

Title: Provision by God's Word

Text: 1 Kings 17: 1-16

Date: Oct 14, 2021

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Subject: Provision by God's Word

In 1 Kings 17 it speaks of "the word of the Lord" over and over. God provided for Elijah and the widow and her house by the word the Lord spoke by Elijah. God's word is concerning Christ Jesus his Son, our salvation. Christ is the Word. The written word concerns the Living Word. By the word of the Lord he regenerates us, gives us faith, sustains our faith, provides all our needs and preserves us to the end.

Here God's prophet Elijah is introduced. His name is a compound of Eli meaning God and Jah meaning Jehovah. He was sent of God. His genealogy is not given and in the end he was taken up in a whirlwind to heaven. God's Son is God Jehovah without beginning or ending of days sent from heaven. Christ is God's righteous servant who accomplished the redemption of his people then ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and shall come again in like manner.

Elijah was sent to declare judgment upon Israel due to their sin and idolatry.

1 Kings 17: 1: And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

God withheld rain for 3.5 years. Worse, God removed his word by removing Elijah. Israel was in the same idolatry when Christ came. It is the same today. The drought and famine of the gospel is upon our nation and the whole world. It was so when Christ came. It was the same in Elijah's day. Preachers of the past said the same of their day.

Amos 8: 11: Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: 12: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find *it*.

Yet for those 3.5 years, by his word, according to his word, God provided for Elijah and the widow of Sarepta. Likewise, God provides for his church in this wilderness as he sends us to call out his elect. And God provides all by his word.

Revelation 12: 14: And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

The church in the wilderness today is fed by the word of the Lord and shall be for God's set time. God has not left himself without a witness. In every generation God provides faithful witnesses. By his word, he calls out his elect remnant for himself. He provides for us by his word according to his word. He shall do so until the last elect child is called.

PROVISION FOR GOD'S WITNESSES

1 Kings 17: 2: And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 3: Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

Elijah is one called and sent by God to bear witness of the LORD. We, as the Lord's church are the Lord's witnesses. We see God provided for Elijah. God kept his servant humble and dependent upon the Lord. So God keeps us humble, believing and depending on Christ who he sends us to preach.

The Spirit tells us Elijah was a man of like passions as we. He was a sinner saved by grace like those God has already called to faith. God put it in his heart to pray for this drought and God sent it. That would be

something apt to puff up in pride. So God kept Elijah humble, depending upon the Lord to provide. God does the same for us.

The servant is not greater than his Lord. The Son of God took the form of a servant. The same sin and idolatry was in Israel when Christ came as was in Elijah's day and as our day. But while he walked this earth, Christ trusted God the Father to provide all his needs. In perfect faith, perfect holiness of heart, perfect obedience, our Savior and Head lived upon the word of God his Father. He said, "I have meat to eat ye know not of." Christ made his people the righteousness of God in him by laying down his life for us. He sent his word to us and by his word he gave us faith, eternal life and all spiritual blessings in him. And our Savior sustains our faith by his word. He sent us to preach his word as he did Elijah.

So the servant is not greater than his Lord. We shall suffer. But by the same word our Lord shall provide all things we need in this life, even as he has provided us perfect salvation in him. So he keeps us humbly dependent upon him to provide.

1 Kings 17: 4: And it shall be, *that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.* 5: So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 6: And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

God our Savior provides by his word in ways that make it obvious he gets the glory. The Lord provided for Elijah by means contrary to nature. He used a brook in a drought and ravens whose nature it is to eat meat. Ravens deny their young to eat for themselves. But the Lord said to Job, "Who provideth for the raven his food, when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat!" (Job 38:41). "He giveth to the young ravens when they cry" (Ps 147: 9).

So the Lord said to Elijah, "*I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.*" None can resist God's command, not even the raven. The Lord is able to turn the hearts of the men of this world to provide for his people. God says to his people, "All things are yours" (1 Cor 3: 21). God uses all things to provide for us, brethren.

God using ravens is amazing! But more amazing is that God gives sinners like us a new nature so that, contrary to our sin-nature, we feast by faith upon the true Bread from heaven, the Fountain of living waters. Beholding Elijah believing God to feed him with ravens is the greatest of miracles here! Christ said,

John 6:51: I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Christ our Living Redeemer provided his own life and his precious blood to redeem his people from our sins. He certainly will provide our *daily needs*. Notice, "*the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.*" God provided ALL he needed in the morning and in the evening. Not more. Not less. Not enough to hold over for tomorrow. God gives grace for today. That is God's promise to us. He gives us this day our daily bread. Elijah will not be rich. None of God's preachers will be. He is not given more than he needs. But he will not starve. God provided exactly what Elijah needed and he will do the same for us. David said,

Psalm 37: 25: I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

How that must have humbled Elijah and strengthened his faith in the Lord Jesus! That is true humility: believing the Lord shall provide and trusting Christ to do so. Abraham told Isaac the Lord shall provide; the Lord shall see to it. He did on the cross. He shall in our daily need.

PROVISION FOR HIS LOST ELECT

1 Kings 17: 7: And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. 8: And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 9: Arise, get thee to Zarephath [Sarepta], which *belongeth* to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

God works all things in providence to dry up whatever brook we depend upon to keep us trusting the Giver rather than his gifts and to move us where he will have us to go. But it was not providence alone. *The word of the LORD came unto him.* We discern God's will in providence by God's word, not by providence alone. Providence alone would have made Elijah think God was against him by drying up the brook. But God's word gives light on God's providence.

Our God gives faith by the power of his word. Before as yet Elijah went to Sarepta, God said, "*Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.*" This is more miraculous than God using ravens. God sent Elijah to a Gentile land where they did not have God's word and the people were as idolatrous as Israel. But God said, "*Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.*" This widow was one of God's elect Gentiles. Christ preached about this woman.

Luke 4: 25: But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; 26: But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, [a city] of Sidon, unto a woman [that was] a widow....28: And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

God chose who he will save by his sovereign grace and power. That is what angers carnal man. Not all who are natural children of Israel are God's elect Israel. Some of God's elect are Gentiles. God passed by many widows in Israel and sent Elijah to a Gentile widow starving just like they were. There is no difference in any sinner God's saves. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. By nature we are in a famine of righteousness and cannot save ourselves. The difference is God's sovereign, electing grace in Christ. This widow typifies all God's elect Jew or Gentile. God saves by electing grace, through the preaching of his gospel, by Christ our Salvation!

Before Elijah gets there, God said, "*Behold, I have commanded her.*" This is grace before grace—prevenient grace. God prepared this woman to receive his servant who will speak his word to her. God regenerates and calls to faith by the preaching of the gospel alone. But what brings a sinner under the gospel? What makes a sinner receptive to even give an ear? God's grace going before his regenerating grace! God always brings to pass what God has promised by his word.

1 Kings 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.

The LORD directed Elijah to the gate of the city and "*behold the widow woman was there.*" God sent Philip into the desert where God had commanded the Ethiopian to receive his servant—*behold the Eunuch was there!* God turned Paul from Bithynia to Macedonia where God had commanded Lydia to give Paul an ear—*behold, Lydia was there.* God rules all things to bring the gospel to each of his elect in truth. This widow was there because God brought her there even as he did Elijah.

Elijah does not know which widow of Sarepta he is sent so beholding this woman he calls to her asking for a drink of water. When the Lord walked this earth, he knew where his elect were. He went to Samaria and set on the well. When the woman came he said, "Give me a little water that I may drink." The Lord knew where this widow was in Sarepta. He moved Elijah to ask her for a drink of water. The Lord will do the same for us when he will have our paths cross with one of his elect.

PROVISION IN THE HEART

1 Kings 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. 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.

This is where Christ finds his elect: gathering sticks to kindle our own fire. **He finds us** trying to eat our earthly bread: the work of our hands. Our nature is to provide for "me first." Then she expected to die.

Christ finds his elect hopeless, helpless, selfish, dead, dying sinners. If our confidence is in anything of ourselves—some little meal or oil—we are not resting in Christ. But Christ said, "My sheep hear my Voice and I know them and they follow me" (Jn 4:7).

The Lord makes his child hear his Word in power and believe on him—**1 Kings 17: 13: And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; Christ says—“Fear not!”**

His command grants repentance to give to him “first.”—**1 Kings 17: 13...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.**

His word comes with promise—**1 Kings 17: 14: For thus saith the LORD God of Israel (the covenant keeping God of his elect Israel), The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendth rain upon the earth.**

This required faith in her and Elijah, too. Elijah has no power to make this promise come to pass. God-given faith is the only thing that made this a good work on Elijah’s part. Without faith this would simply be a charlatan preacher taking advantage of a poor widow woman.

Faith in Christ in the heart is what makes the difference in a work being a good work. *Rahab hid foreign spies and lied to the king of Jericho’s men*; apart from faith in the Lord that would be high treason; but faith made it a good work. *Abraham offering Isaac for a burnt offering to the Lord*; without faith that would be no different than the worshippers of Molech who burned their children to their idol; but Abraham believed God was able to raise Isaac from the grave; it was a work of faith. *Elijah believed God*; this was of faith!

Notice the word “*first*.” By nature she wanted to do for herself first. Christ says give to me first. Our Lord must have the preeminence.

Matthew 6: 30:...O ye of little faith...your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33: But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34: Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.

Unbelief said: "I only have enough for me and my family." "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused." "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused." "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." (Lu 14: 18-20). "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father" (Luke 9: 59). Those excuses are the same as if she held on to that meal and oil for self—it would be no different than a man trusting his own works for salvation.

When God gives faith, God’s word makes Christ preeminent in the heart—“*though he slay me, yet will I trust him.*” Believing the Lord she gives up trusting her carnal reason and believes God is able to do what is impossible with men.

Arthur Pink said, "Where God gives faith, God's word is the end to the carnal reasoning of unbelief. Unbelief puts circumstances between the soul and God. Faith puts God between the soul and circumstances."

Repentance comes with faith so that we give up trusting ourselves—it becomes more reasonable to trust the Lord than our own wisdom—we forsake all fleshly confidence and cast all our care on Christ.

Luke 14: 33: So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

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

By God’s word, she believed the Lord. It was more than Elijah she believed. She believed the word of the LORD which the LORD spake by Elijah.

John 11:40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

By believing God she found it to be exactly *according to the word of the LORD*. Believing God we find it to be according to the word of the LORD. We see God's glory and find that "of God are we in Christ, who of God is made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption. So that we glory only in the Lord" (1 Cor 1: 30-31). And believing God we find that God provides all our lesser needs all our days so we can take the word to his poor, starving elect widows scattered throughout the world.

Amen!