**Let this boy’s life return to him!**

1 kings 17:1-24

Key Verse 17:21

**“Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried out to the Lord, “Lord my God, let this boy’s life return to him!”**

I watched one man’s testimony through a video. He was a Jew. He was not a serious Jew but he knew he could not become a Christian. His grandfather was a survivor of Holocaust, and all of his entire relatives were hardcore Jews. So he could not think about becoming a Christian at all. He knew even if he wanted he could not do so.

He had one best friend whom he loved so much. One day, the friend visited him in his house. His friend took a motorcycle, and that day he was drunk. So when his friend wanted to leave he told him repeatedly that he would give him a ride and he could pick up his motorcycle the next day. But his friend laughed at him, brushing away his repeated plea and left. A little bit later, the man could not stay at home because of his concern for him. So he drove his car and followed his friend’s way home. Soon he found his friend on the side of the road. He was left lying there in the pool of blood. He was hit by a car, and the guy who hit him ran away. So his friend was left there lying on the road. When he checked his friend, he stopped breathing. He was already dead, and he could see a crack on his skull. But he could not accept the death of his friend because he was so close to him. So, he picked up the dead body of his friend and brought him to a hospital. Soon a Christian pastor and several people came to pray for his friend. The man could not join in their prayers because he was not a Christian, and he never seriously prayed in the past. So, on the sofa of the waiting room he prayed silently but desperately something like this, “God, I don’t know you are the God of the Jews or God of the Christians. It does not matter. Just let my friend’s life return to him!” The Lord heard the man’s cry, and his friend’s life returned miraculously and he lived. And he became a Christian despite all of his entire relatives and families’ opposition. He was so sure the God of Christians is the true God because he let his friend’s life return to him.

In today’s message, Elijah cried out to the Lord, “Lord my God, let this boy’s life return to him.” And the Lord heard his cry. And the widow of Zarephath was convinced. The God of the Jews, the God of Elijah was the Lord!

There are times when we cannot accept what has happened. In those situations, the only thing that we can do is to pray. Christians are privileged people because they can ask God to do impossible tasks! Today we want to meet the Lord the God of Elijah who heard his cry, “Let this boy’s life return to him!”

My message has three parts.

Part I. Hide in the Kerith Ravine (v.1-6)

Part II. Go at once to Zarephath (v.7-16)

Part III. Finally stopped breathing (v.17-24)

**Part I. Hide in the Kerith Ravine (v.1-6)**

Look at verses 1-6.

**17 Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1ki+17&version=NIV#fen-NIV-9319a)**] 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.”**

**2 Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: 3 “Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. 4 You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there.”**

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

Today’s passage suddenly talks about Elijah after recording all the evil kings of Israel. Ahab’s father did evil more than all kings before him. Now Ahab did evil more than all the kings before him including his father. Therefore, Ahab was the evilest king.

To the worst king, the Lord had great mercy. The bible says, “When sin increased grace increases all the more.” The Lord’s special love and mercy was demonstrated to Ahab when the Lord sent one of the most powerful prophets, Elijah.

Elijah was a **the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead.** We do not have any information about him such as his family background or how he received the calling from the Lord, and how he ended up standing before Ahab and delivered today’s passage.

But he 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.”**

This verse does not say, “The word of the Lord came to Elijah, “Go to Ahab and tell him. This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says.”

It was what Elijah said. He said, “As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, whom I serve.” The first thing Elijah mentioned was “The Lord, the God of Israel.” Here the word “LORD” means God’s personal name which is YHWH. YHWH was the God of Israel. And he lives. The Lord is the living God! Ahab did not know the God of Israel is living God.

Elijah proclaimed drought. “**there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.”** Do you understand the impact of his proclamation? Right now, Western states of America including California suffer from severe drought. I will show one picture for California drought. (show a picture). These droughts come even when we have less rain. How much more will the droughts be severe when there is no rain!

The proclamation of Elijah means “no rain” or “no dew” at all. And in the next few years. Think about it! When there will be no rain or dews for a whole year in American what will happen? Crops and fruits and vegetables and animals who feed them will suffer. It will be unheard of damage. But Elijah was talking about several years. Indeed it was three and half years!

In those days the Israelites did not have any irrigation system like us. So, drought brought direct impacts on their lives. Israel depended on rain from heaven for their lives and farming. But now Elijah declared drought for several years.

There is a reason for Elijah to declare drought. Baal was the god of rain and fertility. Elijah was proclaiming war against Baal implying the Lord, the God of Israel, controlled rain rather than Baal.

Why did Elijah end up talking about drought? It is because drought together with plagues is God’s way of punishing his people when they worship idols together. And drought means severe famine.

**Deuteronomy 11:16-17**

**16 Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. 17 Then the Lord’s anger will burn against you, and he will shut up the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the Lord is giving you.**

After Elijah proclaimed drought which would bring famine, the word of the Lord came to him. **3 “Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. 4 You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there.”**

The Lord asked him to hide. Maybe Elijah was ready to fight with Ahab. But the Lord wanted him to hide from Ahab. The Lord told him that he could drink from the brook and the ravens would supply him with food.

**“5 So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.”**

Why do you think the Lord wanted Elijah to be there? It was for the purpose of learning faith in daily bread. Two times of day, Elijah’s faith was tested. Would the ravens appear again with bread meat this morning or evening? It was like manna training for the Israelites in the desert for 40 years.

Elijah also saw the brook begin to dry. He could have worried about what he should do to get water.

But the direction from the Lord came only after the brook dried out. It shows the Lord wanted Elijah to live day by day depending on him.

**Part II. Go at once to Zarephath (v.7-16)**

Look at **Verses 7-16**

**7 Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. 8 Then the word of the Lord came to him: 9 “Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.” 10 So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?” 11 As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.”**

**12 “As surely as the Lord your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”**

**13 Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. 14 For this is what the Lord, 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 day the Lord sends rain on the land.’”**

**15 She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. 16 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.**

When the brook dried up the word of the Lord came to Elijah immediately. “Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.”

(show the map) Zarephath was in the region of Sidon. Sidon was the land of Jezebel who promoted the worship of Baal. The Lord hid Elijah in the heartland of his enemies. Zarephath was about 100 miles away from the Kerith Ravine. Elijah obeyed and went to Zarephath once.

**10 So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?” 11 As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.”**

**12 “As surely as the Lord your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”**

The effects of drought were a severe famine. When Elijah asked for a piece of bread, she answered, “**12 “As surely as the Lord your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”**

She was a poor widow. Widows were the most unprotected in their society together with fatherless and orphans. Furthermore, the widow God sent for Elijah was very poor.  The Lord did not send Elijah to a rich widow but to an extremely poor widow.

The drought brought a severe famine. She was ready to die with her son after her last meal. And she was gathering a few sticks for her last meal. Gathering sticks was also a sign of extreme poverty.

 Since her son was a child she was probably a young widow. We don’t know what happened to her husband. But after her husband died she had to raise her own son all by herself. So far she did her best and helped her son to grow. But now even that was not possible anymore because of the severe famine. She was expecting death by starvation together with her son. She was under such an extreme condition. But she was kind enough to bring a little water in a jar.

When he saw Elijah at first, she recognized Elijah as the man from Israel. So she said ‘as surely as the Lord our God lives’. The Lord was not her God. But at least she recognized the Lord, YHWH as Elijah’s God.

After hearing such a miserable condition of herself,

**13 Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. 14 For this is what the Lord, 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 day the Lord sends rain on the land.’”**

Elijah asked her “**First make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son.”**

The request seemed to be too harsh to ask because he was taking away the last meal of the widow and her son. But Elijah’s request came with the promise.

**14 For this is what the Lord, 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 day the Lord sends rain on the land.’”**

It was just a promise. What did she do? She could have said, “Are you kidding me? You are such a bad guy who wants to take away our last meal! Get out! I am not going to give you even a little water!” But she didn’t.

**15 She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. 16 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.**

Miracle happened when she believed the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah and obeyed. So there was food everyday for Elijah and for the woman and her family.

But we need to understand that the jar or jug were not overflowing. Everyday there was food. But every day the flower in the jar was at the bottom, and the oil in the jug was at the bottom. It required faith for both Elijah and the woman to believe that the next day’s meal would come on a daily basis.

It was still daily bread training which is a daily faith training. Elijah and the woman had to trust in the Lord on a daily basis.

We all want security. So we want to pile up things we need in the future as much as possible. When Covid started some people stored tons of bathroom tissues.

I like security. Who does not like it? So when I was in charge of bathroom tissues for our church, I usually piled up many bathroom tissues. I did it because it removed my worries. I felt more secure having a lot of them. I did it even in my home in those days.

But when I look at today’s passage, I found that the Lord was doing exactly the opposite. The Lord fed Elijah by ravens day by day in the Kerith Ravine. It was actually half a day of faith training day because ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening.

Now in Zarephath, the Lord’s “daily training” which is “daily faith training” did not end. The woman’s jay of flour and the jug of oil  were never overflowing. They were always at the bottom each day. Everyday Elijah and the woman must have lived by faith in the Lord on a daily basis.

Elijah received daily bread training which is daily faith training three and half years before God could use him greatly.

Jesus mentioned the widow of Zarephath as an example of the woman of faith compared to his town’s people who did not believe in him and missed the blessings.

**Luke 4:24-26**

**24 “Truly I tell you,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown. 25 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. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon.**

Only the widow of Zarephath could enjoy God’s provision during the severe famine because of her faith.

The Lord honored his own word spoken by Elijah by fulfilling the promise, **“The jar of flower will not be used up and the jug of oil did not run dry until the Lord sends rain on the land.”**

**Part III. Finally stopped breathing (v.17-24)**

When Elijah and the woman and her family were living by faith on a daily basis, some tragedy happened. Although they were in the midst of God’s miracles through obeying the words of the Lord, they were not exempt from life troubles.

**Verses 17-24**

**17 Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. 18 She said to Elijah, “What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?”**

**19 “Give me your son,” Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. 20 Then he cried out to the Lord, “Lord my God, have you brought tragedy even on this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?” 21 Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried out to the Lord, “Lord my God, let this boy’s life return to him!”**

**22 The Lord heard Elijah’s cry, and the boy’s life returned to him, and he lived. 23 Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, “Look, your son is alive!”**

**24 Then the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth.”**

Let’s read **verses 17-23.**

**17 Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. 18 She said to Elijah, “What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?”**

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**22 The Lord heard Elijah’s cry, and the boy’s life returned to him, and he lived. 23 Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, “Look, your son is alive!”**

**24 Then the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth.”**

After the woman experienced the resurrection power of the Lord through Elijah she fully accepted Elijah as the man of God, and she believed the Lord the God of Israel as her own God. She did not say, “that the word of the Lord, your God, from your mout is the truth”

Now I have one question for you. Do you think Elijah prayed for the boy before he died?

There are two possibilities here. One is that the child died so suddenly that the mother could not talk about it to Elijah, and Elijah did not have a chance to pray. The other possibility is she had time and could ask Elijah’s help and Elijah prayed. The illness of her son was a serious one.

Since her life was so closely attached to the life of her only son, she must have sensed something serious was going on and talked about it to Elijah.

So what do you think? We don’t know for sure because the Scripture does not talk about it. But we may find some clues if we want. This is what the Scripture says about the boy’s illness and death.

**“Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing.”**

Do you think it is a sudden death? The Bible says he became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. To me, it shows progress. It does not seem to be a sudden death.

That is why I believe she has asked Elijah’s help and he prayed for her son. If we assume this way, obviously the Lord did not answer Elijah’s prayer for healing.

But amazingly the Lord answered Elijah’s prayer for returning the boy’s life which was a more challenging thing.

If we assume Elijah prayed for the healing of her son, why do you think the Lord did not answer his prayer for healing but answered his prayer for resurrection?

Can you think of someone who did the same thing? He did not answer the request of healing but raised a dead person after he died.

Who is he? Yes, Jesus Christ. Jesus did not respond to the call of Mary and Martha when their brother Lazarus was sick. But he went there after he died and raised him up. And he taught in

**John 11:25-26**

**25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”**

Now we can find the answer why the Lord did not answer Elijah’s prayer for healing but answered his prayer for resurrection. Why did the Lord do this?

Yes, it is to bless him more! The Lord wanted to bless Elijah with the resurrection faith. The Lord wanted to bless the woman with the resurrection faith as well.

We can learn one more thing from the Lord.

Now if we assume the Lord did not answer Elijah’s healing prayer but answered resurrection prayer, what does it teach about the Lord?

The Lord wants us to believe in his love and power all the time even when he does not answer our prayers! Yes, this is what he wants us to do.

The Lord has infinitely greater power than the power of death and sin.

Death has the greatest power over all humans who have flesh and blood. And death is the wages of sin. The power of sin and death is so strong that we may feel powerless many times.  But Jesus Christ our Lord demonstrated that he is the resurrection and the life, and his power is infinitely greater than the power of death and sin to all mankind.

Therefore through faith in Jesus who is the resurrection and life we can overcome all the powers of sin and death.

Sometimes we may feel that we are losing the battle. In those times we wish we have someone who can give us extra faith and strength. Do we have someone? Yes!

We have one.

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# Philippians 4:13I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

# Here, all this refers to living in plenty or in poverty, in apostle Paul’s financial life. Him refers to Christ. So Christ is the one who can give us extra faith and strength. But we need to ask for his help.

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Therefore, we have Jesus Christ our Lord who is willing to help us and give us extra faith and help as long as we want.

But sometimes in life, all we can do is just to cry out to the Lord like Elijah “Lord my God, let this boy’s life return to him.”

“Lord my God, let my life with your original image of holiness return to me!” “Lord my God, let my life without any addiction from porn, drugs, food return to me!” “Lord my God, let my life without lust and fear and anger return to me!” “Lord my God, let my life without any sinful desires return to me!”

That is perfectly fine. As long as we cry out to the Lord, Jesus Christ our Lord, hears and will lead us in the best way possible.

In conclusion, we learned that the Lord trained Elijah on a daily basis until he had resurrection faith. We have trials in life, and they are our opportunities to grow in our faith. Most importantly we have Jesus Christ our Lord who has all authority in heaven and earth and he can deliver us from all our sins and the power of death. He can give us his own faith and strength as long as we want. We as Christians are privileged people because we can cry out to God for impossible tasks, the life of conquering our sins through him.

One word: Let this boy’s life return to him.