

## Elijah – Dirty Birds

### 1 Kings 17:2-7 (KJV)

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. 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. 7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

### The Man from Nowhere

Elijah was literally the man from nowhere. God grows great souls in places of isolation and obscurity. This was the case with this great prophet. Isolation and obscurity were his school teachers and Gilead was the school house.

Elijah went with a supernatural boldness to Ahab and spoke to him as God had sent him to do. But when men are used of God in this manner, it is often the next steps that become very difficult for them to fathom.

He leaves that moment filled with prophetic power to a place that is absent of everything that Elijah probably thought that it should be.

No man however spiritual that he may be can understand all of the ways of the Lord and more often than not we have to know that God leads us through mysterious and obscure paths of life to fulfill His purpose.

Unrecognized and confusing paths to us are literally the ways that God works.

His way is one of mercy.

His way is one of blessing.

His way is one of salvation.

His way is one that completes His will.

Confusion and disorientation may be where we are at presently, but God has a bird's eye view of it all and He is directing your path.

### **The Brook Cherith**

Elijah had spoken to Ahab that there would be no rain or dew and now that prophetic prayer and utterance is put into action.

The hot winds have melted the greenery.  
The bleating sheep and lowing oxen are dying from hunger and thirst.  
The fields are parched and dead.  
The people are in a high state of alarm and anxiety.

What we so often forget is that Elijah was a participant in all of this. He is living under the pressure of the famine just like the nation is. Even the prophet does not escape the judgment of the Lord in this matter. Does the Lord make provision for him? Absolutely, but we must accept the fact that there were some places in Elijah's life that got just as uncomfortable for him as it did the people.

Elijah may have thought that he was facing his end just as Samson had faced his in the temple of Dagon among the Philistines. But we are reading the story with a knowledge of the turn out that Elijah did not have. We know that God is just starting His purpose in the prophet's life, but Elijah does not know that.

We can preach with a sense of faith to all who are here and believe that only God can draw us through and there are grand and glorious parts of the story of our lives that remains yet to be worked out!

Despite the political upheaval  
Despite the moral downturn.  
Despite the seeming upper hand that trouble has on us.  
Despite the grimness of the circumstances that we currently face... God is still putting the story together...

Just as the old song goes...

I cannot fail the Lord  
I cannot fail the Lord  
He has never failed me yet  
Every problem He has met  
And I cannot fail the Lord

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (KJV)**

**5** Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. **6** In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

**Psalms 62:8 (KJV)** Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.

**Jeremiah 17:7-8 (KJV)**

**7** Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. **8** For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

In the middle of difficult times, there is something that takes place in the prophet's life.

Elijah spoke up and now he finds that living is filled with pressure and trouble that comes from the famine. Over the course of history, there are some who if they had known what it was going to cost them they would have remained silent.

But something took place... The word of the LORD came...

That exact phrase appears ninety-two times in Scripture.

The word of the LORD came... Leave your old associations (to Abraham)

The word of the LORD came... Like this to various prophets

The word of the LORD came... Like this to various kings

The word of the LORD came... Like this when visions were given from God

The word of the LORD came... To Moses about taking the role as deliverer of Israel

The word of the LORD came... To Joshua to go forward

The word of the LORD came... To Gideon to wage warfare

The word of the LORD came... To Jeremiah when he was in prison

The word of the LORD came... To Ezekiel when he was among the captives by the river Chebar

The word of the LORD came... To Jonah about specific directions to go to Nineveh

With Elijah and these men, there was a prevailing trait of obedience. The word of the Lord came to him and he did what the Lord told him to do.

### **Go to Cherith**

In scripture, there are a lot of times that the meaning of a name of the place that men find themselves have great insight... although we should be cautioned in the fact of reading more into the text than what is there.

Cherith should be a place that we understand that great meaning comes from just being there. Cherith means to “cut off” or “cut down.”

In the Old Testament, it can mean:

Being cut off from others.

Being cut off from the blessing of a covenant.

Being cut down as one might cut down a large tree.

While Elijah was at Cherith, he was literally cut off from the involvement with Ahab, Jezebel, and all the nation of Israel. There were some things that God had still to do in the life of this man.

Straight out of the shoot in 1 Kings 17, Elijah is defined as a man who is a Tishbite. Out of nowhere and suddenly standing in the court of Ahab and being the mouth-piece of God... the problem was that he was just a Tishbite who had been used to God.

Something happens to Elijah at Cherith, because there is a change that has taken place at a later point:

**1 Kings 17:24 (KJV)** And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.

What was started in Cherith would culminate in his identity as a Tishbite being lost, because now Elijah is defined as a man of God. Be careful how you treat Cherith, because it is the beginning of how God will change your identity.

You most likely won't go to a brook like Cherith, instead you will have other situations that will do the work of Cherith:

- A place where you are trying to overcome shame
- A place where you battle with bitterness
- A place where you are dealing with difficult relatives
- A place where you fight discouragement
- A place where you war against a bad attitude
- A place where you have to deal with injustice and unfairness
- A place where you are learning to grow old
- A place where you have been sorely let down by others
- A place where you wonder if your prayer even matters
- A place where you wonder if your presence even matters
- A place where you have run out of choices
- A place where you are disappointed with God
- A place where you see evil in its darkest depths
- A place where you are confused

All these places are opportunities for Cherith to do its deepest work in our lives!

Cherith is a place that Elijah never expected. The new assignment for Elijah did not have the excitement of the previous one, but it was just as important. Going to the palace had been special. It had been a place of prestige, position, and publicity.

Going to Cherith was the opposite. Obligation to service for the Lord is not determined by excitement, status, popularity, or convenience, but rather by obeying the Word of God.

Obedience to God:

May expose you to hatred, scorn, ridicule, oppression, and meanness from men.

May cause you to be placed in an uncomfortable place of pressure and stress.

Or... may cause you to be put into a place where it seems like God has forgotten you... **He hasn't!**

That is what Cherith looks like and feels like... Somewhere east of Jordan, in the wilderness, by the brook, with the ravens, with the water... alone with God and yourself!

### **The Preaching Points**

There are some very powerful points that we find in these verses that we in this segment of the prophet's story.

The Absent Prophet

#### **1 Kings 17:3-5 (KJV)**

**3** Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. **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.

We forget that Cherith is also a place of protection.

He was concealed and Ahab, Jezebel, and the nation could no longer here his voice. In fact, he would spend a year at Cherith.

Israel had no idea how desperate their need for a prophet was. Most did not even miss him when he dropped out of their sight for a year. One of the greatest blessings and privileges that all of us can have is a righteous voice in our lives.

It is a great curse on any nation when God hides His preachers from them. The presence of a man of God in our society is critical. I am fearful that our nation is about to find out what it looks like when they scoff at the righteous cry of a preacher.

Psalm 74 gives us a picture what a sanctuary that has been desolated looks like.

**Psalm 74:7-8 (KJV)**

**7** They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground. **8** They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.

The following verse gives to us what it looks likes when men forsake God:

**Psalm 74:9 (KJV)** We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.

No prophet, no preacher, no man to call you back to the Lord. Churches that push back against pastors are going to end up being in trouble for it. I realize that pastors aren't perfect people, but it is the economy that God has set aside for His church to function by. We need pastors in pulpits and prophets in the congregation. Be careful how you view the role of a God-called, Holy Ghost anointed pastor.

Don't let yourself get to the place where that voice no longer matters in your life.

**The Dirty Birds**

So, we see the role of the absent prophet, but now we turn to the place of the dirty birds, the ravens that supplied Elijah with food.

Leviticus 11:15 and Deuteronomy 14:14 is a portion of the Law of Moses that put ravens in the category of the unclean. The best way to describe them would be that they are similar to the common buzzard.

Huge birds that have a startling appearance to them. They are ravenous in their appetites toward dead things or almost dead things. One of the characteristics of them is that they would pick out the eyes of a man or beast that they were about to consume. They have even been known to seek out the kidneys of a carcass and go after that before any other part.

Here was poor Elijah who felt terribly isolated, confused, and maybe even rattled by the whole change of venue and then he looks up to see these dirty birds bringing him something to keep him from starving.

Can you even imagine what Elijah may have thought?

How can any good come from this?

This surely cannot be a miracle from the Lord.

I am sure that I must have missed the will of God somewhere.

I am certain that God must be mad at me.

I wonder if this is going to get better or if I am stuck in this place?

All those swirling thoughts began to hammer at Elijah. I have a feeling that he felt like Christian felt when he was imprisoned in Doubting Castle and was being hammered by the violent blows of Giant Despair.

Sometimes it is not the pain of the situation that we must contend with, but with the dark threads of doubt that leap out and try to choke faith. How in the world can I eat what these dirty birds have brought my way?

You think about the ravens showing up twice a day for a year. I have a feeling that for the first week Elijah did not eat was because he knew the Law, but then I can imagine that he did not want to eat what these dirty birds had in their beaks and claws for him. Where had those same beaks and claws been earlier in the day?

But God in His righteous mercy still uses some pretty dirty birds to feed us...

Closed doors

Dead dreams

Selfish people

Job terminations



Greedy people  
Financial pressures  
Dead ends

How can this dirty bird be for my own good?

God often arranges our circumstances in such a way that He will supply our needs, but creates an absence of surplus. When there is not a surplus that means you have to trust God and not your own abilities.

The food the ravens brought was a miracle, but the water was not a miracle. God does not work miracles for our entertainment and excitement. God does not work miracles to validate a preacher or so that others will look at certain ministries as special and blessed. God works miracles to sustain us through dark and difficult days.

Miracles in our day have almost devolved into a point of entertainment for a lazy, worldly, and carnal church. God may work a miracle and send food by the ravens but don't let that blind you to the command to drink from the brook.

Be born again.  
Live a holy life.  
Pray without ceasing.  
Spread the gospel.

### **1 Thessalonians 4:7-8 (KJV)**

**7** For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. **8** He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 (KJV)**

**12** And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; **13** And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. **14** Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. **15** See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

**16** Rejoice evermore. **17** Pray without ceasing. **18** In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. **19** Quench not the Spirit. **20** Despise not prophesyings. **21** Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. **22** Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Elijah got his water without a miracle, but he would have died of thirst if he wasn't obedient. There are some who will embrace the miraculous, but will die because of a lack of obedience.

### **The Brook Dries Up**

The prophet was absent... He was fed by some dirty birds and a running brook... but now the brook dries up.

The stream died! All men must be prepared for the day the brook dries up. But don't be confused with a dry brook meaning that God has lost His power to work!

It just means that there is a change of venue that God will lead you to. Just like He sent Elijah to the palace and then to the brook, He is about to send him to a widow who will witness a miracle. We are reading Elijah's story backwards and we know how it turns out... We are living our lives forward and we don't know how every detail is going to turn out, but we can trust God to work it out just like He did in Elijah's life!

**Philippians 1:6 (KJV)** Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

### **Ten Thousand Reasons**

A song came to my mind as I worked through this message. As I listened to it, I felt a wave of repentance get on me... I felt the need to repent that I get overwhelmed by what I see with my eyes, but have forgotten what the Spirit has said to me.

Forgive us when our faith is weak and we want to question and sometimes curse the dirty birds and what they have brought to us!

Bless the Lord oh my soul  
Oh my soul  
Worship His Holy name  
Sing like never before  
Oh my soul  
I'll worship Your Holy name

The sun comes up  
It's a new day dawning  
It's time to sing Your song again  
Whatever may pass  
And whatever lies before me  
Let me be singing  
When the evening comes

Bless the Lord oh my soul  
Oh my soul  
Worship His Holy name  
Sing like never before  
Oh my soul  
I'll worship Your Holy name

You're rich in love  
And You're slow to anger  
Your name is great  
And Your heart is kind  
For all Your goodness  
I will keep on singing  
Ten thousand reasons  
For my heart to find

Bless the Lord oh my soul  
Oh my soul  
Worship His Holy name  
Sing like never before  
Oh my soul

I'll worship Your Holy name  
Bless You Lord

And on that day  
When my strength is failing  
The end draws near  
And my time has come  
Still my soul will  
Sing Your praise unending  
Ten thousand years  
And then forevermore  
Forevermore

Bless the Lord oh my soul  
Oh my soul  
Worship His Holy name  
Sing like never before  
Oh my soul  
I'll worship Your Holy name

Matt Redman—Ten Thousand Reasons