

Pastor Matt Davis, God the Reviver – 1

Kings 17:17-24

Introduction

¹⁷ And it came to pass after these things, *that* the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. ¹⁸ And she said unto Elijah, what have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? ¹⁹ And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. ²⁰ And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? ²¹ And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. ²² And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. ²³ And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son lives. ²⁴ 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.¹

Last week, we started our series “One God? Which One?” through the life and ministry of Elijah. A quick refresher for you, Elijah’s ministry takes place during the days of Israel’s king, Amos, and during the lifetime of Jezebel, who brought into the Northern Kingdom, Israel, the pagan gods Ba’al and Asherah. In last week’s message, in which we read the first half of chapter seventeen, Elijah is sent to a widowed woman in Zarephath, of Sidon. There he finds a woman too poor to take care of her family, let alone the addition of himself, but God miraculously provides for the family through the pot of flour and the vessel of oil which never run out. In this first account, we learn of a God who is the God of the outsider, we have discovered grace freely offered, and we have seen grace realized.

Today we shall pick up immediately where we left off. So, if you have your Bibles with you, open them up to 1 Kings 17:17. Elijah remains with the widow, living in her loft. The

¹ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., 1 Ki 17:17–24). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

widow, along with Elijah will be faced with another trial that will test their faith, continue to develop the nature of God, and foreshadow the way in which God intends to save His people. Let's read, beginning in verse seventeen, through the end, verse twenty-four. We shall notice in our reading six elements of this passage that detail God's workings.

Another Trial – Verse 17

And it came to pass after these things, *that* the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.²

It was just one verse ago that the family is said to be living off the unending flour and oil. Just one verse ago that God worked a mighty miracle and delivered them from famine and death (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.3)... The widow had just learned to trust in God and His provision. She had just seen that God is gracious, merciful, and loving. And here we are, we find that the young boy has grown sick unto death. Just how long has passed is not clear, it is not mentioned.

God does have a plan of which is unknown to both her and the prophet. God must deal with this woman and the son, that they come to know and believe in Him. For what good are the temporary blessings (the flour and the oil) if their souls shall perish? Dealing with, perhaps, her greatest trial, we are told in verse nineteen that the mother is sitting there with her child in her bosom, we can imagine as the widow attempts to nurse her young boy back to life. I like how Pastor James Smith puts it, he says:

“but the *natural* warmth even of a mother's heart is utterly unavailing to bring back to these vacant eyes the light of a living soul. No more can we, by the strength of natural affection, nurse back to life those of our loved ones who are dead in their sins.”

² *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., 1 Ki 17:17). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

³ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., 1 Ki 17:12). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Was it not Christ that said, “Without me, you can do nothing?” (John 15:5). So this women will learn that without God, life is futile. Without God, life is naught, it is condemned to death without the resurrection. The women shall learn, not only to trust God, but to know God.

With the loss of her son, the widow is heartbroken, but she is also confused.

Confusion – Verse 18

¹⁸ And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?⁴

More than what the widow says, there seems to be more underlying things being said. “What have I to do with thee?” It sounds like, “why did you interfere? We were content to eat our last meal and die together.” I can hear her thoughts, “Why did you give me false hope only to take my son from me?”

While we can hear this conversation taking place, and it likely had, I want to focus a quick moment on what was **not** said. Do you notice that at no point had the widow put blame on God? How easy it is, when things don’t go our way, that we quickly point our finger at God and curse Him. We quickly blame God, “this is your fault!” Oh, how I have noticed the so-called atheists, those who claim there is no God, are the first to blame God for everything that is wrong.

Notice also what is expressed – “Is my son dying for my sins?” It is the death of her son which reminded her of her sin life. The question, which has an answer that may seem obvious, is not abnormal. It was a common believe that children would be punished for the sins of the parent. We see such an occurrence of this belief with the blind man in John 9:2:

⁴ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., 1 Ki 17:18). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

“And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?⁵”

So for what cause was the blind man blind? For what cause was the young child without breath? The answer, in both are the same. Verse three in the same passage, Christ answers:

“Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.⁶”

The women, she says, “I don’t get it, why is he dead? Is it for my sins?” She is seeking an answer, one that Elijah could not provide. It appears (verse twenty) that he has the same question. The answer is quite plain in the passage. God desires to work through the situation that He may be made manifest and the women would believe.

There is much we should learn from this verse. For there are far too many preachers out there who would preach, “If you would only accept this message I have, you will never have a problem again.” “God will prosper you,” they say. “God will take all your trials away,” they say. “If you just have faith, you will never have pain again,” they would tell you. Such preaching is contrary to the gospel.

Humble faith, that is what God desires. Humble faith doesn’t demand everything goes your way, but it understands that God is in control even when things seem out of control. Humble faith seeks God’s direction, and is content living without all the answers. As another preacher had put it, being humble is recognizing that God will do things that contradict what we know and think, things we do not understand. And being faithful is continuing to follow God when we do not understand what He is doing.

I do not think you can have faith, without having humble faith. Faith without the humble is no faith at all. Sure, it works. You may prosper, you may have it easy, you may find

⁵ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Jn 9:1–2). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁶ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Jn 9:3). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

yourself wealthy, and sure, there are cases where that has happened. Faith, without humility, works, until it doesn't. It works when everything goes according to YOUR plan, but what happens to your faith when God does something you don't understand? It falls apart. So often, we find that those who fall from the church do so, not because they have had a change of heart, but they have never had true faith to begin with. They were told, that if they would have faith, if they would donate, if they, if they, if they.... And that is bound to fall apart.

Allow for me to issue you a challenge, you will be unsuccessful, but give it a try. I encourage you, scour the Bible. Look cover to cover, at every miracle recorded in all those pages. Now, here is the challenge – Find a single miracle that did not begin with a problem. You can not do it. Every miracle in the Bible begins with a problem that we cannot solve.

So often, we are willing to have “faith” or to “believe” as long as God conforms to our minds. So often, we are willing to obey God, only if we agree with what He says to do. I may be stepping away from the primary purpose of today's message a little, but too how many churches today cater to the people. They stop teaching sin, morality. Forbidden things become acceptable, the bad becomes good, all in the name of “inclusion” or “we must not offend.”

Let me tell you something, if God never does or says something outside of your understanding or that would offend you, you have probably never heard from God. You have heard a projection of what you think God should be. So here we are, and this woman is confused. She says, “why did you provide for me only to take my son away?” She seeks an answer, “was it my past sins? Are you come to call my sin to remembrance?”

Confronted with the glory and reminder of God, seeing His power worked everyday in the pot of flour and vessel of oil, she remembers her sin. We have seen the same thing happen with Peter, in Luke 5:8, when he was confronted with the glory of God on the boat:

“When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. ⁹⁷”

How much better it would be, to come to reality with your sin when there is yet an offer of help, then to come to reality after that offer has been rescinded.

Help/Grace Offered – Verses 19-20

¹⁹ And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. ²⁰ And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?⁸

In a act of compassion, Elijah asks the woman, “give me thy son.” One might wonder, “what would you do with the dead,” but as we have just discussed that God works in ways contrary to our logic, the man of God will always follow the lead of the Spirit.

It appears that, Elijah, too, does not understand, for he cried out unto God, and says, “O Lord my God, have you brought evil unto the widow with whom I stay by slaying her son?”

I have three items under this heading I would like to explore. They are what Elijah did not do, why God could use Elijah, and intercession.

What Elijah did not do

Though this may seem silly, I continue to point out what is not in the text, I do so that we may be aware of how we act in accordance with the Word of God. Notice carefully what Elijah does and does not. Though the woman, obviously distraught by the events insults

⁷ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Lk 5:8–9). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁸ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., 1 Ki 17:19–20). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

him, “What have I to do with thee?,” Elijah remains patient, compassionate, and loving. Elijah doesn’t complain nor argue back with the widow. Such traits are traits Christians ought to have.

Notice what else he does not do. The text makes it clear Elijah is not in on God’s workings. The text tells us that he too, like the woman, was confused by the boy’s sudden passing. But Elijah does not attempt to explain what he understands not to the woman.

Let there be wisdom in this passage, that it is ok to not understand what God is doing. Oh, how many churches, leaders and people have gone astray by the prideful man attempting to explain what he could not. Knowing now, what Elijah did not do, allow us to examine what he did do – He went to God for understanding.

As leaders, we want to give the impression that we know everything, but that is dangerous in what we may teach and instruct as a result. Perhaps, the best form of leadership is the example set, when we go to God for answers we do not have. As Christians, we too often get eager to win that debate, to convert people, that we become ashamed to admit to a question, “I don’t know,” and we do more damage than we do good.

Let us then, as the Bible instructs us in proverbs 3:5, Trust in God with all our hearts, and lean not on our own understandings.

How God Could Use Elijah

Allow for us to take one quick moment and discuss why God could use Elijah in the first place. If you would recall from last week’s discussion, Elijah has a history of experiencing God’s provision. We discussed last week God’s provision for Elijah at the brook, where Elijah could see the workings of God. When God dried up that brook and sent him to meet the widow, Elijah had seen God multiply the flour and the oil for, as the text would say, many days. It is possible, perhaps, this event takes place even a year later, (the next chapter the famine ends) and Elijah has experienced the provision for an extended period.

What I'm alluding to here, is Elijah's faith. God could use Elijah because he had come to know and trust in, God. How useful we can be if we would only trust in God. If we would develop our faith. How God could work through us and be glorified if we would allow Him.

Intercession

The last item I want to look at is intercession. James 5:16 tells us, "The effectual yfervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. 9" It is here that Elijah helps the woman. Often times, when prayer is all we can do, when it doesn't seem like much, we must remember that the effectual prayers of the righteous people availeth much.

It is, in fact, the way the prayers of the unsaved are heard. For we are told, God does not listen to the prayers of the wicked. When dealing with things of the spiritual nature, it often requires the prayers of the spiritually righteous person to work on behalf of the perishing person.

And while we are on the topic of intercession through prayer, let me make mention that prayer without faith, as faith without works, is dead.

Do not confuse what I am teaching with catholicism. I am not teaching that we can intercede on behalf of your sins, but that we can and should intercede through prayer. It was through prayer that Elijah petitioned God for the pagan womens child to be healed, and then, through the Spirit that Elijah, through God, raised the boy to life.

A Place of Blessing – Verse 19b, 21

and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.¹⁰

⁹ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Jas 5:16). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

¹⁰ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., 1 Ki 17:19). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

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I wanted to separate this portion of the verse and discuss it separately. He carried him to a loft (his room) and laid him upon his own bed. I want to discuss a couple things that we should find significant about these actions.

There is something intimate and personal about these actions. Laying him on his bed. Elijah does what perhaps we should all do. He goes in private, not as a publicity stunt, to secretly pray for the young man. He goes to his “war room,” which is what I call my personal place of prayer and study.

There is something intimate about the personal and private place of prayer, that becomes sort of the Holy of Holies. It is there that we directly access the throne room of God Almighty and petition Him of our requests. It is there that we listen and receive God’s instructions for our lives.

I would point out, how many of us claim to have faith of God’s ability to raise the dead, but we refuse yet to take the names of our loved ones who are already dead in the Spirit, and petition God to revive them?

²¹ And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child’s soul come into him again¹¹

In our last topic, we discussed the effectual and fervent prayers of the righteous, and now, allow us to examine the prayer of Elijah.

Laying upon the child, Elijah places himself in a position of vulnerability. It is almost as if he is absorbing the death out of the child. In this, Elijah mirrors the way in which the Lord Jesus Christ would save us, in being stretched out and absorbing sin and spiritual death on our behalf.

¹¹ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., 1 Ki 17:21). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

He then prays, and he cries over the child, “Lord, allow this child to live again.” And so it is seen, it was not Elijah that revived the young man, but it was God working through Elijah who restored him. It was the God, through the intercession of the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man. The text tells us next, of this miracle that God heard and responded to the voice of Elijah.

The Plea Heard – Verses 22-23

²² And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. ²³ And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.¹²

Elijah’s prayer is heard and in a great miracle, and perhaps, the most memorable event in this woman’s memory, is the first account in the Bible of a person raising from the dead. It is here, where the plea that is answered, that I desire to focus on our topic for this sermon series we have started.

In the series, called “One God? Which One?”, we are examining two questions frequently asked.

1. Is there one God or a plurality of gods?
2. If there is only one God, which God is the true one?

Last week we addressed this question with the God of the outsider. All other gods are gods of the insider. They reward those who have “earned it” or are deemed “worthy”. They reward those who can pay so much, have a specific genealogy, or have otherwise been designated as deserving. We discussed that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the God of the outsider who seeks after the outcast, the lowly, and the meek. If you missed last weeks message, especially if you are searching, I encourage you to go back and watch or read it.

¹² *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., 1 Ki 17:21–23). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

So this week, how does Elijah prove the existence of the one God, and show that the God we follow is that true one? He does so in the raising of this young man from the dead. In fact, it is in this that all other so called gods have failed. Of all the promises the false gods have made, they have yet to raise anyone, and they cannot raise anyone.

If you remember from our history lesson last week, these events take place in the backyard of Ba'al. In this chapter, chapter seventeen, we have now seen three events take place in which mock the false gods of Jezebel.

We have seen Elijah without the rain (verse one), which is a direct mockery of Ba'al, who was the god of rain. It is seen, through the next chapter, that it shall not rain unto the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through Elijah, allows for it to rain again. We will discuss this a little more next week.

Last week we have seen Elijah multiply the flour and the oil, a mockery of the plethora of so called gods who were found unable to provide for the widowed women.

And this week, we have found that the young man has been raised from the dead, something that no other has been able to accomplish. It is through these lessons that we have concluded, that there is but one God, and He can be identified as the God of the Bible.

A little while ago, we discussed that the woman who was confused, and yet was humble. Why? For what purpose have we seen these events? God, perhaps, as a bigger agenda for the women, as He has yet for us. This agenda is bigger than meeting felt needs, but is to meet our greatest need – That she, and we, come to know and trust God, the Lord of life.

God Realized – Verse 24

²⁴ 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.¹³

It was through the death, and raising to life again, that the women came to fully realize God. As has been a recurring theme in recent messages, God works best through us when we weak. I like best what JD Greear say's:

“If dependence is the objective, weakness is an advantage. So rejoice in your weaknesses, because in those are places you are made strong.”¹⁴

Shall we learn to depend on God, we must learn to be weak. It is for this reason the rich find it so hard to trust in God, for they don't feel the need for His providence. It is for this cause the proud and strong, those who rejoice in their strengths and talents fail to find God, because they fail to see Him in their strength.

Earlier, I issued you a challenge, to find a single miracle that did not begin with a problem. I then said you couldn't do it, because they all stem from a need. Let me be bold and state one more thing, the greater the problem, the greater God is glorified through the miracle. The greater your need, the greater God's power will show in your life.

Though the family enjoyed the blessings of temporary unending flour and oil, and the women and the son enjoyed the life of being temporarily raised from the dead, they enjoyed more, and shall enjoy through the eternities the greatest gift of coming to know God through the experience.

Summary

¹³ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., 1 Ki 17:24). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

¹⁴ Greear, J. D. (2017). Preparation for the Battle: 1 Kings 17:1–9. In *J. D. Greear Sermon Archive* (1 Ki 17:1–9). Durham, NC: The Summit Church.

Today's passage has shown us a family, who being ready to eat a final meal and die, was provided for another chance at life. After feeding a prophet of God and receiving a promise of provision through the famine, God then allows for the son to die, confusing the poor widow. "Why?", asks the widow, "would you save us just to kill my son?" Though many would have you believe that life as a Christian is stress free, it is the opposite that is known to be true. We move from trial to trial, infirmity to infirmity, developing our faith as God works in our weakness.

Though we may not understand why God does or allows for certain things to happen, we have seen what humble faith looks like. "I don't understand, God, what is happening. Please explain it to me, but even if you don't, I will follow you."

It is this humble faith that allows us to follow God when things go astray. Any other faith seems great when things are going well, and crumbles when the punches begin swinging. What God does and why He does it is confusing, and often times offensive to His people, but He allows it to happen to further a bigger agenda, that we would come to know Him; for apart from knowing Him, all other needs are temporal.

It is, as we have often discovered, through our weakness and deepest hours of need that we most readily and willingly see and come to know God.

It is through the resurrection of the young boy that God has once again shown that He alone is God. As we continue through the next few weeks, we shall continue to examine further these questions, How many Gods are there, and which God is the one true God.

Application

As the women, through her weakness and hour of need, came to know and trust God, we too, can come into a deeper relationship with God. We should examine our lives, and ask, where has God made me weak? It is where He has given us weakness that we can seek His glory and power. Let us rejoice not in our strengths and talents, but let us glorify God as He works miracles in our own lives.

And be sure, hours of trial shall come upon you, so let us rejoice when they come, that the world may see our God at work. Paul writes in Philippians 3:10, "10 That I may know

him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 15”, and so, when we are made weak, we may allow God to show His greatness. Paul teaches in the context of the passage that he would gladly walk in the fellowship of His sufferings, that he would know the glory of His resurrection.

Today's message shows us, not only is our God the one true God, but that He saves through death. Think about that – God saved us, not through financial gain, nor of glory, nor of popularity. But God came down in the flesh of a babe, and lived to die, that we might live again.

As Elijah stretched out upon the boy, Christ died, stretched out upon the cross. Before you think God needs the strong, God saved the world through the death of an innocent man dying in weakness.

And so, when things go astray, think not that God has cursed you, but rather, than resurrection, of a sense, is around the corner. When Christ died, God used the weakness to display power in the resurrection from the grave. In fact, without the cross, without Christ willing to die in weakness, there would be no mercy and grace.

Invitation

Some of you, like this woman, may be being invited of God to get to know Him. You have questions, and as all, even some doubts. But what you need is faith, and just enough to accept Jesus as who He is and allow Him to work in you the rest.

If you are ready to take this first step of faith and trusting in Christ, I invite you today to do that. If you would say, “but my questions aren’t all answered,” I would ask of you, if your willing to take the first step with Jesus. If you are willing to allow Him to guide you step by step, miracle by miracle, question to answer. Not all questions will be answered in this life, but you can grow to learn that He is God indeed, and that He cares for you.

¹⁵ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Php 3:10). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

If you are ready to do this, it begins with the admission that Jesus is Lord, God in the flesh. That He came to live a sinless life, to die, being made sin for you, that He would rise giving victory over sin and death. With believing that Jesus can save you from your sins, and that you can overcome to the power and glory of God working through your weaknesses. And confessing that you are a sinner, you cannot save yourself, and you need to mercy and grace of God to pull you from the open gates of hell.

If you are ready to allow your weaknesses to become your greatest strength, if you are ready to allow God to work miracles in and through your life, if you are ready to be called His, allow me to help you with that today.

Christ tells us first, that God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever would believe in Him would not perish, but have everlasting life. He tells us later on, that whosoever would confess Him before men, He would confess before the Father above.

Are you ready to confess Jesus as your Lord?

Paul says that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you would be saved.

If you are ready to Admit, Believe, and Confess, then please begin with me today, by repeating after me the first portion of our closing prayer. After that, be ready to walk in faith, allow God to use your weakness. Be ready to make Him Lord over your life and to confess Him before your fellow men.

Prayer