

“God’s Promise of Provision”
1 Kings 17:2-6
(Preached at Trinity, June 13, 2021)

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. After describing the rise of Ahab to the throne and his unparalleled wickedness, Elijah the prophet suddenly bursts on the scene at the beginning of **Chapter 17**. He stood as a great contrast to Ahab. Ahab was one who had completely turned away from God to worship Baal. Elijah’s very name was his testimony – “My God is Yahweh.”
 2. Elijah stands before God, represents God, speaks the Word of God. By the authority of God Elijah announces God’s judgment upon the wicked idolatry of Ahab and Israel. The land flowing with milk and honey was about to become a barren land. Baal, the god of the rain was about to be proven impotent.
And then there is a break between **Verse 1** and **Verse 2**.
In **Verse 1** Elijah addresses Ahab with the prophetic word of God’s judgment.
In **Verse 2** God speaks to Elijah.
By the Word of God Elijah is commanded to go and hide himself.
The Word of God is the primary theme of this chapter.
 3. I want us to see three things in this passage.
 - I. God’s Perdition Upon Israel
 - II. God’s Protection of Elijah
 - III. God’s Provision for Elijah
- I. God’s Perdition Upon Israel – **Verse 3** - "Go away from here"
- A. God removed His Word from Israel
1. We shouldn’t miss that God sent Elijah to warn of the coming drought.
 - a. We aren’t told how long it was between the beginning of the drought and the departure of Elijah, but Ahab had time to repent.
 - b. Sending Elijah was actually a wonderful act of God’s mercy. God could have started the drought without any warning. Sending Elijah to preach God’s judgment was a call to repentance.
 - c. This was at the heart of Solomon’s prayer during the dedication of the Temple.
1 Kings 8:35-36 NAU - "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and confess Your name and turn from their sin when You afflict them, ³⁶ then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants and of Your people Israel, indeed, teach them the good way in which they should walk. And send rain on Your land, which You have given Your people for an inheritance."

- c. This is the nature of the Gospel age. It is an age of mercy, an age of opportunity—opportunity to repent and turn to God. But like Ahab, most refuse to repent.
 - d. It was summed up when God finally brought the Assyrians upon Israel in judgment:
2 Kings 17:13-14 NAU - "Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets *and* every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets." ¹⁴ However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God."
2. God's mercy is a temporary grace. By removing His prophet God was removing His Word.
Amos 8:11-12 NAU - "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD. ¹² "People will stagger from sea to sea And from the north even to the east; They will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, But they will not find *it*."
 3. Jesus told His disciples to shake the dust off of their feet as a sign of their utter abandonment.
Luke 9:5 NAU - "And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."
Acts 13:45-46 NAU - "But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and *began* contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming. ⁴⁶ Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles."
Acts 13:51 NAU - "they shook off the dust of their feet *in protest* against them and went to Iconium."
 4. When God abandoned King Saul there was no word – nothing but silence.
1 Samuel 28:6 NAU - "When Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets."
- B. Ahab was being abandoned to his sin.
1. The words abandoned and forsaken should strike terror in our hearts. It is a great punishment from God to be left to ourselves—to be allowed to commit the sins of our heart. This is the problem with fallen humanity.
Romans 1:28 NAU - "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,"
 2. We read of the Church of Laodicea in **Revelation 3**
 - a. Laodicea was a church abandoned by Christ.

- b. Jesus condemned their lukewarm religion declaring it made Him nauseous.
Revelation 3:16 NAU - "So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth."
- c. In **Verse 20** He is portrayed as being outside the church.
What a terrifying thought.
- 3. This is what we are seeing in **Chapter 17**
1 Kings 17:3 NAU - "Go away from here"

II. God's Protection of Elijah – **Verse 3** - "hide yourself by the brook Cherith"

- A. The departure of Elijah was both judgment upon Ahab and protection upon Elijah
 - 1. Ahab was being abandoned by God but this often brings fury from those abandoned.
 - a. This has been the testimony of Christianity
The blood of the martyrs has been spilled by men abandoned by God.
 - b. Religious men have been so blinded by the darkness of their heart they have often persecuted God's people.
 - c. Most of the martyrs in *Foxes Book of Martyrs* died at the hands of religious men. William Tyndale died at the hands of religious men because he translated the Scriptures.
 - 2. God knew Elijah needed to be sheltered from the wrath of Ahab and his wicked wife, Jezebel.
 - 3. The longer the drought continued the more angry Ahab became. When Elijah finally came out of hiding he was given a strong rebuke by Ahab:
1 Kings 18:17 NAU - "When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is this you, you troubler of Israel?"
- B. God spares His people from His wrath
 - 1. Lot was removed from Sodom before God rained destruction upon the city
 - 2. God spared Israel from the death He brought upon Egypt.
 - 3. There are glorious testimonies of God's deliverance of His people.
Psalms 18:2-3 NAU - "The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. ³ I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, And I am saved from my enemies."
 - 4. This doesn't mean God's people never suffer along with the wicked in this life. This is a fallen world under God's condemnation. The righteous suffer also.
 - a. We need to remember that even during the most wicked times in the history of Israel God maintained His remnant. This means even when Ahab was leading the nation in Baal worship, there were those who remained faithful to God.
1 Kings 19:18 NAU - "Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."

- b. It also means that there were righteous men whose crops dried up in the fields; righteous men whose families went hungry as God withheld the rain.
 - c. If God's judgment is upon our nation the righteous will also suffer. But they will never be forsaken.
5. We know that ultimately God will deliver His own, even if not until eternity.

III. God's Provision for Elijah – **Verse 4** - "I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there."

A. God gave supernatural provision for Elijah

1. Israel suffered day after day from the severe drought. Ahab had to search the land for enough grass to keep his cattle alive
1 Kings 18:5-6 NAU - "Then Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys; perhaps we will find grass and keep the horses and mules alive, and not have to kill some of the cattle." ⁶ So they divided the land between them to survey it; Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself."
2. While Israel suffered God provided for Elijah.
 - a. He gave him bread and meat delivered by ravens.
 - b. Elijah drank from the waters of the brook Cherith

B. God gave Elijah His Word

Verse 4 - "I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there."

1. Elijah trusted the Word of God
Verse 5 - "So he went and did according to the word of the LORD"
2. There were plenty of reasons for Elijah to doubt.
He was told to flee to the east side of the Jordan not knowing what to expect there. He was told to drink from the brook – but wasn't there going to be a drought? He was told he would be fed by ravens. But weren't these among the unclean animals?
Leviticus 11:13-15 NAU - "These, moreover, you shall detest among the birds; they are abhorrent, not to be eaten: the eagle and the vulture and the buzzard, ¹⁴ and the kite and the falcon in its kind, ¹⁵ every raven in its kind,"
Could Elijah trust unclean raven scavengers to bring him food?
2. Elijah took God at His Word and gave strict, exact obedience. James's description of Elijah as a righteous man is demonstrated in truth.
This is how we must live—to simply trust God. God has promised to lead those who trust in Him.
Proverbs 3:5-6 NAU - "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight."
3. God did exactly as He promised.
Eventually the brook ran dry, but not the provision of God.
God orders Elijah to Zerephath.
Verse 10 - "So he arose and went"
4. Elijah was in a life or death situation but He knew God could be trusted.

Conclusion:

1. God provides for His own, even as it seems the entire world has fallen into idolatry. Elijah believed he was the only one left serving God. God reminded him.
1 Kings 19:18 NAU - "Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."
2. May God grant us to remain faithful, even as we live in the midst of a wicked and adulterous generation. God will maintain His own.