

# God's Goodness In Times of Trouble

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning. I'm greeting you with the sure promise of God's word that the Lord is good. He is a refuge in times of trouble, and he cares for those who trust in him.

I'm here at the Grace Fellowship Church building on Saturday morning, and as I look out at all these empty seats, what's missing is you, and I miss you.

But I can almost see you because of your regular pattern of where you sit, and so there are the bars and the hearts and the Reynolds and the hauses, and over here are the crims, and there are the roadies in the back.

It's always kind of hard to know where Roger and Carol will end up as they seem to float around in different seats. But we are thankful to be able to come to you in this way.

And Brother Jim, I think I heard your amen to Nahum 1-7 all the way from Napanee. I wanted to give you an update on Maya. Friday afternoon, we took her to the Goshen emergency room, and while there she coded, and they lost a heartbeat and had to give her chest suppressions and did get a heartbeat going again, and then they needed to send her to Riley.

[ 1 : 27 ] Along the way, they had to reintubate her. And so she's at Riley now. She's on the floor, the COVID-19 floor, where you either have it or you're suspected.

You haven't been cleared yet. And so Maya has pneumonia. She has the RSV, and she has a rhinovirus, and she potentially has the coronavirus.

So she has 24 hours to wait until they would know if she has it or not, and if not, they'll move her out of that floor or that wing and put her in a different place.

So she's poor and needy, and so we thank you for your prayers and just ask you to continue them for her and for Julie, who's with her.

Tom can't be in the room, can't be in the hospital there at this time. He is in Indianapolis, though, with his brother. So we're glad to be resuming our weekly ministry of God's Word to you now over the Internet, and I invite you to open your Bibles with me to 1 Kings chapter 17.

[ 2 : 42 ] My plan was to continue our study on the goodness of God. This wasn't a text that I had in mind, but coming to this text in my own personal reading of Scripture on Monday, it was such a blessing to me that I thought it might be to you as well in the times that we're in.

And then upon further reflection, as the further I went, the more I saw that this is really about the goodness of God. It's an illustration of that goodness in the life of one of his children.

And so before we turn to God's Word, let's pray together. Our great God in heaven, we humble ourselves before you.

It is our place to bow in your presence, to acknowledge that you are God and we are not, that we are the work of your hands, your creatures, and we are needy, and you are rich and full of grace for us.

So we do humble ourselves before you today. We have been humbled as a nation, as a world, by your providence in one way, but we pray that we would humble ourselves, we would humble our hearts before you, and recognize who it is we're dealing with, even behind this virus.

[ 4 : 08 ] We thank you that you are God Most High, the God who fulfills your purposes for us. And as being Most High, there is none higher. You rule and reign over all, and that for the good of your people.

So we call upon you. We call upon you for our nation, for its leaders, for the world, for those who are being brought to death's door, some without Christ and without hope in this world.

We pray it would be a time of salvation. We pray for those that are your people, that you would keep them even in the valley of the shadow of death. We sense our need of you in new ways, that as we are facing new trials, we need new grace.

And as we come to your word, it is our delight to find that you knew of this virus before you created the world.

You ordained for this in our lives, in our times. And you put in your scriptures, in your 66 books, the very things that we need to know at such times, so that through the endurance and encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

[ 5 : 22 ] So help us now as we turn to your word. Give us faith to embrace it, to believe it, to trust you, to obey you, and to honor you.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. I've got you in 1 Kings chapter 17.

I'm going to begin reading in chapter 16 in verse 29, where we are introduced to the next king of Israel. In the 38th year of Asa, king of Judah, Ahab, son of Omri, became king of Israel.

And he reigned in Samaria over Israel 22 years. Ahab, son of Omri, did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him.

He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians.

[ 6 : 26 ] And began to serve Baal and worship him. He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him.

In Ahab's time, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son, Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son, Segub, in accordance with the word of the Lord, spoken by Joshua, son of Nun.

And now verse 1 of chapter 17. Now Elijah, the Tishbite from Tishbe 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.

Now, here in our text, 1 Kings 17, 1 through 16, we're going to see four points. We're going to see a problem and then we're going to see God's provision.

And then we're going to see a new problem and then God's new provision. So first of all, a problem. Verse 1, the problem is the announcement of no rain, not even so much as a drop of dew.

[ 7 : 56 ] Not for a week or a month or a year, but for a few years, he says. As it turned out, it was three and a half years. No dew or rain for that long of a period would cause a severe famine, a scarcity of food.

Now, the land of Israel that God gave them was a fruitful land, a land of milk and honey. But it depended upon the early and the latter rains to produce a good crop.

To receive neither rains, none was certain to bring starving famine to the land. Now, I've been young and now I'm old and I've never had to live through a starving famine.

But we have seen the corona panic empty the grocery shelves just two weeks into it. And can you imagine the desperate panic and fear to be two to three years into a famine with no rain and people dying all around for lack of food.

And what made the problem worse was the cause of this drought and famine. This would not be some mysterious climate change that no one really understood. No, Yahweh, the Lord, the covenant Lord of Israel, was angry at Israel for their sins.

[ 9 : 20 ] We're told that King Ahab did more evil than any of those before him, even treating Jeroboam's great sins as trivial things. And Ahab had married Jezebel, a foreign Baal worshiper, and had become one himself.

Had built altars and temples to him and even put up Asherah poles. And then he taught the nation to follow his ways as 850 prophets were supported by Jezebel to fill the land with their lies.

And so God's anger was provoked. You see, God had entered into a relationship with Israel. I will be your God and you will be my people, but you must walk according to my ways.

And that covenant had both blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. And he had warned Israel often, even as they were coming into the promised land, Deuteronomy 11, 16 and 17. Be careful or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. And then the Lord's anger will burn against you and he will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce and you will soon perish from the good land that the Lord is giving you.

[ 10 : 45 ] Though they were warned, Israel and her king didn't have time for God's dusty old book, the Bible, the word from heaven. They didn't care what God had said.

No, things were going well. Crops were flourishing. Baal, the rain god, was being thanked for sending the rain and Asherah, the fertility goddess, was also being thanked for all the prosperity upon their land.

And then suddenly, almost out of nowhere, a rugged man named Elijah is standing before King Ahab with a word from the king of kings.

Elijah is a prophet. That means that God spoke directly to him. He was the mouthpiece for God to take God's word to him and to give it to the people.

And that means that Elijah's word was the Lord's word. And the covenant Lord has now come to enforce his covenant with the curses that he had threatened.

[ 11 : 53 ] 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. And remember, Elijah's word is God's word.

But there was something else going on here. God was shaming Israel's new gods, Israel's new idols. And he's doing this for the sake of his own name.

God is the one who had sent the rain, not Baal. God gives prosperity, not Asherah. And he will not share his glory with another. So you trust in Baal, do you, to send the rain while I'm announcing that I'm shutting off the rain spigot and your Baal won't be able to turn it on.

I'm drying up the fertility of your land and no Asherah will be able to make it fertile. So God is judging the very idols that Israel was putting their trust in.

And look for that element in any judgment that God brings upon the earth. Even today, he is shaming the idols that men trust in.

[ 13 : 07 ] And isn't it a blessing for us to find out now while there is still time that the things we trust in are not sufficient to meet our greatest needs?

That we might then put our ultimate hope in the living God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is our help, our true help. So if Israel will not obey him, the rain clouds would, Baal notwithstanding.

So that's the problem that meets us at verse 1 of chapter 17. The threat of no rain and hence, no food. And it's a problem not only for Ahab and Jezebel and for the 850 prophets, but it's a problem for the whole nation, including Elijah, including the other hundred faithful prophets, and including the 700 righteous people who had never bowed their knee to Baal or kissed his image.

And this is often the reality that when God ordains his judgments to fall, they fall upon the righteous and the wicked alike. It wasn't that the rain just avoided the wicked fields and fell on the fields of the righteous.

No rain in the land. And this is certainly the situation with the coronavirus pandemic. God's people are being made to suffer right alongside with the rest of the nation.

[ 14 : 44 ] Righteous and unrighteous together. And God has purposes for both the righteous and for the unrighteous. Dozens of purposes that he's pursuing.

Most that we don't even understand. But certainly there is the opportunity as we suffer as it were shoulder to shoulder with the world that they might see in us the living hope that we have in Christ. He's exposing idols that are being put in his place. He's testing our faith. James says, consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.

Surely this coronavirus fits into that category. A trial of many kinds. And why consider it pure joy? Because the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

Trials are tests of our faith. That's one big thing that's happening right now. God is trying our faith. He's testing our faith.

[ 15 : 48 ] Is it real? Or is it false? Is it strong? Is it weak? And we'll see Elijah's faith being tested. Can God keep his servant alive in famine? So that's the problem.

And it's reached Elijah. But so did God's provision. And that's our second point. Verses 2-6. Let me read verses 2-4.

Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah. Leave here. Turn eastward and hide in the Kareth ravine east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there.

So the problem for Elijah is multiplied. There's not only the danger of starvation but there is the danger of assassination. As we find out that the drought as it continued stirred up Ahab and Jezebel's hatred and they hunted down the Lord's prophets to kill them and especially would want Elijah that troubler of Israel whom they thought was causing this drought.

So God directs Elijah to a hiding place in the wilderness away from society. This was social distancing with a vengeance. No one around.

[ 17 : 05 ] And there God had a brook a brook to satisfy his thirst and room service to satisfy his hunger for I have commanded the ravens to feed you there. Now that's a test of faith for Elijah isn't it?

A brook bringing water is ordinary enough but ravens bringing food. Really? No, I don't have ravens at my house or at my feeders but I went online and read this about ravens.

They are those big black birds that are about the same size and in the same family as the crow. They're not picky eaters. They eat plants, grain, rodents, reptiles, insects, garbage, dead fish and rotting animals.

And ravens are listed in the Bible then as unclean birds that were forbidden to be eaten by Israelites. They're intelligent birds on the order of the dolphin.

Tricky in the way they hide their food. May go to several places before they actually leave their stash in one place. And then I read they're shy birds that avoid close interaction with people and I had to say to myself unless of course the Lord has commanded them to feed his prophet.

[ 18 : 30 ] So the word of the Lord promised to feed Elijah by ordinary and extraordinary means. Would he trust and obey? Verses 5 and 6 tell us so he did what the Lord had told him.

He went to the Kareth ravine east of the Jordan and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening and he drank from the brook.

So Elijah did what he was told to do and God did what he said he'd do. We don't know where the ravens got the bread or what kind of meat it was.

He just ate it whatever was put before him without asking any questions. And God cares for his own. That's what we see here and can provide for our needs in times of trouble.

He's not limited to only working in the same usual way that he provides food for you now through your present occupation or whatever those sources of income are for you.

[ 19 : 34 ] What is more unlikely than using unclean ravens as a catering service for Elijah? Evidently God speaks the language of the raven.

At least the ravens know the voice of the creator and do his will. That's God's providence isn't it as we've seen ruling over all his creatures in all their actions.

And we notice that he didn't send an elephant to bring a two years supply of food to Elijah did he? But he sends ravens with only one meal at a time which means that Elijah had to trust God one meal at a time to trust God for his daily bread just as our savior teaches us to do when we pray give us this day our daily bread.

He had to trust God that these intelligent birds would come back tomorrow and wouldn't get fed up with him taking their food. And like the Israelites in the desert who were given manna one day at a time he had to learn to trust God for his bread.

Can we do the same in our time of trial our faith is being tested. Now I spoke of Elijah's social distancing half jokingly but that could be a real trial to Elijah especially to a man of action like Elijah as we see him in the next chapter on Mount Carmel challenging the 400 or the 850 false prophets and challenging the king and Jezebel and the unbelieving Israelites in a showdown to prove who really is God but now here's this man of action and he's hidden away in isolation with only birds for visitors a real trial of faith one that maybe you are or will be feeling more keenly in a couple of weeks it's interesting that Matthew Henry comments on this very thing he says if providence calls us to solitude and retirement it becomes us it's fitting for us to acquiesce when we cannot be useful we must be patient and when we cannot work for God we must sit still quietly for him sometimes the hardest thing to do is to do nothing to sit still to wait quietly for the

[ 22 : 13 ] Lord to be still and know that he is God we want to be up and doing and he says no just sit still and wait on me and know that you're here by my appointment and know that there is more than one way to serve me so that when providence has sidelined us and we sit alone by a brook waiting on the goodness he is just as pleased then as he is when we're out and about serving him so don't chafe against his yoke commune with God pray Elijah did James says Elijah was a man of like passions as we are and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain and it did not rain upon the earth for three and a half years some well-meaning Christians have said that we shouldn't pray for things that God has promised us nobody told

Elijah that nobody told David that nobody told the apostle Paul that or Isaiah that or the Lord Jesus that they do just the opposite promises are meant to be pleaded in prayer they teach us what to pray for so Elijah announces God's word no rain or dew and then he goes away and prays like

crazy that it might not rain he prayed earnestly!

that it might not rain and after three and a half years when God told him it's going to rain what does Elijah do he goes and he prays earnestly seven times with his face on the ground sending his servant to see if there's a cloud yet praying that it might rain and the heavens did give rain and the earth produced its crops are you praying more under your time of lockdown you might have to step out of the house to get alone with God but let us be praying and seeking God's face and praying the promises that he's made to us the problem and now secondly we've just seen God's provision for the problem thirdly we find a new problem verse seven says sometime later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land oh so the word of the

Lord did come true there was no rain just as he had said now this brook was not supplied by some artesian well or some steady source it was supplied by runoff from the rains but without rain it was only a matter of time until the brook ran dry I saw this sort of thing when I was in Arizona recently and took a two lane highway from Mesa down to Tucson right through the desert and very often along the way you go over these bridges and they called them washes and you look and you could tell water had been there there were rocks there like a bottom of a brook would look like but there was no water and when I inquired about it I was told that there is only water there for Elijah was sent to sit by and to be supplied by and that's the brook that began to dry up now how does how does a brook dry up it's not all at once full stage and then empty the next but little by little little less water today than yesterday so

I want you to see Elijah sitting there beside a drying brook remember he's a man of like passions as we are he's not superman so what's he thinking what's he feeling well he can see what's coming it's clear God's provision for his need is drying up before his eyes and yet he's right where the word of the Lord had sent him so what now Lord what's going to happen next where do you want me to go now look there's even less water today and aren't we like that we fear what's coming we see signs that are ominous and we wonder how's he going to provide and maybe some of you are sitting there beside that drying brook right now drying up cupboards and maybe not everything that you want is available perhaps it could get worse your health or the health of loved ones fears of not all medicines and equipment being available or the drying brook of your job situation your means of income the way

[ 27 : 40 ] God has provided for you all these years and wondering is your job going to be there after all of this is over is your business your plant going to survive all of this some of you wondering about your schooling plans how is going to be affected your wedding plans vacation plans drying up or the drying up of the stock market this was your retirement this was your life savings you were going to live on this and it's shrinking it's drying up before your eyes what now Lord what next and we want all the information up front want to know now the whole picture how will God provide but there was no answer God said nothing to Elijah as the brook got drier and drier no new directions no new provision of God revealed in fact Elijah will not hear from heaven until the brook goes completely dry

God waits until then before giving his servant further light and he does this quite intentionally he does it on purpose because remember these trials are a test of faith and to know it all ahead of time would take away the need for faith as Luther said it's the glory of faith not to know just to trust God's naked word so God had said to Abraham leave your homeland and go to a place I will show you and I would be saying well just tell me where Lord give me the directions up front where am I going and God says no you go and I'll show you the land I'll tell you when to turn when you need to know there's light sometimes just for the next step where we just do the next thing and we see no further even though he didn't know where he was going the

Lord Jesus is in a deserted place with a multitude of people in John chapter 6 and he asked Philip where should we buy bread for all these people and John in his gospel inserts he asked this only to test him for he already had in mind what he was going to do and we're often in that position God knows what's next he knows what he's going to do how he's going to provide for Elijah for you for me but he doesn't reveal it it's a test it's a test not to know he's not without a plan he just hasn't shown us that plan and he does it to test our faith will you trust him in the dark will you trust him when his way is not known and not yet clear when all you have is his his naked promise let him who walks in the dark who has no light trust in the name of the

Lord his God and rely on his God Isaiah 50 we love to sing that hymn number 79 by John Newton though troubles assail us and dangers a fright though friends should all fail us and foes all unite yet

one thing secures us whatever be tied the promise assures us the Lord will provide and it's easy to sing that when we're all together and the brook is full and water is running the cupboard stock the job is secure the business is booming the markets are up but can we sing it when troubles assail us and dangers a fright can we sing it by faith in the midst of the storm in isolation beside a drying brook can we sing of our faithful God when we can't see how he will work how he will provide he deserves a song in the night from his people let's honor him with our trust this is often God's way with his people he waits until the last minute to show his hand that he might test our faith and in the! So this is the new problem a drying brook God's provision drying up and that brings us to our last point God's new provision the very first word of verse 8 is then then the word of the Lord came to him when after the brook went dry he's always on time just when we need him he's there just when we need fresh light it comes and when one means of providing is gone he opens another he has more than one way to provide for our needs his resources are unlimited the earth the whole earth is the Lord's and the fullness therein everything in it is at his disposal so then the word of the [ 32 : 51 ] Lord came to him go at once to Zarephath and Sidon and stay there I've commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food so he who commanded the ravens to feed him now has commanded a widow to feed him we might think seeing God feed him by ravens would be all the evidence he would need to trust God for this next step but this was perhaps as great a trial of faith for Elijah as the ravens or perhaps even greater because he's being sent 80 miles to the northwest this is going to take him outside of Israel into pagan territory where Baal is worshipped and where none other than Jezebel's daddy is king the king of Sidon chapter 16 verse 31 what kindness can he expect to receive there they would hate him if they knew who he was and what he had said about rain and there being no rain accepted his word what kind of provisions can he expect from a widow no less widows in those days were the most desperate and needy of all people right alongside of an orphan there were not the opportunities for jobs and other means of support as there are in our day for widows and so to be expected to be fed by a foreign widow from Sidon was an unlikely source indeed and would be a test of faith for

Elijah even as the promise to be fed by ravens besides I don't even know her name how will I know which widow in Zarephath Elijah doesn't need answers to all those questions he has he just needs to take God at his word and go and that's what he does verse 10 so he went to Zarephath and when he came to the town gate a widow was there gathering sticks how's that for providence Elijah's traveled 80 miles and just as he arrives at the gate it so happens that she arrives at the gate he's coming to meet a widow and she's trying to find some sticks and there they meet and he called to her and asked would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink and as she's going to get it he called and bring me please a piece of bread how's that for testing the hospitality of a stranger and the request for bread stops her in her tracks she turns and says to Elijah in verse 12 as surely she takes an oath as surely as the Lord your God lives

I don't have any bread only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug and I'm gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son that we might eat it and die and die Elijah has no more reason to expect good from her than from the ravens other than the fact that God had sent him to her this widow is not only poor she's dirt poor she's down to her last supper and die of starvation poor this is less than promising if we were Elijah we might start looking for a different widow at this point this one can't can't be her she has nothing to supply food for me oh but it is the one it's the very one that God will use to provide for Elijah the one that God had commanded to feed him verse 13 says Elijah said to her don't be afraid go home and do as you've said but first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me and then make something for yourself and your son the guts of the guy he's not speaking though here of his own person private person but he stands as the representative of God don't be afraid don't be afraid you want me to divide my handful not it's in two but into three parts now and give one to you but Elijah doesn't stop there he goes on to give her the word of the Lord which makes all the difference don't be afraid verse 14 for this is what the Lord

Yahweh the God of Israel says the jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the Lord gives rain on the land yes that's right the Lord Yahweh gives rain not bail not your supposed rain God Yahweh is Lord over all and I come in his name announcing his word and this is why you need not fear to give a portion to me before yourself this is a real test of faith for the widow now isn't it will she trust the word of God of Israel with her last meal and the answer is yes remember God had commanded her whatever that meant he would come and somehow equip her

and work in her heart so that she would do what God wanted her to do to feed the prophet he worked in her what he commanded and so verse 8 15 says she went away and did as Elijah had told her and Elijah had reason to say of her what the

Lord Jesus would say of that Gentile centurion I tell you I have not found such faith even in all Israel she staked everything on the truthfulness of the word of the God of Israel and in trusting and obeying she found that the word of the Lord is indeed true and so will you and so will I verses 15 and 16 conclude our section so there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family for the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah she received a prophet because he was a prophet and so she receives a prophet's reward her little food that she had was made to last not by hoarding it to herself but by sharing it with God's prophet as God had commanded her fear hoards faith frees us to give we're told stimulus checks are on their way do you know someone who may need that money more than yourself will fear tighten your grip or release it and loosen it our faith is being tested in many ways in this very trial that we're living through and this passage teaches us that the

[ 40 : 03 ] Lord's word is the firm foundation for our faith how firm a foundation you saints of the Lord is laid for your faith in his excellent word what more can he say than to you he has said to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled this then is the major theme this is the the lesson that's being pounded home to us in our passage that God's word can be trusted the last two verses of chapter 16 prepare us for this lesson indeed I perhaps that's where chapter 17 should have started we have this this unusual statement about something that happened during Ahab's reign and we might wonder why is it inserted here we read that in Ahab's time Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho he laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son of Iram and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub in accordance with the word sorry I lost my place in accordance with the word of the Lord spoken by Joshua son of none you see it was the Lord's word that came to pass it was spoken 500 years before Israel had long ignored and forgotten

God's word but God did not forget to keep his word 500 years later Hiel loses his youngest and his oldest because God's word never fails forever oh Lord your word is established in heaven the grass withers the flowers fall but the word of our God stands forever what I have said that I will do so here's Israel in the time of Elijah Israel has turned their back and ignored and forgotten God's word but God will not forget his promises he will keep his word and that's the lesson then that that hits us in chapter 17 it all starts with the word of the Lord through Elijah no rain and it all happened according to the word of the Lord and again God said that he would feed Elijah by ravens and a brook and it happened just as he said and again that he would feed him by a Gentile widow in Sidon and it happened just as God said it would and that there would be flour and oil that wouldn't run dry until it rained and our passage ends in verse 16 and it all happened in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah well let's not miss the goodness of God in this passage his goodness first of all to give us his sure word to trust in in uncertain and trying times a word that never fails a rock to stand on so that our faith may not fail us in the trial but actually be strengthened in the trial to the honor of God and a witness to those who have no hope in this world because they do not have our God in

Christ blessing to be given the word of God and and secondly the goodness of God in providing for his own in trouble providing a hiding place where in bail land where Jezebel's father rules peace and providing food and famine psalm 33 18 and 19 the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him whose hope is in his unfailing love to deliver them from death and to keep them alive in famine his promise assures us the Lord will provide let's honor him by taking him at his word and resting on his promise he has more than one way to meet your needs and then his goodness think of his goodness in providing for this Gentile widow all the flour and oil that she needed proving that Israel's God is the one who both sends and stops the rain not bail and he's the one who can provide food and famine and bread without rain not a barrel of oil not 250 pound bags of flour but each day as it was needed just like he did for

Elijah his servant but oh there's a far greater goodness here and it's that and a goodness to this Gentile woman that in her darkest trial in her greatest need she's introduced to the true and living God and she comes to acknowledge and to trust him and so to be saved from from bail worship and the lies of idols that cannot do us good I believe we'll meet her in heaven one day we can ask her about these things what a kindness what a goodness and then the goodness of God is seen in sending his greater prophet to teach us the will of God and to save us from our sins Elijah was the

greatest prophet since since Moses but God promised through Moses to send a greater prophet than

Moses himself and he would send that prophet with Jehovah's word and and you must listen to everything he tells you because anyone who doesn't listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people he speaks the very words of God this great prophet that's to come and Peter in Acts chapter three tells us tells the Jews in the temple that this greater prophet has come he's Jesus Christ he's God's son whom you killed but God raised from the dead and when God raised him up he sent him first to you you people of Israel to bless you by turning each one of you from your wicked ways so how did Israel respond when God sent his son to bless them with salvation well we're told in Luke chapter four Jesus comes to his hometown in Capernaum and he's preaching in the synagogue he reads a passage from Isaiah and all the people were hanging on his word and were speaking well of him until until he said something that made them so furious that they took him out and tried to push him off the cliff to kill him now what in the world did he say mid sermon that that would stir up such anger and turn a crowd from hanging on his word with interest to wanting him dead well it was something about a widow from Zarephath listen to what Luke tells us the

[ 47 : 11 ] Lord Jesus said I tell you the truth no prophet is accepted in his hometown Jesus sensed that he was not being accepted there I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land yet Elijah was not sent to any of them but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon those were the killing words for which they wanted to push him off the cliff and though he escaped and walked right through their midst those would be the words that would catch up with him that God is not going to save anyone who can trace their bloodline through Abraham but only those who trust in his word who receive his his greater prophet who who cast themselves in humble repentance and faith in him Elijah was sent to a Gentile widow as a judgment upon the unbelieving Jews of his own day they had turned their backs on God's word and God says okay if you reject my word I will send my prophet to a widow in Zarephath instead of an Israelite widow and these folks in Capernaum got the point and they didn't like it they were rejecting that word

Paul and Barnabas would find the same response to God's word in Israel a few years later Paul said we had to speak the word of God to you first but since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life we now turn to the Gentiles for this is what the Lord commanded us I've made you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth and when the Gentiles heard this they were glad and honored the word of the Lord and all who were appointed for eternal life believed and the word of the Lord spread through the whole region how good is God to include Gentiles as his people yes all who believe his word and trust in his Savior even this widow from Zarephath even us Gentile sinners who for refuge have fled to the Lord Jesus Christ so the word of the Lord is a it's a two-edged sword isn't it it's a precious thing to those who will trust and obey and it becomes a judgment upon those who reject it and push it from them God will go to others oh that we would bow before God's word and drink in the comfort of it he welcomes all to come to him let's pray together our God we we do bow in your presence we do recognize that we live in troublous times when men's hearts are failing them for fear but how we thank you that we have a God who provides for his own provides not only our earthly food but who provides that that heavenly man of that that word of the Lord and that one who is the word the Lord Jesus Christ to meet our deepest needs even forgiveness of sins thank you for Jesus thank you for working in our hearts to to embrace him to believe his promises thank you for the way that you've given us Bibles that that show us how faithful you are to your word and and we pray that you would work in our hearts in these days such faith that would honor you and would point others to the hope that is ours in

Christ we ask it in Jesus name amen