

Elijah – Prophet of Confrontation #4

Elijah and the Widow

1Ki 17:8-16

Introduction:

1. The drought that God brought on the land, effected Elijah
2. Good people suffer when judgment comes on a land because none of us lives to himself
3. Elijah has obeyed God and gone to the brook Cherith and now the test was what to do next
4. Obedience to the will of God is the best way to receive help from God
 - a. Crises can be conquered
 - b. Difficulties can be surmounted
 - c. Problems can be solved
 - d. Great needs can be met if we just do what God commands
5. As time went on Elijah noticed that the water was not gushing over the rocks like it did a month earlier
 - a. That stream was his lifeline
 - b. He began keeping an eye on brook
 - c. It dwindled and became a trickle
 - d. Then one morning there was no water - only damp sand
 - e. Then parched sand and cracks in the stream bed
6. Many have faced an experience like this
 - a. The pink slip came and the job disappeared
 - b. Then the bank account dried up
 - c. The brook dried up
7. Basic training was completed at the brook Cherith
 - a. Now it is time for advanced training at Zarephath
 - b. Zarephath - comes from a verb which means to smelt and the noun form means "crucible"
 - c. This was a place that was designed by God to further refine His servant for further use
8. A humbling command for Elijah
 - a. God did not say, "Go to Zarephath because I want you to take care of a widow there."
 - b. Instead the poor widow was going to take care of Elijah
 - c. It is often the most humbling tasks that prepare us for greater tasks
 - d. It would not be some rich merchant who would take care of Elijah or one of the chief men of Zidon but a poor widow
 - e. God can use "the weak and foolish things of the world"

I. Knowing the Will of God

A. Will of God is Known Through Scripture – vs 8

8 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

1. Elijah watched the brook dry up
2. He no doubt wondered what God had for him next
3. God was silent until the brook dried up – then he told Elijah to move to Zarephath
4. God's will for Elijah was revealed in the Word of God
 - a) *We discover the will of God for our lives in God's Word*
 - b) *What we think is the will of God for our lives must correspond to the Word of God or it is not the will of God for us*
5. Elijah has been faithful to do God's will
 - a) *This is not surprising since we have seen that the Word of God has been prominent in his life*
 - b) *In the life of Elijah we see the phrase "The Word of the Lord" or something similar*
 - (1) 1 Ki 17:2,5,8,16,24
 - (2) 1 Ki 18:1,31,36
 - (3) 1 Ki 19:9
 - (4) 1 Ki 21:17,18
6. Many today do not give the Word of God much of a place in their life
7. Even some churches fail to give the Word of God much of a place
 - a) *They emphasize programs, recreation, socials*
 - b) *No wonder people are increasingly unaware of the will of God*

B. Will of God is Known in Season

1. God was not late in revealing His will to Elijah
 - a) *When Elijah need a new source of water, God gave him the next directions*
 - b) *Elijah didn't die of thirst*
2. We don't have to worry about God being late – He is always on time
 - a) *Think of Moses and the Israelites on the shore of the Red Sea and God divides the water just in time*
 - b) *Jesus was born at just the right time*
3. The widow was also coming to the end of her supplies when God spoke to her
 - a) *She was preparing her last meal when the Word of God came to her through Elijah*
 - b) *She did not starve as she was anticipating*
4. Many who are attuned to the Word of God will testify that just when they needed help, or they faced an important decision, or some temptation, a particular passage of scripture was impressed on their mind.

C. Will of God is Revealed in Segments

1. Elijah was led one step at a time
2. When God sent him to the brook, God did not say that the next step would be to Zarephath
3. Not till the brook dried up and the next step needed to be taken, did the Lord reveal that step
4. When Elijah spoke to the woman at Zarephath he revealed her duty one step at a time
 - a) *Vs 10 – bring me some water* b) *cook me a cake*
5. The will of God is like the headlights on a car
 - a) *They shine far enough ahead for safe driving*
 - b) *They do not show you the entire road*
6. We don't need to know about tomorrow's duty till tomorrow comes
 - a) *Concentrate on today and today's duty*
 - b) *When tomorrow comes, then tomorrow's assignment will be clear*
 - c) *If Elijah had not gone to the brook, he would not have learned of the orders to go to Zarephath*
 - d) *Obey the present duty for further revelation*

II. The Priorities of the Will of God

A. God's Will Has Priority Over Situations

9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.
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.

- If the will of God is not given top priority, it will be left undone
1. Elijah's circumstances did not encourage doing the will of God
 - a) *God ordered him to Zarephath which was nearly 100 mi away*
 - (1) He was already beginning to get thirsty
 - (2) He would have to travel through the dusty desert – famine everywhere
 - b) *Zarephath was the home of Ethbaal, father of Jezebel*
 - (1) God ordered Elijah into the middle of enemy territory
 - (2) It wasn't just dangerous, it seemed suicidal - How could Elijah hide there?
 - c) *How easy it would have been for Elijah to let circumstances determine his actions instead of God's will*
 2. Widow's circumstances would not encourage her to do God's will
 - a) *God's will for her was to take care of Elijah*
 - b) *How could she take care of him, her condition was desperate?*
 - c) *She had enough food for one more meal – vs 12*
 - d) *She seemed to be the one to be needing help, not one to help*
 - e) *She would risk her life to care for Elijah since he was a wanted man and she would be an accomplice*

B. God's Will Has Priority Over Self

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. 13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; 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.

1. Self cannot reign if God's will is to be done
2. Elijah had to put self in the background to go to Zarephath
3. The widow was tested also
 - a) *Her comments were not just feeling sorry for herself*
 - (1) She was desperate
 - (2) Fear was written all over her face
 - (3) There is no exaggeration in her words here
 - (4) For days she had cautiously rationed the meal / oil
 - (5) See her frail body from lack of nourishment
 - b) *Elijah asked for a drink during the drought*
 - (1) He asked to be given a cake 1st before the widow+ her son ate
 - (2) Even the most unselfish person would have to stop and think about that
 - (3) None of us have been down to our last meal
 - (4) Let alone having someone ask you for your last bit of food
 - (5) I wonder if she had been praying and asking God for help
4. Don't interpret Elijah's request as selfishness
 - a) *He was only saying what God told him to say – vs 16*
 - b) *Elijah was God's representative + she was really giving to God*
 - c) *The challenge was to give to God first even when it was her last bit of food*

C. God's Will Has Priority Over Sense

1. Human reasoning should never have priority over God's commands
 - a) *Often God's commands do not appeal to our reasoning*
 - b) *If you have just enough food for yourself for one more meal and I came along and told you to give me the food, you might think that I was crazy – it doesn't make sense*
2. When Elijah was told to go to Zarephath, human reasoning would have found a closer place, further from the enemy
3. Elijah was told to go to the widow – human reasoning would have said "find a rich person, a prince or someone"
4. As it turns out, the widow took care of Elijah very well and Elijah was never in jeopardy
5. We are not asked to understand God's commands, only obey them
 - a) *When God told Abraham to sacrifice his son, it didn't make sense*
 - b) *When Gideon decreased his army to 300 men, didn't make sense*

III. The Rewards of the Will of God

A. The Providence of God

1. Things work together for good to those who are in the will of God
2. Note how God worked everything out
 - a) Vs 9 – go to Zarephath and I will have a widow there
 - b) Vs 10 – he arose and in Zarephath there was a widow
 - c) Lucky coincidence? – No, God's providence

B. The Power of God

1. The widow obeyed and witnessed the power of God daily
2. Day after day, she and Elijah saw the power of God working
3. How many believers have given and God has stretched their income to cover the expenses
4. If God had given her a silo filled with grain and a vat filled with oil, word would have spread around the city and people would have stolen it. They might have caused a riot and killed the woman for her food. God was wise in giving her just enough for each day.

C. The Provisions of God

14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. 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.

1. Elijah had great needs when he left the brook and the widow had great needs in Zarephath
2. Both were taken care of by obeying what God said
 - a) God used unclean birds
 - b) Here God used a Gentile (unclean) widow woman
3. When Elijah saw the near-empty flour bin and jug of oil he said, "That's no problem for God – go ahead and fix some biscuits for you, me and your son. Praise God from whom all biscuits flow."
4. Follow your heavenly orders, do your divine duty and God will take care of you.

Conclusion -- Four lessons from this account

1. God's leading is often surprising - don't analyze it
 - a. If God leads you to Zarephath - just go - don't analyze it
 - b. Stay put
2. The beginning days are often the hardest days - don't quit
3. God's promises often hinge on obedience - don't ignore your part
4. God's provisions are often just enough - don't fail to thank Him