
Perfected in the Word Ministry

“Undernourished By The River: Sustained By The Brook”

Spirit of Truth Cathedral

Sunday Worship

October 15, 2017



Preliminary Remarks:

Saints and children of the body of Christ, I come to you this afternoon to inspire you with a message to build your faith in God and to encourage your commitment to the work of God! The message for today's church is entitled: “**Undernourished By The River: Sustained By The Brook!**”

Text:

Jeremiah 17:7,8 [King James Version]

⁷ Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

⁸ **For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.**

Psalms 1:3 [King James Version]

³ **And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.**

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Introduction:

On the night of Sunday, September 3, 2017 I had a dream, where I was preaching to an unknown congregation. I was awakened with a press to write this message down for further dissemination to the body of Christ.

Picture This: So much water flowing through a tree's root system by the rushing waters of the river that the tree eventually dies of over-nourishment. That is, there are so much nutrients flowing in abundance within the river system at such a great pace that the tiny root system of the fledgling tree simply cannot obtain enough nutrients for its own growth and development. In contrast, there is an interconnected stream that has a much slower flow rate and smaller capacity, which will yield a greater abundance of nutrients for the root system of this same tree, had it only allowed itself to be planted in this portion of vineyard.

Some folk seek fame and fortune in a "bigger is better" mindset, which is only a construct of our own vision of grandeur, formulated from what we see on the big screen and our own selfish desires and even jealous perspectives of what our life could be if we were in the shoes of some otherwise prominent individual.

But what about God and His purpose for ministry in you, and the simple stream or brook that He desires for you to either serve or be served? Do you believe that He already knows how nutrient-rich the brook would be for your spiritual development versus the underdeveloped spiritual life you would endure while simply existing in a malnourished presence in the theater of the river?

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Metaphor of the River and Tree:

A **metaphor** is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them. So, in relation to this afternoon's text, the **tree** represents both the individual **congregants** as well as the **pastor**; and the **river** represents the **church building** and **ministry**.

For comparison's sake: a **river** is a large natural flow of water that crosses an area of land and goes into an ocean, a lake, etcetera; a large flow of something. A **brook** is a small stream. And a **stream** is a natural flow of water that is smaller than a river: and is also described as a continuous flow of people or things; a body of running water (as a river or brook) flowing on the earth; a constantly renewed or steady supply; a prevailing attitude or group (ex., has always run against the stream of current fashion).

Undernourished refers to the state of not getting enough food or not getting enough healthy food for good health and growth – supplied with less than the minimum amount of the foods essential for sound health and growth – poorly supplied with vital elements or qualities. A synonym, **malnourished**, also relates to the state of not eating enough food or not eating enough healthy food; poorly nourished.

Saints, let me break it down for you! Some preachers desire fame and fortune. They seek the pathways that begin and end in a “**river**” or “**sea of members**” ... they have aspirations to pastor from the walls of a mega-church, but not from the confines of a storefront. Other preachers look to serve wherever the Lord directs their paths: on the street corner, in a storefront, in their own home, in a rented hotel room, or in some otherwise small or nondescript neighborhood building ... just because of their zeal to propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ!

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Ezekiel 47:12 [King James Version]

And by the **river upon the bank** thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all **trees** for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth **new fruit** according to his months, because their **waters** they issued **out of the sanctuary**: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

Being spiritually overwhelmed by the overflow of the river banks can be likened to the devastation of Hurricane Harvey in a desolate and barren place!

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Elijah and the Brook Cherith:

Saints of God, many of us are most familiar with the story of *Elijah and the Widow at Zarephath*; but I ask that you follow with me as I unpack the first half of the passage found in **1Kings 17:1-9**, which concerns *Elijah and the Brook Cherith* ...

1Kings 17:1-9 [King James Version]

And **Elijah** the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, **said unto Ahab**, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, 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 him bread and flesh in the morning**, and **bread and flesh in the evening**; and **he drank of the brook**. And it came to pass after a while, that **the brook dried up**, because there had been no rain in the land. And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, **get thee to Zarephath**, which belongeth to **Zidon**, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a **widow woman** there to **sustain thee**.

The Lord told Elijah to “Leave Gilead, and turn eastward, and hide by the **brook Cherith!**” **Cherith** (transliteration: Kēriyth ~ ker·ēth') a brook of Palestine, which means “cutting” –a derivative of the Hebrew word **karath** (kā·rath): to cut, cut off, cut down, **cut off a body part** (as in cut off from the body of the river, resulting in a branch of the river or a brook), cut out, eliminate, kill, **cut a covenant** (reach an agreement).

Before Elijah could **stand on Mount Carmel**, he needed to **sit by the brook**. Before the more mature faith and ability to handle the Mount Carmels of life, there must be the maturing experiences of the **Cherith brooks of life** and the widow of Zarephath. These are the testings of life that purify and build as they teach us to trust in the Lord and stay occupied with. [J. Hampton Keathley III, Th.M., *Testings by the Brook (Part 2)*, Biblical Studies Foundation]

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In this lesson, we turn to three tests Elijah experienced by the brook. The test of **God's promise and supply** ❶, the test of **obedience** ❷, and the test of **the dried up brook** ❸.

Test #1: God promised to supply Elijah's needs while **by the brook.** How gracious of the Lord! It is a wonderful truth to know that He never sends us anywhere to do anything without His presence and provision.

Philippians 4:19 [King James Version]

But my **God shall supply all your need** according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

God chose to supply Elijah's needs through a **brook**, not a river, or a lake, or an artesian well. It was a **brook** that would dry up very soon and Elijah knew that. Why is God's **provision** sometimes just barely enough? And why does God's **supply** sometimes dry up? The Lord sent Elijah to a **brook** He knew would dry up! [J. Hampton Keathley III, Th.M.]

God does this to remind us of a number of spiritual lessons:

Luke 12:15 [King James Version] ~ **True Joy and the Significance of Life!**

And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Psalms 37:16 [King James Version] ~ **Prosperity should not Define You!**

A little that a righteous man [owns] is better than the riches of many wicked.

Proverbs 15:17 [Good News Translation] ~ **A Little Love is Better than a Lot of Hate!**

Better to eat vegetables with people you love than to eat the finest meat where there is hate.

Proverbs 16:8 [Good News Translation] ~ **Wealth without Righteousness is not God's Plan!**

Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.

1 Timothy 6:6 [Good News Translation] ~ **Godliness with Contentment!**

But godliness with contentment is great gain.

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Test #2: Elijah's obedience tested while **by the brook**.

1Kings 17:4-6 [King James Version]

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 him bread and flesh in the morning**, and **bread and flesh in the evening**; and **he drank of the brook**.

Elijah went and did according to the will of the Lord: as the scripture states that he went and lived by the **brook Cherith** – *the brook of life ... the brook of covenant!* He moved – not according to how he felt or what he thought, or what others might think or want, but according to the direction of the Lord. Elijah exhibited immediate **obedience** ... without arguments, without questions. Once he reasoned for sure what God wanted, in simple trust, he simply obeyed.

Was this simply pharisaic **obedience**? No! Elijah **obeyed** because he knew and trusted in his God – the God who is: omniscient (all knowing), omnipresent (present in all places at all times) omnipotent (having complete and unlimited power), omni-loving, omni-faithful, omni-merciful, omni-true, and omni-good. He believed that the Lord's will is always perfect and designed for the highest good with ramifications extending into eternity. He knew the Lord was *building his faith*, his *character*, and *preparing him* for things to come. His **obedience** was a work of **faith**.

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What would you or I have been doing? Would we have been conducting a little argument with the Lord out of our great data bank of information? It might go something like this: “Now wait just a minute Lord. Across the Jordan is out of the land of promise. And ravens? My goodness, they are unclean birds according to your own Word. Furthermore, I’m a prophet and you called me to preach. If you send me over there, you will be wasting my gifts. The nation needs me. This just doesn’t make sense!”

Are you perplexed about certain things in your life? Then ask yourself: “What is the Lord seeking to teach me?” Ask yourself: “How is the Lord wanting to use this in my life or in someone else’s life?” Ask yourself: “Is God trying to change some of my values and priorities, or reveal some of my false sources of trust?” [J. Hampton Keathley III, Th.M.]

Test #3: Elijah’s test of the dried-up brook.

1Kings 17:7-9 [King James Version]

And it came to pass after a while, that **the brook dried up**, because there had been no rain in the land. And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, **get thee to Zarephath**, which belongeth to **Zidon**, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a **widow woman** there to **sustain thee**.

Saints, do you remember the reason for the **dried-up brook**? It was because “there was no rain in the land.” But why was there no rain in the land? Because Elijah had prayed for no rain [verse 1]. There was no rain for a period of **three years and six months**, resulting in a prolonged famine in the land. God was simply answering Elijah’s prayer: a prayer, however, designed to bring the people to their knees so they would turn back to the Lord.

Luke 4:24-26 [King James Version]

And he said, Verily I say unto you, **No prophet is accepted in his own country**. But I tell you of a truth, **many widows** were in Israel in the days of Elias, when **the heaven was shut up three years and six months**, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a **widow**.

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When we pray for revival in our nation or for the restoration of others, it means God may have to **bring about suffering** to get their attention to turn them away from their independence, rebellion, and self-sufficiency. This also means **we may have to suffer** in the process. Are we willing? Are our values and our concern for the glory of God, for justice in society, and for the salvation of people such that we are **willing to suffer** in the aftermath of God's dealings with the nation or others to see them turn to the Lord? This really challenges our faith and the **level of our commitment** to the will of God. [J. Hampton Keathley III, Th.M.]

Likewise, God left the prophet by the **brook** until it was *dry as a bone*. Then, having worked in the heart of the prophet, He came to him in his need and sent him to his **next place of provision** ... to the home of the *Widow at Zarephath*. **Zarephath** (transliteration: Tsarēphath ~ tsä·ref·ath) a city on the coast south of Sidon, which means "**refinery**" – a derivative of the Hebrew word **tsaraph** (tsä·raf') : **to smelt, refine, test**; to test (and prove true); smelter, refiner, goldsmith; **to be refined**. **Zidon** or Sidon (transliteration: Tsiydown ~ tsē·dōn') an ancient Phoenician city, which means "**hunting**" in the sense of catching fish; fishery – a derivative of the Hebrew word **tsuwd** (tsüd) : **to hunt**, hunt eagerly or keenly; **take provision**: to lie alongside (i.e. in wait); by implication, **to catch an animal** (figuratively, men).

Zarephath was a place not only for the prophet's growth, but also a place of ministry to the widow and her son. God is developing our faith in Him that He might use us in the lives of others and them in our lives as well.

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I have a prophetic word to Pastor James A. Parson, Jr.: “Not only does God want to *hone your skills* as a true *fisher of men* [And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. ~ Matthew 4:19] through the *fiery test in the furnace of affliction*; [Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. ~ Isaiah 48:10] but through the path of the **brook Cherith** (figuratively **Spirit of Truth**), He desires to use you as an *instrument* to bring about a *miraculous healing* and *deliverance* in both ministry and person to the proverbial *Widow at Zarephath* ... embodied through the saintly life of our dear mother (Apostle Shirley V. Parson)! You’ve come too far now to quit! Don’t let your adversary, the devil (in whatever earthly form he has chosen), steal your reward!

I have a prophetic word to the church, embodied in the words of a song by the female R&B group TLC; entitled: *Waterfalls*. Through the profound lyrics of the vamp proceeds this prophesy: “*Don't go chasing waterfalls!* Please stick to the *rivers* and the *lakes* that you’re used to. I know that you’re gonna have it your way or nothing at all, But I think you’re moving too fast!” “**Undernourished By The River: Sustained By The Brook!**”

Altar Call: “**Order My Steps**” [Performed by: The Mighty Clouds of Joy]

Benediction: May “*the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, [e]stablish, strengthen, [and] settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*” [1Peter 5:10]

