

Fed by ravens

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Preacher: Rev Ronald Morrison

[0 : 00] We turn for a little to 1 Kings chapter 17. And reading from the beginning of the chapter again, 1 Kings chapter 17 verse 1.

And Elijah Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, Ask the Lord God of his little livid, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is, before Jordan.

And it shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. 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.

And the ravens brought in bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank of the brook, and so on.

[1 : 28] It's always profitable for us to look at the characters, the life of the characters of the scripture.

We can learn many great truths from studying these characters. We can find help, and this study can be a means of making us grasp some of the great truths that God's word brings before us. Because when we look at these characters, we're not just seeing their high points, and their times when they were totally obedient to God's word.

But we're also seeing their times when their faith seemed to desert them, and they would turn and go in the opposite direction to that which the Lord had ordered them to do.

And I think that is so characteristic so often of our own life. Sometimes it is perhaps quite easy for us to follow the commands that God gives to us.

[2 : 58] It may be easy sometimes to follow the commands of his word, to recognize his voice speaking to us. And we know from experience that it is also true that at other times the last thing we want to do is to be obedient to God's word.

And in our often seeking to side step with the issues of God's word that may confront us or his voice speaking to us, we can become very skilled in making so many different excuses rather than be obedient to God's word.

And I think everyone who has faith in Christ, every believer here tonight, I'm sure knows at least in some small way something of that in their own experience.

And so when we look at the characters of Scripture, as I said, we so often see that that is true in their lives. And when we see the failures in their lives and we see the failures in our own, we can also discover the remedies that God brought to the fore to correct faithlessness or to correct man's disobedience.

And we can learn and we can follow these particular patterns that God has laid down in his word for us. Because he has left us an example that we should follow him.

[4 : 40] Now this evening I just want for a little to look at this first incident in the life of Elijah. The life of Elijah I'm sure is well known to all of you.

But I think perhaps it would be helpful just for a little for us to look at some of the teaching here.

Now the first thing I think that we see here is that he is obedient to God's direction.

You notice what he says there in verse 2. The word of the Lord came unto him. And verse 5. So he went and did according to the word of the Lord.

And I think when we see there in verse 2 something of a way in which God's word comes, the word of the Lord came unto him, it may well be a good point for us just to pause and ask ourselves quite simply and searchingly, I hope, do we have that discernment?

Do we have that ear to discern the word of the Lord speaking to us? Because it seems obvious at this point in the life of Elijah that he is well tuned in, we would use that expression, to what God's word has to say.

[6 : 11] He has an ear to hear what God's word will say. And not only does he have an ear to hear what God's word says, but he has a spirit that is willing to be obedient and to go in the direction that God's word says.

And so these two elements go very closely together. The discernment to know the Lord's voice and the willingness to be obedient to that voice.

And it's in that area that we see so often that God leads his people. It is there that we see that he leads them so often into areas, into paths, into byways and highways, that they least expect it.

And perhaps for some even of ourselves that we least desire to go. And you'll notice when God's directive comes to him, it is that he takes him to a place that perhaps he least expected.

And it is to a place that in many ways is perhaps not all that attractive. It is to a brook. It is not even to a river. It is to the brook chariot, which was on the very banks of the Jordan.

[7 : 38] And it is there that he deals with this man. And I feel that when we see such a situation, we see that the Lord, even although he might send us or lead us, point us in certain directions, it is not for us in a sense to decide for ourselves whether we ought to go there or not.

But it is for you and for me, if we are living, seeking to live out the life of faith, it is for you and for me to go in that particular direction.

It is for us to be obedient to that word. And it is that element of obedience that is so crucial in this early stage of Elijah's life.

It is willingness to be obedient, to have the hearing ear, to have the willingness to go, and that takes in the whole picture of a man who is willing to be obedient to God's word.

And you can think of the different ways, different times in scripture, when God's word has directed individuals in certain directions. You can think of even sometimes the reasoning that, for example, the disciples, when the Lord tells them to cast their nets out.

[9 : 08] And you remember that they, for a moment, tell them that they have been working, and we have toiled all the night. It is as if they are beginning to argue with him concerning the wisdom of his direction upon their lives.

And yet there is this, that they come to this mind where they say, we will do it at thy bidding. And so you see, the necessity of doing it at his bidding, of having lives that are brought under his subjection, of having lives that are brought under his control, and of having lives that are willing to be under his control.

no matter where it may be that he will send us, no matter where it will be that he would ask us to go, be it to cherish, whether it's but a brook, or be it somewhere else.

It is this spirit of agreement that we need to say, Lord, I hear your voice, I discern your voice, I know your voice, and because I know it, I am willing to go where you would have me go.

And you'll see when, in a moment too, that God rewards obedience, that God rewards obedience, and that God wants us to learn that he will work so often in a contrary way, in the opposite way perhaps, to the way in which you and I would want him to work.

[11 : 03] And that so often, our discernment, and our judgment, upon the way in which God's work, these are tainted and tarnished by our own particular viewpoint, as opposed to coming to scripture, scripture, and examining there, how perhaps God dealt with other characters, with other biblical characters.

And that's why I said, it's so important, and it's so great a lesson for us so often, to come to this world, and to find how God dealt with a particular, or particular situation, and to find how God dealt with these men and women, in these particular situations.

And because so often, when we're seeking God's direction, we must also be willing to be in agreement with his word and with his direction.

And in that you see, is he not as if it were, and I use the word, I hope, of relevance, checking out, to see where, to see what level of obedience, or to see what level of willingness, you or I might have, to go in that way.

He's wanting to examine, he's wanting to see, whether in our asking of him, we are willing, when he tells us, when he explains to us, when he shows us, he's wanting us, he wants to see, whether you or I, are willing, to go, in that way.

[12 : 48] And in this path often, the more we subject, the more we, come into, agreement with his will, the more we are willing, to subject ourselves, to his direction, for our lives, the more we will discover, that he is leading us, into newer, and into greater, a pathway, there might be, greater pathways, spiritually, there might be, greater pathways, of difficulties, there is no, as if it were, guarantee, that although, we might be, in the path, of obedience, it is going to be, a road, that has no, ups and downs, on the contrary, it is so often the case, you see it, in the life, of the apostles, how often, they were scattered, in persecution, to one place, and another, and that they would, find a witness there, and there would be, more persecution, and more scattering, and in all of that, the outworking, of God's kingdom, was launching for, and the church,

God was adding, to the church daily, such, us, would be saved, and he is, he is seeing, our faith, and he is, testing our faith, and he is, he is stretching, our faith, and he is increasing, our faith, he is building us up, block by block, and in that, all the more, seeking, seeking to make us, willing, to be obedient to him, let's just, for a moment, go to the other part, of the story, you see how he, how he goes, we're saying, he goes out, by God's direction, he has the year of the Lord, to discern, this direction, and he takes him there, to Cherith, to a brook, and then the brook, dries up, and he moves on, from Cherith, to Saripha, and at Saripha, he is provided, for a game, but in the midst of a doll, there's a crisis, you see, the principle is there, that although, he is leading us, and he is directing us, nevertheless, he can confront us, with extremely, difficult situations, and in these, he's asking, that we cast ourselves, more and more, upon him, my soul, wait thou, with patience, upon, thy God, alone, ye people, place your confidence, in him, and it's that element, that has trapped, so much lacking in us, and that manifests, so often, so much failure, in our Christian lives, failure, to place, our trust, and our confidence, in him, self, will rear, its head, so readily, and we go out, in our own strength, like Samson of old, perhaps in a different context, nevertheless, you see how he was, confident, in his own strength, he said,

I will go out, as before, and didn't have the discernment, to know, that the Lord, had departed from him, how often, we go out, in our own strength, we have not got, that discernment, though, that the Lord, is not with us, as he has been with us, in previous times, and we'll see on from that, he trains, Elijah, in the discipline, of being alone, with God, perhaps up to, certainly up to, a period of three years, including, Zarephah, until eventually, he will take him on again, to meet, to meet Ahab, and then, to take him on, to that, momentous confrontation, on Mount Carmel, all the time, he is being taught, and in that time, in that framework, he is learning, to walk, in the path, of, of, of, reading, and there's something else, we need to learn, in this path of reading, and it is this, it is, to take it, one step, at a time, so often, our fears, well up, because, we're looking so far ahead, now God is telling, Elijah here, you just go, to a church, and then, later on, as if it were, he's saying, I will reveal to you, what I want, what my plan is, for your life, it is waiting, with patience, upon the Lord, it is, that, element that says, I am here, and he has placed me here, I must learn, to live here, to, to organize, my life here, to cope, with the situation, by seeking, help from the Lord, waiting, with patience, upon him, his grace, is sufficient, for all of our needs, God's, direction, not only is it God's direction, but it is, to God's, place, and he, if he is to have the Lord's, blessing, and to be, further able to discern, the voice of the Lord, he must do so, in that place, where God, has, placed him, and, in a very real sense, surely, he had to go there, to be alone, with his God, with his God, and, no, it's a, perhaps a spirit, that is, difficult for us, to cultivate that time, to have that, patience, to have that, frame of mind, to have that, willingness, within us, whereby, we are, brought to this, where I must, go alone, and cherish, with my God, remember, how the psalmist, put it, he that does, in the sacred place, of the most high, beside, under the shade, of him, that is the almighty, shall abide, then the psalmist, as he could say, because he was disciplined, in the sacred place,

I of the Lord, my God, will save, he is my refuge still, he is my fortress, and my God, and in him trust, I will, and it is a discipline, that we must learn, each, and every day, it's not just, something we must, try and cultivate, perhaps as we are so often, guilty of doing, before a communion, trying to get ourselves, into a spiritual, frame of mind, because the communion, is alone, it is something, that we ought to be at, each day, and when he is, absent from us, can we not, express the words, of the sons, who longs, who longs, that the Lord, would manifest, his power, and his glory, and he had experienced, it in time's time, and he wants it, back again, and he is pleading, with the Lord, for it, Lord surely, is calling you, and I each day, to be pleading, and it's, as we come, to his place, that there, we will learn, the discipline, of pleading, and you'll see, the word of the Lord, came in, and he said, get thee hence, turn eastward, and then he says, hide thyself, now, isn't this a strange,

request in a sense, for a man, who is going to, bring down, the powers of evil, that reigned, and ruled, in the land, me, but you see, he's teaching him, there to, as if it were, as a child crawls, and as a child, learns to go, the Lord is teaching, the Lord is saying to him, you go and hide yourself, please, you go aside, and be there, with me, and I, with you, can you see, the confront, you and me, again, tonight, the question, am I, am I, cultivating, that kind of, frame of mind, in my Christian life, am I, am I going, to this place, where the Lord, will meet with me, and where the Lord, will deal with me, and where I can go aside, and speak with him, where I shut all else out, and do business, with him, you know, when you think about, take that phrase, you do business with heaven, you think of, the way in which, business is done, in a secular sense, sometimes the intensity, of effort, that is put into it, the, the, the, the discipline, that is involved, the preparation, that goes on beforehand, and, the setting up, of so many different, arms, and of all these, coming together, doing business, well, how much more, should the heavenly business, be conducted, how much more, should there not be, this preparation, how much more, should there not be, this intensity, of purpose, in seeking to, to drive ourselves, to, to be, as if we are propelled, into this place, to meet, with, the Lord, there, and you see, when you come, to this place, and when, we ask, and he gives us, that right frame of mind, of spirit, is it not so, that we then, have a mind, and a spirit, that is willing, to submit, to him. [23 : 09] You see, we go back, just for a moment, to what we said, about the self. Self, you see, in a sense, counteracts, this willingness, to submission.

Self is so often, the last enemy, that is, that is, that is in need, of destruction, within, and you see, if there is to be, submission, there must be, the cancelling, out of self, within, there must be, this, that I come, and say, Lord, I hear your voice, Lord, I am submitting, to your voice, and Lord, I will do, as you would, have me do.

It's the example, of our Lord, the example, that takes him, to Calvary, not my will, that thine, be done.

Oh, him, right of me, take my life, and let it be, consecrated, Lord, to thee. These are, the standards, he demands of us.

These are, the paths, that lead us, into true, fellowship with him. These, are the maps, he sticks upon us, disciples, whom he has purchased, with his own blood.

[24 : 36] Surely, we haven't, been in that place, as we ought, to have been. We ought, to start, this very night, and find, that place, find, that chariot, for us all.

Then, the Lord, will speak, with us. Then, of course, although he speaks, we need, as we said, a few things, that ear, that discern, is speaking, to us.

and that willingness, to submit, that mind, that says, this is the Lord, and he is, speaking to me, and he is, saying, to me, I want your life, and I want it, more and more, to be in, in service, for me.

And, it's not just, submission, but there is, this great element, of it, this trusting, to the Lord's word. Trusting, that the Lord, will help, and there.

And I said, it's not a river, he takes him to, the land is, is going to be, in drought. And he doesn't, take him, to a river, where, where, where he will sit down, well, there's enough here, to keep me going, for a while.

[25 : 56] No, it's just a little brook. And you'll see, what happens, when he's there, on the path of duty. It dries up. The water, finishing.

And he has to move on. But you see, here is, the way in which, God deals, with his people. He takes us, to, to, to teach us, to trust in him.

He takes us, and says, I'm putting you here, and as I said, without wanting to, enlarge him again, but to remind him, I'm, setting you here, so that you will learn patience, so that you will learn discipline, so that you will learn willingness, so that you will learn to trust me, to trust in me alone, and to see that I will, supply, supply, all your needs.

Someone would point, a contrast between, this trust of, of, of, of, of, Elijah, and the way in which, there was prosperity, with, jeshuren.

Remember how, the words, from Deuteronomy put, jeshuren, waxed, waxed, and then, what happened? He forsook, the Lord.

[27 : 19] You see, because of his plenty, he ceased, to have that dependence, upon the Lord, that was, so crucial. He ceased, to have that hunger, and that thirst, for the Lord, for his word, for his company, for a fellowship, with his people.

He became self-sufficient, and then you see, he forsook the Lord. God, in his wisdom, and by his healing, through the agency, of the Holy Spirit, with us, sometimes gives us, just the pushing, for that moment.

So we will return, to that place again, and ask of him, and prove him, and show him, our own willingness, our own desire, and fulfill, his purpose, for our lives.

His brook, was just as blessed, a place, for Elijah, as any plentiful river, could or would have been, just as precious, a place, for this man, as a place, where there, would be plenty, prayerful submissiveness, to his will.

It's also a place, of standing, inevitably a place, inevitably a place, of strengthening, but it's also, a place of safety. And you know, there's one other thing, you know, there's one other thing here, that is, that is, so I think, astonishing.

[28 : 52] You see the way, God supplies him here, he supplies him, from the brook, for a moment, and then you see, what he does here, he went and did, according to the word, of the Lord, he went and dwelt, by the brook, Teraz, that is the word word, and the ravens, brought him bread.

Now you remember, in Leviticus, what is said, of these birds, they were an abomination, and yet, God uses them, for his own purpose, for his own glory.

anything, of our imagination, he feeds them there, with food, supplied, by the ravens, these, created beans, used by God, to supply his servant, he uses, does he not, so many different means, to supply you, and to supply me, so many different ways, in which, he shows us, that we are, his own, so many different ways, he proves, his love for us, how, much, we feel, in proving, our love for him, but because, of the greatness, of his mercy, he shows us, something, of his love for us, he provides, for, his servant, just as he, provides, for us, a passage, through the Jordan, passage, through the Red Sea, just as he closes, the mouth of the lion, in the den, you see, he is the God, who is almighty, all powerful, and perhaps, in the idea, of small things, and of truth, we've lost, that picture, that concept, of the greatness, of our God, and the marvel, of what he has done, for us, the provision, he has made, for us, we need to come back, again, to reflect, upon that, we need his spirit, to enlighten us, so that we can be, obedient, to his, own will, for our lives, and then, when you see, the book cries, that, time, to move on, to a greater stage, and what happens, then to you, well, the word tells us, and the word, of the Lord, came unto him, saved, you see, because there was, obedience, in the first step,

God, doesn't leave him, he takes him on, as if it were, to stage two, I say, you will know, Elijah, you will learn, the next stage, in this school, of faith, and I will lead you, and again, he has the discernment, to know, the Lord's voice, speaking to him, I wonder, perhaps, if the Lord, is speaking to you, and to me, tonight, perhaps, he's using, this incident, to reprove my life, and to reprove your life, perhaps, he's using this, story, that we're so, so familiar with, to point us back again, to the need, to discern, the Lord's words, and the need, to come, and be obedient, to that voice, and for the need, to go out, by faith, being submissive, to his direction, being submissive, so as I will be, in the place, where he puts me, where he places me, being submissive, and being content, with the supply, with which, he supplies me, being submissive, to being, in the place, where he will, keep us in safety, despite the fact, there may be, many dangers, such is his way, of teaching us, such is the way, sometimes, that we must learn, but if we are, willing to learn, he will, help us, and he will, bend over, more and more, towards him, he makes our people, willing, in a day, of his power, and would it be, not, a blessed communion, season for us, if we, count, if we, could come, into that framework, of, of willingness, and of discernment, and to be, in that unity, of the spirit, to be, in that oneness, to be knowing, that the Lord, is in the midst, and that he is taking, his word, not man's word, but his word, and applying that word, to the heart, of both speaker, and hearer, alike, let us pray.