55] And I am sure that all this time that he was praying to the Lord, as we saw this morning, he was a man of prayer. That he was praying to the Lord, and the Lord answered his prayers.

In the Lord's own time, he answered his prayers. Then the Lord of the Lord came to him, arise, go to Seraphath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there.

He was to leave Cherith and go about a hundred miles to the city of Seraphath. And that in itself was another test for Elijah.

He was to leave the land of Israel. He was going to go into Gentile territory. He was going into the very place where Jezebel came from, who hated Elijah so much, and who brought Baal worship to Israel.

Now, as we noted this morning, since we live in a day that resembles really the days of Elijah, where there is little regard to the claims of God, where people said of the gods, where sin is looked upon as a trivial thing, and wherein God is not relevant in our age.

[37 : 12] However, God speaks to us, and our lives is disrupted. Our economy is dwindling away. There is chaos and confusion.

There is the cost of living crisis. The brooks of daily living are wandering and dying away. It's all drying up. We all suffer.

But what should our behavior be? Well, I think the lessons of chari are important for us to learn. And the most urgent thing for us all is to repent and to turn back to God.

The lessons of chari is to humble ourselves, and that's hard for us to do. It's hard for us to humble ourselves. It is hard for us to acknowledge that we are dependent upon God, that we are dependent upon the Spirit of God to come and to bless the gospel.

But however isolated and lonely we may feel, it is good for us to wait upon the Lord, to live in accordance with his word, to be still and know that he is God, and that he is working out his own purpose for me, for you, for our congregations, for our nation.

[38 : 41] Even when the brook is drying up, and we suffer the pain of our nation, let us be patient, and let us wait upon the Lord.

Let us trust more and more in our living God, in his word, in his promise. Let us become more dependent day by day upon the Lord.

These are some of the lessons that Cherith teaches us. These are the lessons that Elijah had to be taught, and these are the lessons that I and you have to be taught as well.

May the Lord bless our thoughts upon his word. Let us pray. We thank thee, O Lord, that thou art the God of Elijah, thou art the God of Cherith, thou art the God who is in control.

And we pray, O Lord, that each and every one of us would be unable to say that you are our God, and that we will wait upon thee, that we are dependent upon thee.

[40 : 06] O Lord, we seek that it may please thee to outpour thy spirit upon us, upon our communities, to draw a people to the gospel, to draw a people to hear of the great provision that thou hast made in thy son, to meet with our needs as sinners.

And when our brooks are drying up, we pray, O Lord, that we will wait upon thee. For thou art the God who will answer prayer.

Thou art the God who will fulfil your promise. your word. Grant to us, O Lord, that in these coming days, that we will give evidence in our lives that we are a people who are crying to the heavens, who are praying to thee, that we are a people who are dependent upon thee, and that we are a people who are waiting upon the Lord.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would go before us in these coming days, and all that we ask for the forgiveness of our sins. It's in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

We shall conclude our service by singing to the Lord's praise from Psalm 65 on page 297. Psalm 65 on page 297.

[41 : 32] Praise ways for thee in Zion, Lord, to thee vows pay shall be. O thou that hear a rat of prayer, all flesh shall come to thee. Iniquities, I must confess, prevail against me, do, but as for our transgressions, then purge away shalt thou.

Blessed is the man whom thou dost choose and makes approach to thee, that he within thy course, O Lord, may still a dweller be. We surely shall be satisfied with thy abundant grace, and with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy place.

We shall sing these verses to the Lord's praise. Psalm 65 on page 297, verse 1, to the end of the devil version, marked 4. praise ways for thee in Zion, Lord, to thee vows paid shall be.

Praise with thy glory. For he is thine honor, to thee God's faith shall be.

O love, not hear her heart of death, all flesh shall come to thee.

[42 : 51] operate together. It is mine O song is very superior how God thinks be and be in the years have leftit ing■ what heart must père dign Engineering■■■ Forbreaker earth■ tone■■■ determination May God be His emoji.

May God be His aysection. Like o'er soul, Lord, may still the quell our need.

We surely shall be satisfied with thy love undone face.

And with the goodness of thy mouth, in all thy holy bliss.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all now and forevermore. Amen.

[44 : 43] Amen. Amen. Amen.