

It will not rain for three years. There won't even be any dew. Things are about to get bad and it's your fault. You've offended God with your marriage to a woman who worships false gods. You've brought disaster on the people by setting up idols in the holy city. You were supposed to be the king, supposed to lead people into worship of the true God. Instead you've led them astray. Now you're being judged by God.

Whoever speaks words like that before a king must be very self-assured and confident. A person willing to say those things could take care of himself. Elijah may have been. We know nothing about him before this moment. Suddenly he was in the deep end being asked to speak to no less than the king and speak no less than words of judgment. Elijah's trust in God was just beginning to be tested.

Lakes and streams might be filled now, but having come out of drought we understand there are times when flowing rivers might be barely there. Such was the place Elijah was sent. **"Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: leave here and turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there."** During the rainy season this ravine and its brook would be filled with water. But it would get drier and drier. And since God's word said God wasn't sending any more rain the brook would quickly dry out. That was his life source. The birds God chose to deliver food weren't the first choice either. Ravens scavenge, they don't share normally. But twice daily God used the ravens to serve Elijah with a miraculous meal of bread and meat.

Elijah wasn't trusting the brook or the ravens. **"So he did what the Lord had told him."** The Lord spoke, Elijah listened. He had a relationship with the Lord, the saving God, who already showed him that what he says will happen. The word of the Lord told Elijah to hide in this ravine, so he went. The Lord told him the water would be there and the ravens would feed him, so he waited and they did. The Lord made promises and kept those promises. Slowly step by step the Lord was training Elijah to trust in him alone.

It's so easy to be self-reliant. If Elijah had done that he probably never would have parked himself where dependable water and reliable food wasn't available. He never would have gone into that ravine. He may have moved around looking for whatever source of water he could find. He would have followed the food sources. We have our moments when we rely on ourselves for what we need. Health issues come up and we immediately jump to action, getting doctors, finding medications, whatever because who else will take care of us? We pride ourselves on our independence, the ability to not have to go to anyone else for anything. Parents raise their children to depend on themselves. Workers learn they can't depend on coworkers like they depend on themselves. We wrestle with what God wants and what we want. We get anxious if basics like water and food aren't readily available. When suffering or challenges come we want to believe in ourselves, trust in ourselves, and lean on ourselves.

The Lord is working in you a stronger trust in him. You believe in God who made promises that you would be where he wants you and have what you need. So in life you've seen clearly times where God had you right where he wanted you but you probably never would have been on your own. God promises you the necessities of life. While you may not receive them by miracles, they may not always be readily at hand, still God keeps those promises to you.

With the water and the ravens bringing him food, Elijah could have survived in the ravine as long as God wanted him to survive. **"Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the Lord came to him: Go to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food."** Following his more typical pattern God began to involve other people in the care for his prophet.

At first glance she was just a woman picking up sticks as Elijah approached her. **"Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink? And bring me please a piece of bread."** The word of the Lord led Elijah to place himself into this woman's care. But the drought was impacting this area outside of Israel too. She was dangerously low on supplies for food. These sticks would light the fire for a last meal. Once home she would use whatever flour and oil was left and bake a cake of bread. Starvation would kill her and her son after that. Now Elijah might have wondered why God brought him to an already starving widow with no food. She may have worried that being hospitable to this prophet might leave her with nothing. The Lord speaks a word of promise to both of them. **"Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord the God of Israel says: the jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry."** Both of them can trust in God.

Self-reliance is natural for our sinful nature. Trusting in other people is hard. It means putting our well-being into another person's hands. Doubt comes quickly since we can't be sure they'll work as hard for us as they would for themselves. Worry happens because we can't know if they'll see our needs as important. We might fear they'll become selfish. They won't truly care about us. We can even think these when having to trust God. Will he work as hard for us as we would? Will he worry and see our needs as important? What if things go wrong like they probably will, won't that show that he doesn't truly care about us?

God worked on Elijah's faith to grow it. First by miracles in the ravine. Then through a widow's flour and oil in a normal way. God expands your trust in him showing you his love by providing for you in the normal way. Farmers grow food. Shippers deliver that food from where it's made to the grocery store. The store stocks the shelves. You earn a living at a job to have money to go to the store. You bring home the food and prepare and serve it for you and those you care for. Most of that process is outside your control. All of that process is under God's control. In love he provides for you what you need. In love he leads you to see that whether by miracle or by normal process, he's the one who cares for you and will provide.

The Lord God has already fulfilled some great needs. Your faith in him grows each day as you consider what he provides for you. And he's willing to go even further because your greatest need isn't any of those things. The Lord addressed your greatest need by providing a Savior from sin. Jesus met your greatest need with a greater miracle than ravens dropping food supplies or jars and jugs that wouldn't run out. The Lord's greatest miracle is a promise of living bread, a Savior to pay for all your sins. Jesus is that living bread. He promised love for you and he delivered. He was willing to give himself completely for you. You hear the promises, you witness the great sufferings Jesus endured, and God shares with you that it was all because he loves you. Nothing was too much for Jesus to suffer; nothing was too great for Jesus to endure.

As your trust grows in Christ so does the opportunity to put that trust into action. God leads you into those situations. But he doesn't leave you alone. He comes with his promises. The widow through Elijah heard God's promises. Then she could act. **"She went away and did as Elijah had told her. The jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah."** God has spoken his word of promise to you as well. If you find yourself in need of food, the Lord knows and promises you he provides even if you can't. If you can't imagine how you could go on another day with the little you have, the Lord promises you he knows and is working in ways you may not see to show his love to you.

Elijah was not the model of a self-assured self-made man. God molded Elijah into faith-filled action. He led Elijah to see that he could not provide for himself, but if necessary God would provide through a miracle. He also led Elijah to see God's normal activity using other people to provide. That's how God's love and promises work for you as he leads you to see his promises always come true. He promised the necessities of life and he delivered. He promised a Savior for your greatest need and he delivered.