

On the Job Training

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Preacher: Pastor Steve Hersey

- [0 : 0 0] chapter 17. Again, 1 Kings 17. We're still talking about Elijah and things that he did. Things that happened in his life we can learn from. 1 Kings 17. Beginning at verse 17.
- So, 1 Kings 17, 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. 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?
- And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, carried him up into a loft where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.
- 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? And he stretched himself on 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.
- [1 : 1 8] And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. 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. And the woman said unto 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.
- That's our word of prayer, and then we'll continue on talking about the things that happened here. Dear Heavenly Father, I pray that you would be with us tonight, Lord. Help us to understand just how great you are, and how much you love us, and how much you would take care of us.
- Lord, help us to see from the life of Elijah, as we've already been seeing. He was an ordinary person, just like us.
- But you used him mightily because he trusted in you, and he followed you. Lord, help us to trust you in everything that happens in our life. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So Elijah is getting some on-the-job training.
- [2 : 2 6] You notice we've talked the last few weeks. He has been at the brook Cherith, where he was fed by ravens, and he had water to drink from the brook.
- God is taking care of his fleshly needs. What he needs for food, what he needs for sustenance, God is providing for him. Then he goes to Zarephath, and God is using a widow to supply his needs.
- He's learning to deal with pride. He's relying on a widow to take care of him. That was not how things usually worked out. But God had her ready to take care of the things that were going on in his life.
- And now he's there, and this boy is going to pass. And sometimes we look at things that happen in our life, and we're wondering, what is going on?
- Why are these things happening in our life? And God isn't necessarily correcting Elijah for things he's done. He's perfecting Elijah and the things that he's doing in his life.

[3 : 38] He's helping him to learn. He's helping him to grow. He's helping to get prepared for other things that are going to come along. Don't forget, sooner or later, we're going to get to Elijah up on the top of the mountain with the prophets of Baal.

And he's going to be ready for them. He's going to be ready for what God has for him to do. Because he has learned to trust God in every situation. See, the disciples were out, and storms came up.

And they learned about Jesus walking on the water and how he could take care of them. We go through valleys in our life. One of the names for God in the Bible is the lily of the valley. Everywhere we go, everything we do, he is there with us.

He's ready to help us if we will just trust him. Excuse me. The prophet's about to face another trial here. This boy is going to pass away.

What does he do with this situation? Well, he's going to get some more on-the-job training. First of all, look at Elijah's test. Elijah's test.

[4 : 47] What happens when you go out and you're trying to do God's work, and the first thing that happens in this case is a dead body? A dead body.

What do you do with a dead body? You think about this for a second. Elijah went to Zarephath because God told him to.

And he goes there because God said, look, there is a widow woman there who is going to meet your needs. She's going to take care of you. She's going to supply everything that you need. Okay, I will do that.

So he gets there. He finds the widow woman. He finds that she has a son. And here's God. The meal in the barrel. The oil in the crews.

They just keep resupplying every day. And God is taking care of meeting their needs, keeping them alive. People, other people in the area, they're running out of stuff. And they're dying because of starvation.

[5 : 42] And these three, God is meeting their need every day. And then all of a sudden the boy dies. God, what's going on?

Why did this happen? It seems like such a contradiction to everything else that you've been doing. Remember in Isaiah, Isaiah 55, 8 and 9, where it says, For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. God says, look, there are times when the things that I am doing don't make sense to you.

But trust me. Trust me to do what is right in every situation. He does things that's totally contrary to what we think should happen.

Totally contrary in the most unusual ways. And we're like, God. And he says, trust me. He says, I've got something for you.

[6 : 49] I've got something for you to learn. I've got something for you to see. I've got something for you to know about me. Trust me. You know, regardless of what the problem is or the trial or anything like that, as I always say, looking unto Jesus, keep your eyes there on him.

Psalms 37, 5. Commit thy way unto the Lord. Trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. Psalm 37, 5. So he has a dead body that he's got to figure out, what is God doing here?

Why is he doing it? Not only does he have a dead body, he has a distraught parent. Obviously. The lady's upset. Obviously.

You know, she's got one son that we know of. Everything that we read, one son. And she was probably penning all of her future. Her husband's dead. She's a widow. She's probably penning all of her future on the fact that this son is going to grow up, and he's going to take care of her in her old age.

He's going to be there to feed her. She's feeding him now. He's going to be there to feed her later in life. He's going to take care of her. And now he has passed away. What does she do now?

[8 : 03] Her dreams are shattered. She's devastated. She's upset. She's discouraged. See, when the drought came, she knew that was coming.

Look back at verse 9 of chapter 17. We've looked at that numerous times. But, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there.

Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. Remember we talked about that? I have commanded. Before Elijah arrived, she knew what was going to happen.

Before Elijah arrived, she knew that there was going to be a drought. She knew that she was going to have to feed him. God had already set it up. But she didn't know, verse 17, that her son was going to pass away.

She did not know that. And what is her reaction when that happens? Verse 18.

[9 : 02] 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?

She blames two things for the death of her son. Elijah. And her sin. She says, all of this is happening because you came and you're here and you've reminded me of my sin.

And you've reminded God of my sin. And you've done all these different things. She's blaming all these things. But you know what? It had nothing to do with her.

It had to do with God and what he was trying to teach them. Have you ever been in a place in your life when everything just seemed to go to pot?

Everything is falling apart. Everything is going wrong. Everything seems to be crumbling around you. And you remember how you felt? It's a difficult place to be, isn't it? But he says, look, remember what God has done.

[10 : 09] When you go through the Bible, think of how many times people faced many difficult things and God was working in their behalf. Job.

If you read Job 1 and 2, you don't have to turn there, but if you read Job 1 and 2, Job lost everything he had. Everything. But God was teaching him something.

Abraham. In Genesis 22. Abraham, I want you to go up and do a sacrifice. Up on top of the mountain, I want you to take Isaac with you and I want you to sacrifice him.

Whoa, wait a minute, God. You want me to sacrifice my son? What did God teach him? I like the way Randy put it, Sunday morning at Sunday school.

God prepared himself a lamb. We always take that to mean, well, God had a lamb ready, and he did, but he also pointed out that God prepared himself a lamb.

[11 : 13] He prepared himself to be the lamb that was going to take away the sins of the world. Joseph. Joseph. Sold by his brothers into slavery. Winds up in Potiphar's house.

Winds up in prison. Then winds up second in command. God had a purpose in the things that were taking place in Joseph's life. It did not seem good, but he had a purpose in what was going on there.

The disciples, they learned about Jesus walking on the water in the midst of the storm. Paul, he learned about the fact that God can take care of you even when things aren't going your way.

When you're going through trials and all kinds of things, God says, you trust me. Put your faith in me. Why does he do these things?

So we learn to trust. We learn to take him at his word. We learn to follow him. Let me give you three illustrations.

[12 : 14] I want to, they're going to sound like weird illustrations, but let me give you three of them. I'll tell you why. I'm giving you these three. Most people around here have never seen a wild buzzer. You have to go other parts of the country to see a wild buzzer.

But if you take a wild buzzer and you catch him and you put him in an open pen, you have the fence around it, no top, and you put him in there, a pen, six foot by six foot, that buzzer will die.

Why would he die in a six foot by six foot place with no cover over it? Because he needs at least 12 feet to use as a runway to take off.

You might learn somewhere along the way he could jump up, but usually they don't. They need 12 feet and they can't do it. How about a bat? You put a bat on the ground, and some of you have probably done this when you've caught a bat.

You put a bat on the ground, they're just going to flop around until they die. Why? Because they need to take off from up above.

[13 : 24] They need the air to drop into before they can fly. They need to have space where it's an elevated position where they can kind of drop into the air and then go. They can't launch from the ground.

Take a bumblebee. Bumblebees, those are easy, right? If you take a bumblebee and you put it in a tumbler, leave the cover off, just put it in the tumbler, he will have trouble.

He will probably die as well because he's used to going from flower to flower to flower, and so he's looking through the tumbler and he's seeing flowers, but he can't get there. He keeps bouncing off the glass.

Now, what's my point? All three of those things, there was no cover, but they couldn't seem to manage to get out of the situation they're in.

A lot of times, we are in situations in our life and we forget to look up. God is going to take care of us.

[14 : 31] God is watching out for us. Do we trust him? Looking unto Jesus. Where is he? Up. So we need to be able to concentrate on the fact that I need to put my faith there.

Whatever's going on down here, doesn't matter. The people down here, I need to be able to look up at what's going on. See, this widow thought that she was going through a storm of correction and God was punishing her and God was hurting her.

Instead, she was going through a storm of perfection. God was helping her. He was trying to teach her. He was trying to show her that she could trust him in all situations.

Number letter C, a discouraged prophet. A discouraged prophet. What kind of effect did this have on Elijah seeing all these things happen?

He's trusted God to feed him. He's trusted God to take care of him. He had the ravens bringing the food. He had the lady bringing the food. He had all these different things. And now this child has died.

[15 : 37] He has trusted God. He'd seen miracles that God has done. And now he's like, why did this happen? Why are we going through this thing? Even to the point where the lady is accusing him.

It's your fault. These things are happening. You know, we're never more vulnerable in our Christian life than when we are discouraged.

You're going through discouragement. At times, the devil has a heyday when you're going through discouragement. I have been there. There's things that happen and I just, God, why?

Why is this happening? Why is that happening? Why are these things? Elijah had done everything God had told him to do. He had crossed all the T's, dotted all the I's. He'd done everything he was supposed to do. And he's like, God, why would you allow this to happen?

See, when we lose faith and hope, we become discouraged and we're easily defeated. Be so very careful about becoming discouraged. Trust God in what he has done for you.

[16 : 41] Let me give you another illustration. A couple of weeks ago, I told you about a pastor who was discouraged because only one little boy had been saved in a year.

That one little boy turned out to be Robert Moffitt who was a great missionary of the Lord. Kind of a similar situation. Most of you have probably heard of W.A. Criswell. He was the pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas for a number of years.

He preached all kinds of sermons. He wrote all kinds of books. Untold numbers of people came to know Christ because of Criswell's ministry. In his biography, the guy that wrote it tells an interesting story about the man who led Criswell to the Lord.

When Criswell was 10 years old, a man by the name of the Reverend John Hicks came to his small Texas town to conduct revival meetings. Hicks stayed in Criswell's home during the two weeks.

Criswell got out of school one day to go to the meetings. They were having meetings in the morning at 10 o'clock as well as at night. So he went to the 10 o'clock meeting, sat behind his mother, and followed along the meeting.

[18 : 03] At the end of the meeting, Criswell went forward to give his life to Jesus Christ. Years later, Criswell was talking about this.

You know, he's a well-known pastor, done lots of things, and he's recounting how he got saved to a friend of his by the name of Wallace Bassett. Wallace Bassett heard the story, and he said to W.A. Criswell, he said, will you repeat that?

So Criswell told him the story again. He said, Bassett said, I can't imagine that. He said, Johnny Hicks was one of my best friends. He said, he was a very dear friend of mine.

I went to see him at the hospital. He was at Baylor Hospital. His last illness that was going to take his life, he was going to die. He said, I went to see him, and one day, I was sitting there beside him, and he said, Wallace, my life is over.

My preaching days are done. I've never, excuse me, I've never done anything for Jesus. I failed, Wallace. I failed. And those were the last words he said before he passed away.

[19 : 15] I failed. And yet, here's Criswell, who was led to the Lord by him, out there doing fantastic things for the Lord.

What's the lesson? Never discount what the Lord is doing through you in your life. You may not see hundreds of people saved. You may not see, you know, some great miracle things taking place.

But you live for the Lord, and you watch him work as you talk to other people one by one. I was talking about this the other day with the guy at jail.

And I said, you know, when you leave here, you're going to go out. And I don't know what God's going to do through you. You follow him, you keep trusting him, you keep growing, you keep learning, he's going to use you.

Never forget that God is using you, even if you may not think that he is. Know that there's some great things that can happen because of any effort you put forth for the Lord Jesus Christ.

[20 : 28] Don't get discouraged. Make sure you keep your eyes on him. All right. Prayer request.

