

## “Walking by Faith: The Confidence of Elijah”

The Reflection Year Series

### Scripture:

1 Kings 17:1-7 (NIV)

Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe<sup>[a]</sup> in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.”<sup>2</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: <sup>3</sup>“Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. <sup>4</sup>You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there.”

<sup>5</sup>So he did what the LORD had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. <sup>6</sup>The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

<sup>7</sup>Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land.

**Subject Question:** What three humble but resolute decisions does the writer of 1 Kings teach us concerning the Prophet Elijah that allowed Him to walk confidently in His relationship with God?

**Compliment answer:** Elijah made a decision to listen **FOR** God, Elijah made a decision to listen **TO** God, and Elijah made a decision to be led **BY** God.

**Big Idea:** The three humble but resolute decisions that the writer of 1 Kings teaches us concerning the prophet Elijah that allowed Him to walk confidently in His walk with God are: Elijah made a decision to listen **FOR** God, Elijah made a decision to listen **TO** God, and Elijah made a decision to be led **BY** God.

**Homiletical Idea:** “Confidence is an Inside Job”

**Purpose:** I want the congregation to discern and consider if they are willing to make the three humble but resolute decisions that can help them develop the kind of confidence in God that Elijah possessed.

**Introduction:** Elijah the Prophets life was a whirlwind of activity—figuratively and literally. In our text today Elijah is confronting the evil King Ahab and His dubious darling of a queen, Jezebel. NO, rain, NO water, NO precious precipitation until you change and I see it... were Elijah’s words of judgement from God as a result of Ahab’s incessant and defiant ways as he ruled over the Northern Kingdom of Judah. Next? Better exit stage left—better get out of

Dodge for a while as Ahab, Jezebel, and the rest of the people begin to experience the reality of God's judgment. But what made Elijah bold enough to be a spokesperson for God to begin with? We get a few clues today as we peer deeply into the heart and soul of the Prophet and consider the three decisions that He made, over and over, when it came to walking in obedience and confidence with the God that he spoke for and walked with. The decisions themselves serve as a spiritual template for you and me as modern day Christians who are also called upon to be spokespeople for the living God.

(Feeling Confident about your confidence?)

**Groundwork:**      **Question: "What can we learn from the life of Elijah?"**

**Answer:** The prophet Elijah is one of the most interesting and colorful people in the Bible, and God used him during an important time in Israel's history to oppose a wicked king and bring revival to the land. Elijah's ministry marked the beginning of the end of Baal worship in Israel. Elijah's life was filled with turmoil. At times he was bold and decisive, and at other times fearful and tentative. He alternately demonstrates victory and defeat, followed by recovery. Elijah knew both the power of God and the depths of depression.

Elijah, a prophet of God whose name means "my God is the Lord," came from Tishbeh in Gilead, but nothing is known of his family or birth. We first meet Elijah in 1 Kings 17:1 when he suddenly appears to challenge Ahab, an evil king who ruled the Northern Kingdom from 874 to 853 BC. Elijah prophesies a drought to come upon the whole land as consequence for Ahab's evil (1 Kings 17:1-7). Warned by God, Elijah hides near the brook of Cherith where he is fed by ravens. As the drought and famine in the land deepen, Elijah meets with a widow in a neighboring country, and, through her obedience to Elijah's request, God provides food enough for Elijah, the woman, and her son. Miraculously, the widow's barrel of flour and jar of oil never run out (1 Kings 17:8-16). The lesson for the believer is that, if we walk in fellowship with the Lord and obey Him, we will be open to His will. And when we are in God's will, He fulfills all of our needs, and His mercy to us never runs short.

We next see Elijah as the central character in a face-off with the prophets of the false god Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:17-40). The prophets of Baal call upon their god all day long to rain fire from heaven to no avail. Then Elijah

builds an altar of stones, digs a ditch around it, puts the sacrifice on the top of wood and calls for water to be poured over his sacrifice three times. Elijah calls upon God, and God sends fire down from heaven, burns the sacrifice, the wood, and the stones and licks up the water in the ditch. God proved He was more powerful than false gods. It was then that Elijah and the people kill all of the false prophets of Baal. Such supernatural evidences of God's power are not seen today. However, we have access to the same power as God's Word works through us and demonstrates the power of His Spirit in our lives (2 Corinthians 4:7). Elijah is an illustration that it is not the vessel but God in the vessel that demonstrates power.

After the great victory over the false prophets, rain once again falls on the land (1 Kings 18:41-46). However, in spite of victory and provisions from the LORD that he receives, Elijah enters a period of wavering faith and depression (1 Kings 19:1-18). Hearing that Ahab's wife Jezebel has made a vow to kill him, Elijah feels sorry for himself, hides in a cave, and even comes to believe that he alone was left of the prophets of God. He got his eyes off of God and onto the details. It is then that the LORD instructs Elijah to stand on the mountain as the LORD passed by. There is a great wind, an earthquake, and then fire, but God is not in any of those. Then comes a still, small voice in which Elijah hears God and understands Him. When Elijah stopped focusing on the fear of what men could do and his feelings of being alone, God's voice was heard, and Elijah went on to be taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:1-11).

As was true for Elijah, when we focus on the noise and the tumult of life in this world, we can get our eyes off of the LORD. However, if we listen for His still, small voice and walk in obedience to His Word, we find victory and reward. Each person in the Bible has a lesson for us to learn and can aid our walk as believers. Elijah struggled with typical human frailties, yet he was used mightily of God.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/life-Elijah.html>

### **Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary**

17:1-7 God wonderfully suits men to the work he designs them for. The times were fit for an Elijah; an Elijah was fit for them. The Spirit of the Lord knows how to fit men for the occasions. Elijah let Ahab know that God was displeased with the idolaters, and would chastise them by the want of rain, which it was not in the power of the gods they served to bestow. Elijah was commanded to

hide himself. If Providence calls us to solitude and retirement, it becomes us to go: when we cannot be useful, we must be patient; and when we cannot work for God, we must sit still quietly for him. The ravens were appointed to bring him meat, and did so. Let those who have but from hand to mouth, learn to live upon Providence, and trust it for the bread of the day, in the day. God could have sent angels to minister to him; but he chose to show that he can serve his own purposes by the meanest creatures, as effectually as by the mightiest. Elijah seems to have continued thus above a year. The natural supply of water, which came by common providence, failed; but the miraculous supply of food, made sure to him by promise, failed not. If the heavens fail, the earth fails of course; such are all our creature-comforts: we lose them when we most need them, like brooks in summer. But there is a river which makes glad the city of God, that never runs dry, a well of water that springs up to eternal life. Lord, give us that living water!

### **MacLaren's Expositions**

The worst times need the best men. The reign of Ahab brought a great outburst of Baal worship, imported by his Phoenician wife, which threatened to sweep away every trace of the worship of Jehovah. The feeble king was absolutely ruled by the strong willed Jezebel, and everything seemed rushing down to ruin. One man arrests the downward movement, and with no weapon but his word, and no support but his own dauntless courage, which was the child of his faith, works a revolution in Israel. 'Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than' Elijah the Tishbite. Bugged, stern, solitary, he has no commission to reveal new truth. He is not a 'prophet,' like later ones whose words were revelation.

Little is preserved of his sayings. His task was to reform and restore, not to advance; and his endowments of 'spirit and power' corresponded to his work. The striking peculiarities of this heroic figure will appear as we go on with his history. For the present, we have to consider the three points of this narrative.

**I. The Prophet and the King.**-The startling suddenness of Elijah's leap into the arena, where he appears without preface or explanation, helps the impression of extraordinary force which his whole career makes. He crashes into the midst of Ahab's court like a thunderbolt. What did Jezebel think of this wild man from the other side of Jordan, with his long hair and his loose mantle, who thus fronted Ahab and her? Nothing is told us of his descent; it is even questionable whether the reading which calls him 'the Tishbite' is correct. We only know that

he was of Gilead, and therefore used to a ruder, freer, simpler life than that in kings' palaces.

The natural conclusion from the narrative is that the prophet and the king had never met before; and, if so, the stern brevity of the threat is even more remarkable. In any case, the absence of explanation of reasons for the drought, or of credentials of Elijah, or of offers of mercy on condition of repentance, give a peculiarly grim aspect to the message, and make it a dangerous one to carry to such a hearer as Ahab, stirred up by Jezebel. When God commands us to speak, no thought of peril must make us dumb. If the 'word of the Lord' is to sound from our lips with power, it must first have absolute sway over ourselves. One man with God at his back, who fears nothing, can work marvels.

God's servant is men's master. The vision of God's Presence paled the splendour, and blunted the perils, of the court of Samaria. Ahab was but a poor puppet in the sight of eyes that 'saw the Lord sitting on His throne, high and lifted up.' So the very first words of Elijah lay bare the secret spring of his fiery energy and courage. 'Before whom I stand,'-that is the thought to put nerve, daring, and disregard of earth into a man.

James's comment on this incident assumes that the declaration to Ahab followed earnest prayer that it might not rain, and that the 'word' which should end the drought was also prayer. The truest lover of his country or of any men may sometimes have to wish for losses and sorrows. Elijah did not open and shut the heavens, but his prayer had power to move the Hand that 'openeth and no man shutteth.'

**II. The Prophet and the Ravens.**-One would like to know how Elijah made his escape from Ahab; but the whole story is marked by sudden appearances and disappearances. He flashes into sight and flames for a moment, and then is swallowed up in the dark again. The exact position of the brook Cherith is doubtful. It would seem most natural to look for it across Jordan, as safer and more familiar ground to Elijah than any of the tributaries on the western side. At all events, somewhere among the savage rocks in some wady with a trickle of water down it, and rank vegetation that would help to hide him, he lurked for an indefinite period, alone with God.

Why did he flee? Not only for safety, but that the period of the drought might be prolonged till it had done its work, and that the prophet might learn more lessons for his calling. Good Obadiah would have made a place for the chief of

the prophets in his caves; but the man who is to do work like Elijah's must live in solitude. Cherith was part of the training for Carmel. The flight thither was as much an act of obedient faith as was the appearance before the king. However the necessity of flight was impressed on the prophet, it *was* impressed on him as manifestly not his own plan, but God's command; and though the journey was a weary one, and the appointed place of refuge inhospitable, the command was unhesitatingly obeyed. He was not left to wonder how he was to be fed when he got there, but God gave him, what He seldom gives—a previous assurance of miraculous provision, which obviously met some unspoken thought. We do not usually know how we are to be fed in the solitude till we get there; but if our doubting hearts object, 'But, Lord, there is nothing at Cherith but a brook and some ravens,' He sometimes gives us assurance that these will be enough. Whether or no, the duty is the same,—to follow God's voice, whether it take us face to face with Ahab and Jezebel or into the wild gorge.

Note that the same words are employed about the ravens and the widow: 'I have commanded the . . . to feed thee.' God has ways of reaching the mysterious animal instinct and the mysterious human will, and each, in its own way, obeys. It is needless to try to pare down the miracle by saying that, of course, ravens would haunt the water-courses in drought, and that the food which they brought might be for their young, and so on. The daily regularity of the supply takes it out of the natural category, to say nothing of the remarkable breed which the ravens must have been of, if they brought their young ones' food within reach and let the prophet take it.

People take offence at the abundance of miracles in the lives of Elijah and Elisha, and assert that some of them, this among the rest, are for unworthily trivial occasions. But the grave crisis in Israel is to be taken into account, which involved the necessity for unusual manifestations of divine power, and very evident credentials for the prophets; and the preparation of Elijah for his tremendous struggle was, even to our eyes, surely an adequate end for miracle. How could he doubt that God had sent him and would care for him, with such memories as those of his winged purveyors? How could he doubt future words which should come to him, when he recalled how marvellously this one had been fulfilled? The silence of the ravine, the long days and nights of solitude, the punctual arrival of his food, would all tend to weld his faith into yet more close-knit strength. If we may so say, it was worth God's while to

work miracles, to make Elijah. The highest end of creation is the production of God-fearing men. All things serve the soul that serves God.

(Feeling Confident about your confidence?)

- A. Elijah made a decision to listen **FOR** God. (Vs.1-4) *Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe<sup>[a]</sup> in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word."*<sup>2</sup> *Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah:<sup>3</sup> "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. <sup>4</sup>You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there."*
- B. <sup>2</sup> *Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah:<sup>3</sup>* We start off our story considering Elijah. Believe it or not, at this time, Elijah was not a famous prophet... not a hardline political foe that represented a majority in the house, which King Ahab, much less Jezebel, had to fear. He was a nobody, an obscure figure of anonymity... someone who seemingly had such a manner and message that you either had to listen or just laugh... But with Elijah we see although he was just an ordinary guy... he was also a person who at some time in his life felt the pull of God on His heart; beckoning him to come, sit, listen, learn and enjoy... , who seemingly developed some sort of relationship with that God and subsequently ended up speaking for... that Deity.
- C. The real lesson for us today as modern day Christians is the overwhelming reality that God still beckons you and me, through the message of His Son's sacrifice on our behalf to come, sit, listen learn, and enjoy... enjoy the fact that the God of the universe sees something in you that he likes... enjoy the fact that God offers you His friendship, His favor, his presence... his love. But as well to listen; develop an ear and a heart that wants and longs to hear from God... Learn; to be doers of what God teaches... sit; make the time and make the priority to spend time listening and learning...
- D. When we , like Elijah respond to that initial pull beckoning us and begin to develop a relationship that is rightfully and generously offered to us, we too cannot help but become enamored, thrilled , in awe that in time we too will begin to long for , crave for and look forward to a word from the God whom we serve and the Father that we have grown to admire and love. Our beginning lesson this morning, isn't so much that Elijah made a decision to listen **FOR** God, that is obvious, as are we left to consider the same invitation, the same kind of life that is built upon

“listening” for that still small voice, to be ever inclined in our hearts, deciding, if you will, to incline our inner ears, to be ever attuned and ready, ever dependent upon and desperate for that gentle whisper of the Holy... How can we begin to develop an ear? We first have to decide that this is what we truly want and desire. Next, we practice the following:

### 1) **Seven Keys to Hearing God's Voice**

Craig von Buseck

So how can we know whether we're hearing the voice of God? The Bible gives us seven basic keys or filters through which every possible leading should be judged. We are to carefully examine the thoughts and intentions of our hearts -- and the words of godly people who may have influence on us by their words and actions -- through the use of these seven keys:

1. **Scripture:** "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17).
2. **The Holy Spirit speaking to our heart:** "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother, saying, 'know the Lord,' for all will know Me, from the least to the greatest of them" (Hebrews 8:10-11).
3. **The Prophetic (word of knowledge, word of wisdom, personal prophecy):** "Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good" (I Thessalonians 5:19-21).
4. **Godly counsel:** "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14).
5. **Confirmation:** "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed" (Matthew 18:16).
6. **The peace of God:** "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful" (Colossians 3:15).
7. **Circumstances/Timing:** "After these things he (Paul) left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus,

having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers" (Acts 18:1-3 -- this relationship between Paul, Aquila and Priscilla -- which happened as a result of circumstances -- became one of the most important strategic partnerships in the book of Acts).

Many times the Lord will confirm His direction to us through three, four or more of these keys -- especially when we are in the process of making an important, life-changing decision. But it all begins with an Elijah like decision to listen FOR God.

(Feeling Confident about your confidence?)  
Elijah made a decision to listen **FOR** God.

- A. Elijah made a decision to listen **TO** God. (Vs.5-6) *<sup>5</sup>So he did what the LORD had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. <sup>6</sup>The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.*
- B. There are three lessons we can glean at this point in our story, and they are just as relevant, just as pertinent, just as precious today as they were back then:
1. Listening TO God is paramount if we are to know the protection of God. (Because Elijah not only listened for, but then listened to, God said, get outta here... and Elijah.. got outta there! He didn't take time to pray or call for a special meeting... he didn't ponder and weigh the good and the bad... God said jump and he jumped)
  2. Listening TO God is preeminent if we are to experience the provisions from God. (Even though God had been specific in his instruction where to go, the word about being fed by the ravens must have made Elijah kind of say... "what? This must be a metaphor..." "OK, I'll go, I'll jump, but if birds starts feeding me.. then pigs fly..." The point being that where God leads, God provides... we may be in doubt as to how... but know this; God always provides... at times in miraculous ways , at times in the most unexpected ways, and sometimes in completely unusual ways... the bottom line is that if you and I will not

only listen for, but listen to, if we do our part, then we can be assured that God will do his...

3. Listening TO God is powerful in proving our own special place and position of privilege with God. O the security in knowing that we belong to Christ and Christ has promised that he would never leave nor forsake us! O the wonder of it all, God is my provider and my banker... the one who owns the cattle on a thousand hills... the one who will not withhold good from His children... O the glory that it is. O bless the Lord o my soul and all that is in me...for through it all and despite it all--I am His, and He is mine! What greater treasure can I seek, more what greater knowledge can I find in this life?
- C. Back to our story... And the birds came and the pigs... I guess also flew by...! And Elijah's confidence in God... grew... pretty confident.
- D. A Second important less here concerning listening TO God: At times in all our lives as His cherished, chosen, children, there will come a time of His testing us, putting us through the fire, pushing us out of our comfort zones... to do what... build our character? Perhaps, but not necessarily. It's more about God asking; "will you trust me, will you listen, will you do... even though you may not understand?" "Even my Son had to endure 40 days in the wilderness... He made it, I was with Him and so can you... I'll be with you in the midst of your storms... I'll be there in the shadows..."

(Feeling Confident about your confidence?)

Elijah made a decision to listen **FOR** God.

Elijah made a decision to listen **TO** God

- A. Elijah made a decision to be led **BY** God. *Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land.*
- B. And, Elijah needed once again to sit, learn, listen for and listen to God. And we know the rest of the story, how Elijah made His way from the dry Creek to the widows house at Zarephath, and she had one last serving of meal in her jar and Elijah had his supper and the woman and her son? Well from that day forward, they had a bottomless supply, the jar that never again ran out... for a lifetime... and so on and so forth...

- C. The point being in our story, that at times when it seems like God is removing his blessing from us, and we start to panic and wonder if we've done something to upset Him, did something that cut us off from His grace and His care... yet, the reality is that at times, God simply is getting us ready to take another step of faith with Him, to be another blessing from Him.
- D. God needed to bless another person... and so He sent Elijah. God needed to draw another family into His care... so he sent our Prophet. God knew He could count on Elijah and He could. I wonder this morning, is there another person God may be sending you to... another family that needs to be drawn into His care...? Can God... count on you?

Elijah made a decision to listen **FOR** God.  
Elijah made a decision to listen **TO** God  
Elijah made a decision to be led **BY** God  
Will we...?