

The God of Elijah

This is a brief excerpt of the sermon given by Pastor Alexander Thomas during the Watch Night Service on Saturday, December 31st, 11:30 PM 2016 at the International Church, Atlanta, Georgia.

This New Year 2017 message was taken from 1 Kings Chapter 17

Verses 1 - 7

Elijah's brook dried up. Why did the Lord allow this to happen? To teach him to trust in God and not in the brook. His name was significant because it conveyed his message. Elijah means "my God is Yahweh," a name that shouted defiance to Ahab while declaring allegiance to the Lord. From 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 9, the central figures in the history will not be kings but two prophets, Elijah and Elisha. God did not raise up an army or an organization to oppose the power of an evil king or the spread of heathen worship. Rather, He used two men who were armed with the word of the Lord.

There will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years, except at my word.

Elijah's message to Ahab was brief, but it went like an arrow to the central issue. And with those brief words, the prophet was gone. He had defined the issue and drawn the battle lines. Elijah was convinced that the Lord, in contrast to Baal, was the living God. Canaanite mythology talked about Baal dying each year and coming back to life to bring the rains. Elijah knew that such a belief was nonsense, since Baal was a fraud, the Lord alone was the living God. Furthermore, he was the sovereign God who claimed the nation as his own, "the God of Israel" who would tolerate no rivals.

Spiritual courage calls us to fight for the glory of God, standing alone, if necessary, against the false gods of our generation. The hiding of Elijah was actually a judgment upon the nation. The nation needed Elijah. If people refuse God's blessings and His message, He will take it away.

Drink from the brook, ... the ravens feed you there.

This demanded faith because the brook that ran through the Kidron was a wadi, a stream that flowed only during the rainy season, and ravens were untamed scavengers, not providers. How could they serve as a food source? Nevertheless, Elijah followed God's instructions. He made his way to the Kerith, where he spent a period of time. It was a place of total dependence upon God, and the Lord demonstrated his sufficiency by providing food and water for Elijah. In the midst of the drought, God demonstrated that He, not Baal, was the God of nature who could provide all the resources that Elijah required. This was crucial training for the later event at Mount Carmel. Elijah was learning the absolute reliability of the Lord.

GOD'S CHILDREN ARE OFTEN CALLED UPON TO SIT BY DRYING BROOKS.

Elijah served his God in one of the most dangerous periods in history. The issues of syncretism and pluralism, so significant in Elijah's day, are with us today in somewhat different form. These are times when followers of Christ need to be at their best.

Drying brook of our popularity

Drying brook of our health

Drying brook of our needs

GOD'S CHILDREN MUST LEARN TO TAKE ONE STEP AT A TIME.

God gave Elijah his new assignment to go to Cherith Brook because he completed his first one in going to Ahab. God does not grant fresh revelation until there has been compliance with that which has been already received. If you are confused about the will of God today, it may be the result of not obeying the will of God yesterday. People do not grow in the Lord because they do not put into practice truth already taught.

Psalms 37:23—Steps are ordered by the Lord. "Give us this day our daily bread."

GOD'S CHILDREN MUST LEARN TO TRUST GOD COMPLETELY.

God sends Elijah to Cherith. Cherith means "a cutting place." God puts us through those cutting times to prepare us for future service. Cherith comes before the Mt. Carmels of our life. The cross comes before the crown. Trials come before blessings. At Cherith Brook God will cut off the rough edges of Elijah's life. Cherith was the place of loneliness, uncertainty, waiting, and hardship. God uses these elements to develop our character and knock off our rough edges.

The Lord fed Israel with manna and led them by a cloud.

GOD'S CHILDREN MUST LEARN THE VALUE OF THE HIDDEN LIFE.

At Cherith, Elijah would develop his relationship with the Lord. He would grow in faith, prayer, patience, and humility. He would grow in humility because this was a humble place. It was a brook, not a river. It

was a wilderness, not a castle. The Lord uses our Cherith Brooks to keep us level-headed instead of big-headed and proud.

Moses on the backside of the desert

Paul in Arabia

John on Patmos

John the Baptist in the wilderness

Jesus alone in the mountain

GOD'S CHILDREN MUST LEARN TO TAKE ORDERS.

Elijah is ordered to Zarephath. There was another challenge to Elijah's faith: some time later the brook dried up. The irony was that God was answering Elijah's prayer that there would be neither dew nor rain (17:1), and Elijah was experiencing the consequences of his own prayer being answered! Nevertheless, he did not leave the place where God had sent him until the Lord said he could. He was submissive to the Lord's timing, and he waited for the Lord to communicate the next step. Kerith was Elijah's "boot camp" where he learned that God, not Baal, was the Lord of creation, the God of rain and crops.

Moses is ordered to Egypt. Jonah is ordered to go to Nineveh. Paul is ordered to go to the Gentiles.

GOD'S CHILDREN MUST LEARN ELIJAH'S GOD STILL LIVES.

Psalm 37:7—Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

Psalm 37:9—For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.

Psalm 46:10—Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

Before God exalts, He humbles. God will exalt Elijah at Mt. Carmel. The Lord allows Cherith Brook experiences in our life because He wants us to realize that our usefulness to Him is not dependent upon our station in life or upon the honors of men. It is dependent upon our willingness to walk humbly before God at all times. This is what the Lord was endeavoring to teach Elijah and this is what He tries to teach us too.

Elijah would need patience for the waiting ahead. If we do not learn to wait upon the Lord, then we have a tendency to get ahead of Him. The result is disastrous. Saul found this out in his own life. His impatience with Samuel ruined him (1 Samuel 13:8-13). It ruined Abraham too. God uses Cherith Brook to get us alone with Him and dependent upon Him.

James 5 says Elijah was a man of like passions—a man just like us—and yet he prayed and the heavens were shut up. In other words, he was heard by God. James goes on to say that the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. The reason Elijah was so powerful in public was because he was prayerful in private.

When the brook began to dry up, Elijah found himself in an interesting situation. As he sat there, he saw the flow slow down. He saw the depth decrease and finally disappears altogether. But Elijah didn't panic.

Are you beside a drying, dying brook? Is there a relationship that is drying up? Are your finances drying up? Is your physical strength drying up? If you're wondering why the brook to which you thought the Lord led you is drying up, I want you to see these possible reasons...

When you're beside the drying brook, you might rejoice, knowing God is keeping you from getting ahead of Him, renewing you in your knowledge of Him, and reminding you that no one else can but Him. May God grant you understanding as you sit there and wait until you hear Him say, "Arise."

The lessons we need to apply to our life this New-Year 2017 is

The God that supplies every need

The God that answers prayer

The God that gives victory over all enemies.

Each generation faces the battle to live out their loyalty to the Lord Jesus.

Our greatest calling is to declare God's will faithfully and fearlessly to our times.

God not only works through us; he works in us to prepare us for his next great purpose.

Faith grows as we trust God's word and see his faithfulness to his promises.

The difficult places of life are God's training ground.