

“Sufficient Supply”  
2 Kings 4:42-44  
(Preached at Trinity, January 23, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. This chapter records four miracles that God performed through His servant, Elisha.
  - The first involved a destitute widow and her two sons that were about to be taken into slavery to satisfy the family debt. Her only resource was a single jar of oil. Elisha commands her to gather jars from her neighbors and as she began pouring oil from her single jar, all the jars were filled.
  - The second miracle was the raising from the dead of the child of the Shunammite woman.
  - Third, Elisha healed the poison pot of stew prepared for the school of the prophets. The author is showing us God's omnipotent power over all things – over debt, death, and danger.
2. Tonight, we'll look at another miracle revealing God's power. Like the previous, it deals food provided during the famine. We don't have clear chronological direction in this chapter—are they in chronological order and how much time has elapsed between them. But if we can connect this fourth miracle with the previous passage, we can assume the 100 men were of the school of the prophets gathered to hear Elisha teach. A man from Baal-Shalishah had brought Elisha of his first-fruits, twenty barley loaves and some fresh ears of grain. It was hardly sufficient to feed such a large number, and yet, by the hand of God, it was more than sufficient.
3. It calls to mind the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels. John 6 records Jesus feeding a multitude with just five barley loaves and two fish.

**John 6:9-13 NAU** - "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. <sup>11</sup> Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. <sup>12</sup> When they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing will be lost." <sup>13</sup> So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten."

  - A. In Matthew's Gospel we are told the number was 5000 men besides the women and children  
**Matthew 14:21 NAU** - "There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children."
  - B. They were fed and it took twelve baskets to collect what remained after all were fed. I've pointed out many times that God most often works through the use of means to accomplish His purpose. But He is never bound by them.

1. Jesus could have fed the multitude supernaturally without the loaves and fishes. He could have caused bread to appear in the lap of each person. Instead, He used the existing bread and fish to bring about the miracle.
  2. God is the first cause of all things. All things exist by His power. But again, He usually works through second causes—the use of means.
  3. God made the heavens and earth of nothing – yet made Adam from the dust of the ground just as the other animals and formed Eve from a rib taken from the side of Adam.
  4. God brought plagues upon Egypt in the deliverance of Israel from bondage. He could have just destroyed Egypt and led Israel immediately into Canaan, but He ordered Israel’s deliverance in such a way that His redeeming grace was put on display.
  5. God promised Israel the Land of Canaan, but they had to fight to take dominion over Canaan. They had to fight but the battles were of God.
  4. Jesus took bread and fish and made more bread and fish. He could have created from nothing, but instead He used the existing bread and fish to bring about the miracle.
4. Elisha felt compassion upon the prophets and fed the prophets. But how could ten barley loaves feed such a multitude? Because God is able to do His holy will. In His compassion God provides our daily bread. Jesus taught us to pray for such.  
**Matthew 6:11 NAU** - "Give us this day our daily bread."
5. As I’ve said before, we can use the narratives to glean certain truths about the character of God, or the character of man, or of God’s redemptive purpose – but we have to be careful about over spiritualizing.
- We always have to maintain the original intent of the author. And we have to be careful to maintain what the Reformers coined as “The Analogy of Faith.” This means Scripture interprets Scripture. If the Bible is the Word of God, then God will always be consistent in His revelation of truth. He cannot deny Himself or contradict Himself. Our Confession states it (LBC 1:9) –
- “The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the rule and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold but one) it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly.”*
- A. We might be tempted to draw from this passage that God always sustains His people abundantly; that He will always provide for His own. Is that what this passage is teaching? Is that what we should glean from Jesus feeding the multitude in the Gospels.
- And can we say that is universally true? Does Christianity shield God’s people from suffering? Is that a true interpretation of Scripture?
- B. God delivered the widow from the consequences of her poverty at the beginning of this chapter. Can this be universally applied? Does God *always* deliver His people from poverty, or hunger, or disaster, or any of the other countless afflictions that can occur in this life?
- We could spiritualize this passage and say that God feeds us abundantly with the Bread of Life – a boundless supply. But again, we should avoid spiritualizing the narratives. That isn’t the original intent of the author.

- C. People carelessly handle Scripture all the time. For example, is Matt 17:20 a universal statement on the power of prayer?  
**Matthew 17:20 NAU** - "truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you."  
 Is it accurate to declare that we can use prayer to gain everything we pray for? Is it teaching us that we should tempt God by commanding mountains to move? Or is it teaching about the nature of faith? That we can rest in God's sovereign design to do all that He has purposed to do. If there is a need for God to move a mountain it would be a small thing for Him to do it.
6. This leads us to a sure interpretation of this passage
- I. The prophets were being fed because God said He would do it.  
**2 Kings 4:43 NAU** - "Give *them* to the people that they may eat, for thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and have *some* left over.'"
- A. Elisha was acting upon faith
1. God said they would eat to the full and still have some bread remaining
  2. Elisha commands that the bread be distributed with confidence that it would be more than sufficient.
  3. So he set it before them and they ate and there were leftovers.  
 Why? Because God commanded it.  
**2 Kings 4:44-5:1 NAU** - "So he set *it* before them, and they ate and had *some* left over, according to the word of the LORD. "
- B. The important principle of this passage is the final phrase:  
 "according to the Word of the LORD"
- II. This passage does not teach us that God always provides our food.  
 It does tell us that God always does what He promises to do.
- A. God made promises to Abraham – the Abrahamic Covenant.  
**Genesis 12:2-3 NAU** - "And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; <sup>3</sup> And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."  
**Genesis 12:7 NAU** - "The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land."  
 1. God promised Abraham an innumerable seed and a land. Through the seed of Abraham God would raise up a Deliverer. Abraham trusted the promise of God. Even when he was commanded to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac, he knew he could trust the promise of God. If God had promised that His promise would be fulfilled through Isaac, Abraham knew that God would provide.  
**Genesis 22:7-8 NAU** - "Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" <sup>8</sup> Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together."

**Hebrews 11:17-19 NAU** - "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; <sup>18</sup> *it was he* to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." <sup>19</sup> He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type."

2. God's promise would be a long time to reach fulfillment.
3. God delivered Israel from their bondage in Egypt and reaffirmed His promise to deliver them and give them a land.  
**Exodus 3:8 NAU** - "So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey"
  - a. It was an absolute surety. God's promises cannot fail.
  - b. But again, it would be a longtime coming. Israel wandered in the wilderness. They often murmured in unbelief.
4. God sustained them for forty years  
**Deuteronomy 29:5 NAU** - "I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandal has not worn out on your foot."
5. God provided them manna. It was their bread. It sustained them.  
**Exodus 16:4 NAU** - "Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction."
6. This was also according to the Word of the Lord. It was a promise.  
"Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you"  
The bread continued until they entered the Land of Promise  
**Joshua 5:12 NAU** - "The manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year."

B. But Israel needed to understand, it wasn't the manna that sustained them. It was by the promise of God.

1. This gives clarity to what we read in Deuteronomy 8  
**Deuteronomy 8:1-4 NAU** - "All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore *to give* to your forefathers. <sup>2</sup> "You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. <sup>3</sup> "He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. <sup>4</sup> "Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years."

2. It wasn't the bread that sustained them – it was God's promise – "Every Word that proceedeth from the mouth of God."
  3. This was the passage Jesus quoted when Satan tempted Him during His time of need. He was hungry and needed bread. If He would turn the stones into bread He could eat and be satisfied and His life sustained.
    - a. But Christ did not come to do His own will but the will of the One who sent Him. His food was to do the will of His Father.  
**John 4:34 NAU** - "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."
    - b. It was at this assault of Satan that Jesus quoted Deut. 8 "man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD."
    - c. It wasn't earthly bread that sustained Jesus during His life upon the earth but the plan, purpose, and providence of God.
- C. From what source does your daily bread come?
1. The farmer labors hard to bring his crops to market. There are many laborers involved in keeping the shelves full at the supermarket.
  2. We know the importance of the supply-chain to supply all of the elements necessary for providing our daily bread.
  3. And, of course, you work hard to bring home your paycheck. Are all these things the source of your daily bread? They are surely the means of provision, but they are not the ultimate source.
  4. As Christians we must have a Christian worldview—the understanding that all things move at the Divine Decree of God.  
*LBC 3:1 – "God hath decreed in Himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass. . ."*
  5. We receive our daily bread because God has ordered it. It is according to the direction of God. We exist not because we have bread but because God has declared it.
  6. God sometimes brings us to the point where we exhausted of all of our resources so that we will trust Him fully. Do we trust in our bread, our bank account, our job, our good health? Or do we trust in the living God who is able to do His good pleasure?

#### Conclusion:

1. God is never limited by our earthly supply.  
**2 Kings 4:44 NAU** - "So he set *it* before them, and they ate and had *some* left over, according to the word of the LORD."  
  - a. How is it that God would feed 100 men with 20 barley loaves and some grain? Is this too difficult for God?  
They were not supplied by the number of loaves but by the Word of God.
  - b. Does this mean that God will always provide bread for His people, that Christians will never suffer hunger? No. That is not the point. But it does mean we can always trust the sovereign will of God.
2. God is always sufficient to work in us all His good pleasure. His ways are always right, and He can always be trusted, even during those times that we can't understand the end.