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Roadkill Paterers

God's Provision and Preparation for Our Service

By
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Introduction

WHAT TO DO NEXT... SHOULD I WATCH OR RUN!

This book is about watching and running.
Maybe a more dressed up word would be "SERVICE".

Elijah stood before a king in obedience to God and started a chain of events unequalled by any man before or since. Elijah the man was faced with the same pressures, victories, defeats, and questioning moments, you and I have. He wasn't treated special by God, just treated with love and expectations by a special God -The One and Only True God, We might add.

Let the life of Elijah speak to your heart, as you hold this book. See that one day, you and I will give an account to this loving King of Glory, how we've put into service, the talents, miracles, challenges, and promises He's put into your life and mine.

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Chapter 1 - Gone To The Dogs

Picture in your mind if you will the most devious, cunning, most despicable person you can remember... Now try even harder. Let's say this person is a man that's lower than a snake's belly. The typical Simon Lagree that would throw his own mother out in the cold... No that's not good - I mean BAD enough... This scum of a man would throw a baby out in the cold, if he wanted to. We hear ourselves saying,

**WHAT'S THIS WORLD COMING TO? or
DOESN'T ANYONE HAVE CONTROL OF THINGS
AROUND HERE, ANYMORE? or
WHAT A MESS WE HAVE HERE!**

Some time ago, I'd begun reading a book written by a well-known evangelist. The first three chapters spoke of the condition of this world. Now, I know it's easy to get a gruesome picture of this rotten world by just reading a couple of pages in today's newspaper, or listening to the news for five minutes. But this book told about the corruption in organizations that I had believed were all-out eradicators of crime and corruption!

The book spoke of police and law enforcement agencies, even churches that had succumbed to Satan's ways. I decided right then and there, that if I didn't have anything better to look forward to, than living in this rotten world, I would then and there, set about to commit suicide. (More about this later..)

If you searched for a book that could be purchased for your own, giving instances in history, of the depths of degradation that man can stoop to, you'd be quite surprised to find it to be the self-same book that is well recognized as the best book on the subject of true love.... almost seems like a paradox doesn't it? Well, you guessed it.... the Bible, God's Holy Word gives us the most accurate picture of man's efforts to be led by Satan's influences.

In the first chapters of Genesis, scarcely has God created His crowning glory of all His creation - man and woman, when we're told of Satan and shown his tactics. I believe the most despicable word in our language happens to be the first word used to describe Satan; the word 'subtle'. Reading through the Bible, filled with love and forgiveness, you are also made aware of the myriad of ways man has found to sink. Once before, God decided He had enough, and began the events leading to the flood. The Bible says in Genesis 6:5:

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Be sure to notice the word '*continually*'. Now you'd think this was the absolute bottom, right? Well, what we've just covered isn't the half of it!

Of all the pagan god worship before and during the reign of King Ahab, none was worse than that of Molech, "The Protecting Father" image. This most abhorrent worship was culminated in the burning of children, by fire. And we thought the burning alive; in the womb with chemicals and giving it the official name of Abortion was something new... Stick with me, it gets worse yet. In the 11th book of the Bible the words say:

"And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him."

This reference in I Kings 16:30, describes the mode of operation of King Ahab, a principle person in the life of Elijah. Before we introduce Elijah, we've got to add, possibly the worst part of all the ingredients depicted in the following chapters of Elijah's life.... Ahab's wife, Jezebel.

Of all the rotten things that Ahab did, the worst, was the choice he made for a wife. Read in verse 31:

"And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Eth-baal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him."

Unger's Bible Dictionary describes her as:

"A woman in who, with the reckless and licentious habits of an oriental queen, were united the sternness and fiercest qualities inherent in the Phoenician people. The wild license of her life, the magical fascination of her arts or of her character, became a proverb in the nation (II King's 9:22)" (Note: licentious means without measure)

We've spent some time, now, to paint a picture of the world into which Elijah was to live and work. With the little we've touched on, we could easily become discouraged and, even worse; cite many reasons why we think God isn't maintaining control of all He has created...

As you and I look at our present world around us, we easily wonder 'What's this world coming to?'

You undoubtedly have heard the phrase 'the patience of Job'... Maybe it's time we considered the patience of God.... If we were studying the life of Job, we'd see that Job's patience was of God. Anyhow. Is it possible that our impatience and our hasty evaluations of circumstances move us to think that God isn't on His throne and in control?

We look at the leadership on the job or in the classroom, or for that matter, in many lukewarm churches and sometimes have to force feelings of fear and uncertainty back down where they've come from. Can it be God gives us time to use our eyes and ears, and brain, to see His ways are best, and His love and forgiveness are without equal? The intent of these humble words on printed page, are meant to remind us all of the God that

Is ALWAYS IN CONTROL of His Plan
NEVER FORGETS US or our needs,
LOVES US more than we can imagine.

In the following chapters, we'll see how God proves these three concepts. On to the next chapter >>

Chapter 2 - THE LAW AND COVERED BRIDGES

Many events in the life of Elijah are BEYOND BELIEF. But all these happenings are tied together, as are the events that happen in your life, by rules, no let's say "Laws", we'll discover in this chapter.

There's no doubt, you'd love to spend a leisurely day next to a secluded stream not far from my home. Probably the first visit you'd go solo. Way off to the right begins the brook in your field of view. Down through the pasture then a lazy bend toward where you're sitting, across in front continuing left and disappear behind a knoll.

Your ears tell you birds are enjoying the soft breeze as you move your legs to an uncramped position, just knowing your eyes, ears, and nose are about to have a feast. Something odd becomes apparent as you take a deep sigh of relief for the third time or is it the fourth time? Oh! Who cares?

Though not noticed at first, you've chosen an area of contrasts; over here looks almost the opposite as over there. Watch. See over there to the right, where the stream makes its bend? Now on the far side of our stream is an earthen wall that rises some fifty feet straight up to a cornfield on top.

As you reposition again so as to use a shady tree as a backrest, your eyes feast themselves on all the layers of shale rock that climb most of the fifty feet. Hey! Your eyes say, "This place has character!" You'd jump up in a minute and pick out a piece of shale for a souvenir, if it wasn't for that very large dead tree limb just barely lodged between two others, hanging just above your prospective souvenir stone.

More to the left, the layered wall drops down enough that the gentle afternoon sun finds you and stages its ever-popular diamond dance. Your heart stakes its claim that this is YOUR SPOT, now and forever. Heaven help the person that tries to put a super highway thru here.

The stream that started on the right, from a run-of-the-mill pasture and along the shale wall as a quiet unnoticeable flow in front of you, moves off to the left over round shaped stones. As the water zigzags around and over the stones, the Master in charge of lighting, stages a delight for any eyes. The sparkling reflections appear as weightless diamonds dancing on top of boiling water. One hand wants to quickly cover one eye to retard the hypnotic spell the diamonds produce.

With great effort your eyes pull away from the diamond dance leftward to discover the foundations on either side of the brook that once held a stately old covered bridge. You know the kind I mean. The ones that sheltered animals from the driving rain and fear of the waters below.

No way to tell if this was a Kissin' bridge. "A kiss passin' thru makes the wish come true." I am sure at least one pair of initials carved in the kingpost, declared two lovers would never part. Gone with the bridge were the posted advertisements for high button shoes, and horseshoeing while you wait. Trips to carry the family across the frozen stream to grandmothers for that Thanksgiving



turkey would never be the same. I suppose if you stood on tiptoes, you'd see the new bridge. You guessed it. Steel and concrete; no character at all.

Now I've said all that, to say this:

WATER RUNS DOWN HILL!

No. I mean it.

Water really runs down hill.

Everywhere on the face of the earth -- even where you are: **water runs down hill**. Whether thru a pasture, along a cliff or thru rocks, **water runs down hill**. Whether diamond dance or rain, **water runs down hill**. No matter how technology changes from oak kingposts to concrete and steel, **water will run down hill till the Lord comes**.

The lesson of this chapter goes far beyond gravity's effect on old tree limbs or flowing water. Our brook, stuffed with all its contrasts, is also a great place to discover many of God's laws meant to give pattern and purpose to your life and mine. We're told in God's Word that the things around us even tell us of Himself so that we are without excuse. (You can read more about that in Romans 1:20).

First of all, this spot had to be sought out; looked for; desired with a healthy purpose in mind. The quiet water on the right contains life and rest for the continuing journey. God has formed us with a requirement for quiet times that prepare us for what's ahead. Quiet water reflects what is beyond. God doesn't always show us what is out there, but he always gives us opportunity to prepare according to His leading. That's the law.

The layers of shale are captivating to say the least. It appears that almost every layer has its own character. Some support a clump of moss or maybe a small bush. Others are stained by years of water oozing out of its cracks. The only claim to fame of others is that they are solid and very supportive.

So loudly, these stones cry out, saying to the observer, "The God of heaven has placed some of us in the middle of the brook to produce dancing diamonds, others at the brook's edge to make an effect on the erosion of time. Others are placed in the wall to be supportive to those above."

There's a law in our members that gives no purpose or direction in our life until we take the quiet time and discover God's Will for us. Sometimes this is necessary each day, or each hour on those really tough days.

Even here in our favorite spot, if you look hard enough you'll see the tracks and trash of shallow minded people. Had I been totally focused on these negatives, I'd not have noticed the unexpected three small ducks paddling thru the middle of the diamonds.

So whether your day holds diamonds, ducks, or disappointments, expect always to be blessed in surprising and beautiful ways by God's provision to those who are focused on Him and willing to be in the spot where He wants them... **IT'S THE LAW!**

One day not long ago, I had someone very close, really disappointment me. It hurt so much on the inside; it was like a boxer punching me in my chest as hard as he could. Sure I quoted several

verses to myself, refreshed my memory with assurances that God gets even with those that do harm to those who are His. I reviewed the passages that tell about the mansions, streets of gold, crystal sea, the day that has no night, and others that are in my future. But, know what? It still hurt. It still hurt so much that tears would not put the heart flame out.

Retreating to my favorite spot I expected some sort of balm to be there to show me how to flip a switch within me that would instantly make the hurt go away, and my smile come back. Little did I guess what timing God uses in working out His plan, and the lesson I was about to learn.

When I reached my special spot, it seemed not to be mine. Oh sure, the shale, the trees, the tracks and trash were all there. But nothing seemed calm and inviting. The rain of the last two days gorged the once quieting stream almost to its limits and spelled danger and destruction to anyone advancing without real purpose and direction.

Please don't think I spiritualize everything. But when I stared at that torrent of mad, muddy water rushing through "my quiet place" it was as though I was looking inward at my own soul.

Have you had those moments too?

Have you found yourself in the middle of lots of commotion with no clear calculated direction. You feel as though your heart is about to self-destruct and there's nothing you can do about it. Your senses tell you to scream so loud that people from miles away will rush to you and take you out of this holocaust of the soul.

Your mind says no one cares or can hear your scream above the torrents." No I didn't scream or run or stick my head in the sand. My first decision was that I didn't want to go on feeling like this.

Make it very clear, I didn't say, "I don't want to go on." This shorter statement is one of the seeds of deceit that Satan plants. The first one comes from God, and merely states I want my situation to change to something better. That's the critical one. Ever met people that actually wanted to go on hurting, or harboring anger toward someone? I have.

In wanting to destroy others, they actually destroy themselves, by creating poisons within themselves. Sad case. Sad case. My body just doesn't have the stamina for that sort of thing.

My second decision was, "God, I've told so many people you have the power to quiet the storm, whether inside or out. Please do it here and now."

'Course I didn't think I could snap my fingers and the water stop its mad travels through my quiet spot, but God as my judge (and He will be), I realized which way the water was going. See, anger and hate so scramble our vision and reasoning we can't even tell which direction things are REALLY going.

THE WATER WAS GOING DOWN HILL!!

Sure it was muddy, but it was still going down hill! You bet, it was moving at a mad frenzied pace!

**BUT IT WAS STILL OBEYING GOD!
IT WAS STILL GOING DOWN HILL!**

I wanted to thump the side of my head several times as though I was pounding some sense into it, and saying "you lunkhead... Jim, seek direction by looking into God's laws of grace and truth for your life.

I left my special spot and started the six-mile drive back home, when a boulder hit me. No not some great big piece of rock - bigger than that. A humongous hunk of truth I hadn't expected.

**God had began preparing the answer
to my need, when he started
it raining several days before!**

Now that's real timing! Place an order on Friday and find out it was packed and shipped three days earlier - Never from Sears, but routine with our Loving Heavenly Father.

In this chapter we've seen God's power, His presence, His direction, and magnificent timing, with regard to our needs.

Do you wish to be able to navigate around the torrents with control and contentment? Can you find in these words, the God of all power? Can you now, just for today, give Him your control rudder without reservation and let Him guide you to your next quiet spot of refreshment?

Whether your day holds diamonds, ducks, or disappointments, expect always to be blessed in surprising and beautiful ways by God's provision to those who are focused on Him and willing to be in the spot where He wants them...

IT'S THE LAW!

In the following chapter is the brook in Elijah's life. Will he learn from his brook, the same laws, you and I are learning from ours?

On to the next chapter >>

Chapter 3 - ROADKILL CATERING

Elijah wakes up to a beautiful blue sky and a bright orange sun overhead as his ears remind him; he's been camping next to a brook of crisp sparkling water. To his left, on the horizon, there appears what looks to be a dark cloud. His eyes stay fixed on the 'cloud' because it doesn't move like a cloud and besides, it was the only one in the sky.

Elijah rubbed his eyes, hoping for clearer vision, as this black 'cloud' got closer. Did he have some strange magnetism that drew this bit of confusion to him? He didn't have time to ponder that question, because he now saw clearly - the largest flock of birds in all of his born days!!

**Large black ones!!
Anyone of which, was large enough
To tear a man apart!!!
And they were heading right for him!!**

Now wait a minute....

We've skipped some important background events that we'd better go back and fill in, sorry.

Remember now, we've just spent most of the first chapter, getting an inkling of the corrupt king Ahab and his treacherous wife, Jezebel. Now, you'll be miles ahead, if you assume, by faith, that God has a plan, and it's still in operation.... I Kings 17, verse 1 says:

“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.”

It's interesting that almost nothing at all is said about Elijah's background. It doesn't say if he had any brothers or sisters, or anything about his parents; not really much at all. But, look what happens. All of a sudden - BOOM! - he comes on the scene. He is standing before King Ahab, the king of the northern portion of the land of Canaan called Israel that is made up of ten of the original twelve tribes.

Lest an important, but wrong, assumption is made, I'll hasten to remind the reader that God is not in the habit of just 'throwing' one of his faithful servants into the middle of a situation, without first offering him the opportunity for preparation....

Some light is shed upon what kind of preparation Elijah had for this monumental confrontation with King Ahab, as we consider the inspired words:

"who was of the inhabitants of Gilead."

Gilead is a strip of land about twenty miles wide and stretches down from the Sea of Galilee to the north end of the Dead Sea, about sixty miles in length, on the east side of the Jordan River. It's a land so filled with great forests of mighty Oak trees and fertile pasture lands, the tribes of Reuben and Gad preferred to remain in this land rather than crossing the Jordan river and possessing the

'promised land' that God had intended for all twelve tribes, not just ten. The inhabitants were of such befitting this desirable land, called Gilead. In the same way that 'to be rough' gives the meaning to the name Gilead, 'mighty', 'robust', 'hardy fighting men' describes "the inhabitants of Gilead".

Elijah must have been raised in a family and a people that knew well, the importance of being physically fit, having a good understanding of one's potential and how to stand for what one believes in. II Kings 1:8 give us an indication he was just such a man. So we see Elijah standing before King Ahab. He says to the king:

"As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand."

Even though Elijah was physically standing before Ahab, a ruthless rotten king, Elijah still recognized he was obeying and bowing down to the God of heaven and of Israel. What does he say after that? -

"there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

Now, that's something any king would "love" to hear. First of all, King Ahab is not your king but you are bowing down to someone else's God. Furthermore, things are going to happen, not according to Ahab's words, but because of the Word of God, which, in this case, was Elijah's words too, because he was God's prophet. After that, I'll bet Ahab loved Elijah about as much as fish love fishing.

That wasn't bad enough. But, right in between those two statements he said there would be a drought to last three years. Why, you would ask, would a loving God shut off the rain and the dew for three years? Keep reading. God's magnificent plan starts to unfold.

We look at our world today and see strikes and wars. We don't call them wars anymore, but rather police actions. We see bombings and all types of disturbances throughout the land, abortions, Aids, suicide, and national shame. We tell ourselves that it looks like God has lost control. If He doesn't come back soon, there'll be nothing to come back to. Have you ever said that? I have. This is the world situation that Elijah comes into. Yet, he did what God told him to do.

The next thing God told him to do is in verse 3:

"Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan."

Oh, that'll be great! He's going camping! He's going backpacking! No, he doesn't get to take any food, cooking utensils or canteen. This doesn't sound too good!

Verse 4 says:

"And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there."

You and I have read this story many times. We've told it to our children. We've heard it in Sunday school class. It's interesting when you have enough desire to dig into the Word and look up the meaning of these words and descriptions of these animals.

You'll be surprised to find a raven is the largest bird of the crow family. It can have a wingspan of fifty-six inches. That's almost the distance from tip to tip of a man's fingers as he spreads his arms. What's more interesting is that ravens eat dead animals. They eat road kill. Isn't that neat! God's man stands before an evil king and says what he supposed to say, and God sends roadkill caterers to feed him. Verses 5-7 says:

"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."

Oh me! God had a good thing going. He was taking care of His man. Now it looks as if He's lost control again. Elijah was supposed to drink from the brook, but it dried up.

How about the brook and circumstances in your life? Do you sometimes see your brook dried up? God answered your prayer or a particular need you had; things were going really well. Then, the brook dried up - the promise dried up!

It almost looks as though God is moving this man from one uncontrolled situation to another situation that is out of control. Evidently God had something else in mind for Elijah. He had already provided an escape for him. He had performed a miracle by having the ravens feed Elijah.

Surely, God isn't going to let Elijah die now; He doesn't waste His efforts and energies like that. So, what happens? This man of God has to just trust in his God. We read in verse 8-10:

"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. So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks..."

Did you notice the word THERE? It's interesting to note some of the places you see that word in the Bible. God says, "I want you to go THERE and when you go THERE, I will be THERE with you." It's easy for us to act for God when He says I want you to do this particular thing; pick up this stone, or do this or that - when we have all the things right in front of us.

We size up the situation and tell God we'll do it. But, that doesn't exercise any faith. It's just a command and we obey. The verse says, 'whatsoever is not of faith is not of God.' God says, "I want you to go THERE and when you go THERE, I will be with you THERE." That takes faith, doesn't it? It takes action too.

But friend, as we trust Christ as our Savior and step out on faith, doing His Will; isn't it a joy to know wherever we are, He will be with us THERE?

In verse 4 of chapter 17, we see the word THERE used also. It took faith in God for Elijah to go to the brook Cherith and depend on the ravens to feed him... THERE.

On to the next chapter >>

Chapter 4 - YOU BLEW IT AGAIN, GOD!

Read in I Kings 17, verses 10-12 of Elijah's obedience:

"So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

Oh no! Elijah thinks to himself: "God, You provided for me at the brook Cherith with water and had the ravens bring me food. Then the brook dried up. So, I supposed You were taking care of things. You commanded this widow to take care of me now, but God, you blew it! It just won't work out. She can't feed me. She has just enough food for one meal for herself and her son. Then they will starve to death."

How'd you like to go out on visitation to a home where you're to have a meal? You sit down at the table and realize that the family is almost out of food. How would you feel? Tough situation, isn't it? Does it look like God is still in control?

I suppose Elijah felt bad about the widow woman being commanded to feed him, when all she had was enough for her and her son. But, he decided to go ahead with God's directions. In verse 13, it says:

"And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son."

I love Elijah's statement. His first words to the stressed out mother are 'Fear not'. The backbone of Christianity is turning our FEARS into FAITH in God's word and His will. As we really focus our will on God's direction, we'll often see a hint of God's provision and plan. The hint is in the last portion of Elijah's statement. '...and after make for thee and for thy son.' This tells me that in obedience by faith, she is STILL going to be able to feed herself and son. Neat huh?

That's interesting! She only has a little bit left. But, what she has, she dedicates to God's servant first. Where have I heard that before? In Matthew 6:33 we read:

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

That's good tithing, isn't it? We dedicate to God first and then depend upon Him to make the rest do, as He so leads. Let's see if that's what happens in verses 14-16:

"For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to

the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the Word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah."

Isn't that fantastic! - a blessing, a miracle of this nature right in your own house! Now that was a lesson she could never have gotten in a Sunday school class. It's truth that still applies down through the ages. You take care of God's man first, as God leads, and trust Him for the necessary provisions. He not only provides, but also provides until the end of the curse.

Now we read further into the life of this poor widow in verses 17-18:

"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?"

It looks as if we go from one hopeless situation to another. This woman has obeyed God's command and showed proper tithing principles. A miracle is done to the cruse of oil and the barrel of meal. But, look how she is repaid! Her son has died. "God, why do You do these things? Why do You repay people who are faithfully serving You, sustaining your men and messengers, with the death of loved ones?

Verses 19-20 say:

"And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and 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?"

Even Elijah is saying the same thing. "God, why do You repay good with evil?" But, in verses 21-24, God instructs Elijah and he continues to obey:

"And he stretched himself upon 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. 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 to 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."

What a fascinating thing to happen! When she gets together with her friends and shares the news of the day, she'll be able to tell about a man who required of her to feed him first, even when she had very little food. She can tell how God blessed her. The neighbors will really be interested in hearing about that, won't they? In fact, when it comes to providing food, she can relate the events that Elijah encountered with the ravens. What stories to tell! What a witness of God's sustaining power!!

But, as she is relating to her friends, a seriousness, a solemnness in her tone of voice explains to them that yes, the God of Elijah is able to sustain life by commanding the animals to obey. He is able to sustain life not only by animals, but products of the land - the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil. More than that, the God of Elijah, the One True God in heaven, is able to give new birth to those who have been faithful to Him. She knows that to be true, because it happened in her own house.

No one in the entire world knows the name of this widow. We may never know. But, won't it be exciting when we get to heaven and fellowship with all of those who have trusted in Him.

We can hear the account of these neighbors sharing with this widow woman. With tears in her eyes, she'll explain how God uses all He's created to provide for those obedient to him. What an exciting testimony!

Would you share that testimony with someone who quite likely thinks 'things are out of control' or 'God can't keep track of things'?

1. He provides in a manner showing He has been in control all along.
2. Then, He delivers us TO something better, not just OUT OF a situation.

On to the next chapter >>

Chapter 5 - CHERRY HILL CHARIOT WORKS

As you walk in, you see a large conference table with chairs all around it. On the walls are charts and graphs with mysterious lines going up and down and all over. On the wall at the head of the table is a picture of a strong, sleek and durable chariot. Welcome to the Cherry Hill Chariot Works!

The board members are about to meet and you get to sit in. Shortly, the different vice presidents of the various departments walk in, papers in hand. Each takes a seat. Then a very distinguished gentleman walks in and sits at the head of the table. The meeting begins with various discussions and pieces of leftover business.

Then the chairman of this conference asks each man who is seated at the table to relate the status of the company in relation to their department. The sales manager paints a very dismal view of the status of the company. Sales are way down. It seems pretty hopeless. The marketing manager is also in a difficult fix because he doesn't have any cash flow that he can use to present the products to the public like he wants to. It's in bad shape.

The accounting manager confirms what the other two have said. There's no money coming in so they can't afford to step out into new marketing areas like they want. Each of the men presents a very "doomed" view of the company. The company is almost dead. What really makes it rough is there seems to be no new ideas. They have no answers to the problem of saving the company.

The chairman of the board explains that he understands what each man has said. He concurs with them. Then, for a little bit of distraction to relax them, he suggests a way that they might be able to deal with this terrible situation in each of their own hearts individually.

The chairman pulls out what looks like a scrapbook. He opens it and turns the pages. He explains to the men, as he goes through the pages, that so many times in the past, when he has been in a hopeless situation and really doesn't see any way out, he gets out this old scrapbook and thumbs through its pages. He looks at the sketches and relives the circumstances and events that are tied up in these pages. For a diversion, he suggests that maybe now would be a good time for him to take them through this scrapbook.

Since everyone is discouraged and has nothing better to do, they all agree. Why not? He opens up the scrapbook and holds it out where each man can clearly see each page. Very quickly each man on the board realizes that the scrapbook is primarily centered on one person - one famous person. In fact, when they got to looking at it, the scrapbook was about the man we have been learning about - Elijah.

He points to the first sketch. They see large, black birds. The chairman relates the events that happened as Elijah shared them with him. He tells how ravens fed Elijah. Then, in the next couple of sketches, the chairman points to a figure of a lady and says, "That's my mom." Down here are little morsels of meal that we had left. He explains how Elijah the prophet had come to their home. Even though they were about to eat their last meal and die, the prophet has said to feed him first.

The next picture is of two containers - one a barrel and the other a cruse. The chairman explained about the miraculous provisions God had performed right in their own home. As he talked on, the men seemed a little bit troubled by all of this. They really weren't getting the picture.

Then the chairman said, "Right down here in this picture, is a person lying down. That's me. That's when I died! He then goes on to another picture. One of the vice presidents at the table said,

**'Wait a minute!
What did you say about that other picture?
You died?'**

The chairman said, "Yes, I died." Immediately, the man gets up, quickly moves to the head of the table and stands right in front of the chairman. He gets his face real close to his and says,

**"You tell me that one more time - you died?
You don't look like you died!
You look alive and well! You're right here."**

The chairman of the board explains to him that because his mom was faithful with what she had, there were a couple miracles performed in their home. But, the greater miracle was that I had died and God, through Elijah, brought me back to life.

The chairman then went on to quickly show and remind the men of the provisions that God had made in the life of this famous prophet, Elijah.

1. God provided food for him through animals - the ravens.
2. God provided him food through his mother.
3. God provided food through the miracle of the meal and oil that never ran out.

As we are quietly leaving the conference room, we hear the chairman of the board, who happens to be the widow's son, telling about all the other miraculous things that God did in Elijah's life. Closing the door behind us, we seek a quiet place away from the hustle and bustle of the other workers.

Reviewing the scrapbook, we think about that young man, the widow's son, grown up and became the chairman of the board of an important company that is struggling to stay alive. As we think about that scrapbook, we see the testimony that young man had with his fellow workers. Wouldn't it be neat if we had a scrapbook like that? Wouldn't it be great if we were mentioned like the widow's son?

It's interesting, but we do have exactly that. It's already prepared for us. We don't have to put any more pictures or printing in it. They are easily attainable. You can spend anywhere from \$1.50 to \$100 for these scrapbooks. What scrapbook am I talking about? God's Word! God's inspired Word.

Well, this is just a story involving the widow's son. I don't know if it actually happened like this, but it could have. The important thing to see is what he did with the scrapbook and what we can do with ours. We are mentioned in it. We surely are!

A verse that we have heard for many years - John 3:16:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Whosoever? I can put my name in there. So can you. As you are sharing your scrapbook with your neighbors or with the people you work with, you can put their names in there, too. Whosoever! Share your scrapbook with somebody today -

"For God so loved the world, ...that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish." But, greater than not perishing, we "shall have everlasting life."

Some people believe that everlasting life begins after we die - when we are in heaven. But, that's not so. Everlasting life, with its promises, its peace and purpose, begins the moment that we put our names in that verse - *"that whosoever believeth in Him."*

But we really need to do something more than just believe. I think a better word is receive or invite Jesus into our hearts. He comes in to stay forevermore that we might have everlasting life.

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Chapter 6 - THE INSIDE MAN

Oh no! I'd better keep this quiet. I don't want any of my friends to know about this. I'd better run and ask the pastor real quick! Have we got problems! I think we've finally found a contradiction in the Bible. That's right! But, we don't want these unsaved people to find out about it. They'll really go to town with it. In Psalms 40:7, we read:

"Then said I, 'Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me."

In another verse, Hebrews 10:7, much like the one above, we read:

"Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."

Both of these verses explain that all scripture tells of Jesus Christ. Now wait a minute! If we read I Kings 18:1-16, we find a contradiction, don't we? Let's see what these verses say:

"And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria. And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly: For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.) And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts. So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah? And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And he said, what have I sinned, that thou wouldst deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth. Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid an hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me. And Elijah said, As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day. So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah."

If you read these verses, you read about Elijah and a man named Obadiah. These verses don't seem to say much of anything. The scriptures tell of some things they did, but nothing of

importance. It certainly doesn't say anything about Jesus Christ. At least, that is the way I see it. This really bothers me.

God inspired the man to write these Scriptures in the first place. Down through the years He has guarded them so words and meanings don't become confused and the Book become chaotic. Certainly in 1611, when the King James Version was penned, God blessed, watched over and guided the hands of the servants of King James. If God has gone to all of this trouble to be able to get the scriptures to us, surely there must be something in it.

Now, I know, and you do too, that there aren't any contradictions in God's Word, so let's take a closer look. Somewhere in these verses, we are to see Jesus Christ. Let's read the first part of it again.

In the first three verses we read of Obadiah as the governor of Ahab's house. It really doesn't mean the governor over a large piece of land that involves the masses and the cities as we think a governor today to be. He was a governor, the overseer, of Ahab's house. Obadiah was in charge of all the animals, the real estate, the servants and everything of Ahab's personal belongings and holdings.

Because he was the overseer and protector of all that King Ahab had, he sat close to him. Whenever King Ahab would ask Obadiah how his matters were going, Obadiah would tell him he was on top. Ahab would then tell him to make sure it stayed that way. Also, sitting at the table would certainly be the queen, Ahab's wife, Jezebel. I'm sure because of his position, whenever important things were discussed and decisions were made by the king and queen, Obadiah was right there. In verse four it says:

"For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water."

It's always interesting and enlightening when we read Scripture, to see people who have no names and seemingly no job; just there to fill in the picture. It's interesting to try and anticipate what was going through their minds. In other words, we use our imagination to make the people real. No scripture is a fairy tale. It's meant to encourage and uplift us. This can only be done if we remember that these folks are real people. If they are saved, we'll be able to talk to them in heaven.

So, we are thinking of one hundred prophets, two groups of fifty, who are hiding in caves, being fed with bread and water. Somehow, I picture in my mind, some contrasting individuals in these prophets. Maybe one that seems to be the old war-horse has been a prophet for many years. He's really been through the war. He's seen God deliver His chosen ones out of situation after situation.

Then, I also see a young recruit, one who hasn't been a prophet for long. He just signed up last month looking for some excitement and wanting to see some great miracles accomplished.

We find the young recruit in the back of the cave, curled up in a ball shivering. He's shivering, not because of the cold, but because he's scared. He's scared, discouraged, and disappointed. Thoughts keep going through his mind saying, "We're the good guys. We're God's chosen men. God can do anything, at least that's what I hear all the time. God can take care of things."

So why isn't He? If God can take care of anything, why are we, His prophets, penned up in this cave, eating bread and water? Boy! I quit my job to become a full-time prophet, supported by faith promises from some little group back in my hometown. Look how God takes care of me; shriveled up in a cave, discouraged and wondering if we'll live through the night."

We see the old war-horse, looking over his shoulder, watching over the whole group and seeing not only this one discouraged recruit, but also several other young prophets in very poor spirits also. He walks over to this discouraged recruit, takes him by the hand, and slowly leads him out to the mouth of the cave. Putting his arm around him, He points in the direction where smoke is curling over a burning field. Those crops belonged to people who loved God. He points in another direction and sees homes destroyed. Smoke is curling over where a house used to be, where a prophet lived. He shows this young recruit all these things and agrees with him. Yes, yes, it does look very discouraging and dismal.

Then the old war-horse takes the young recruit and points with his finger to a little spot on the horizon, like a small cloud of dust. It looks like someone walking with horses and wagons. As they are talking, they see the wagons getting closer. The old war-horse explains there is food and provisions in those wagons. Those wagons come every day. "Why do they come," asks the recruit. "They come because Obadiah has decreed that it be so." "Obadiah who?" Then a soft smile comes on the old war-horse's face. "Sit down son, and let me tell you about Obadiah."

He shares, in a very tender way, about God's man, sitting at the table with King Ahab, and his treacherous wife, Jezebel. Every time they have a meeting, Obadiah is on the inside. He's in on the meeting. Whenever they plan some rotten trick, some scheme to catch more of God's prophets, Obadiah hears it all.

As the old war-horse shares with the young recruit about this man on the inside, you can see the fear and discouragement melt away from the young man's face. In a matter of a few moments, the countenance of this young recruit has made an about-face. You can see the joy coming out as he slowly walks back into the depths of the cave, scratching his head in a thoughtful way and mumbling something like, "Boy! That's Great!"

The old war-horse still stands at the mouth of the cave, still looking over the difficult situation outside the cave. Shortly, he hears from the back of the cave, "Really? You mean it? We really have a man on the inside? That's great!" A few moments later, a different voice, "isn't that terrific! We have a man on the inside. Things are okay now."

The old prophet puts his hand to his chin and sort of wags his head from side to side and smiles. In a voice, a little louder than a whisper, he says with a smile, "those recruits! You tell them a good thing and they blab it to everybody!"

You don't have to believe this if you don't want to, but in about a half an hour one of the recruits came running out to the old war-horse and said that he just found out that we've got a man on the inside. It took all the strength the old man could muster, to keep from butting in to the recruit's further explanation of most of what he had heard in the back of the cave.

How it thrilled his soul to see these recruits come to the realization that whatever the situation looks like before them, God always has a man on the inside. Oh how I'd have loved to have been in on the revival of spirits in that little cave.

How about that man on the inside? This portion of Scripture, seemingly had no importance, really does present an important truth about the third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. He was sent as an ambassador OF Jesus Christ and BY Jesus Christ. He is a person.

We need to be adult about our discussion of Him. I don't have Jesus Christ in my heart. I have His ambassador, His representative, the Holy Spirit in my heart, and wherever I go, He goes too. Not only do I take Him with me, but also this MAN ON THE INSIDE, the Holy Spirit, is in the middle of confidential meetings about me.

**Isn't it wonderful to have
A man on the inside?**

Because He is the ambassador, the representative of Jesus Christ, He is also our liaison. He takes our feeble prayers and utterances and transforms them into communication that is only fit for heavenly circles. He takes our petitions, each and every one of them, before the throne.

ISN'T IT WONDERFUL TO HAVE
A MAN ON THE INSIDE?

The same Man on the inside is not only our communication link with Jesus Christ, but also our link between the printed page and our heart. He took this portion of scripture, which seemingly had no importance, and showed a tremendously wonderful truth. We have God within us, to help us to communicate with Him, and with others, and to help us get the real meaning from the scriptures that He wants us to have.

When the entire world looks like it's in shambles and chaos; all hope seems lost and there is no direction to go, don't forget the inside Man, the Holy Spirit. He's waiting and ready to take our petitions before the throne. As we open the Word of God, He will reveal to us the provisions that God the Son has already prepared. What a wonderful God to provide everything exactly like we need.

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Chapter 7 - SHOWDOWN AT SUN UP

The following events in Elijah's life are what come to mind, most often when we think of Elijah. Let's begin by turning to I Kings 18:19-29:

“Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mt. Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mt. Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.”

We've heard this story, even while we were still children. We can easily understand that the eight hundred and fifty Baal worshippers heard no response nor saw any response from their god. That's because he was an idol. But, let's be a little more mature about this.

If we really think about it, as these Baal worshippers had organized themselves, set this idol before them, and sought to worship something or someone other than the one true God, don't you suppose Satan became involved and tried to encourage them to continue worshipping Baal in some way?

Satan is powerful, isn't he? He has the ability to perform incredibly miraculous feats. I think when people today, get wrapped up in miracle services and special healing services, they need to remember Satan does have this ability. He can heal and he can destroy. Nevertheless, let's recognize that behind the scenes, behind these Baal worshippers, is Satan.

I picture a scene in heaven, of a greater confrontation than that of Mt. Carmel. Even though there's a lot of commotion down below on the mountain, I believe there was a greater warfare, a greater confrontation in heaven. We are told that Satan is the accuser of the brethren. He accuses us day and night. That means he's standing right now, before the throne of Jesus Christ in heaven,

bringing forth every sort of accusation against those saints of God; those who call upon the Name of Christ.

While almost one thousand Baal worshippers are down there facing off with Elijah's God of fire, I can see Satan recognizing he can get pretty bad press out of all of these people watching Mt. Carmel. If there was ever a time Satan would want to be unrestrained and do what he wants, now is the time. Oh, how he wants to consume that bullock in front of the Baal worshippers and show all those people that 'Baal' really is alive and powerful.

So, up in heaven I see Satan standing before Jesus Christ and saying, "Just this once, Jesus, just this one time; let me consume this sacrifice! I'll never ask again!" But, Jesus very calmly says, "Satan, you old serpent, if you move one muscle toward that sacrifice or send one of your demons, I'll make it clear to every soul on earth who you REALLY are." Satan retorts, "No! No! Don't do that! Not that!"

Back on Mt. Carmel, out of the eight hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal who are trying to get their god to come down and consume their sacrifice, I can easily see --- one, two, or even more prophets that really recognize there isn't a Baal; there is no god represented by this idol. But, they are deeply concerned about the offerings that come into the temple of Baal.

"Hey, if that sacrifice isn't consumed, that's it. No more tithe money. No more golden rings. No more people coming into the temple of Baal to worship and tithe." I can see a couple of these prophets in a very sleazy sort of way; edge themselves toward the sacrifice with a hidden torch. They MUST light that altar. They must get that sacrifice consumed. People are watching.

So, as they are inconspicuously making their way toward the sacrifice, I can see Jesus directing one of his angels. Suddenly, a bump of an elbow of one of these Baal prophets takes a knife and cuts the throat of the prophet that is trying to light the sacrifice. So often we have our eyes just on Elijah. We have our eyes just on the physical aspects, the things we can see just in front of us.

I'm sure none of the people that watched, had any idea what was going on, up in heaven. God the Son had complete control of what was seen on earth and the events in heaven. Isn't that comforting to know? The things Satan tries on us, the things Satan sends his demons to do, in our lives, - in spite of all that, God's only Son, has complete control. How comforting! Verse 30 is an interesting verse. Let's read it:

"And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down."

Why was it broken down? These Baal worshippers, when they go to do some worshipping and try to call down their god, there were no holds barred. They must have leveled everything in sight. I wonder what we could accomplish; what kind of church we'd have; what kind of nation; if God's people were so dedicated that nothing was held back in serving and worshipping Him? Let's go on:

"And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: And with the stones he built an

altar in the name of the Lord: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it a second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water."

There were more than twelve barrels of water on that altar. I wonder if Elijah, thinking of years to come, thought of the skeptical people who would read this scripture and say, "Oh well, there must have been some sort of spontaneous combustion involved..." With twelve barrels of water, there was no possibility of spontaneous combustion taking place. There's no doubt about it, friend. So we read in verses 37-38:

"Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench."

I've never figured out where the dust came from. I guess there wasn't much dust with twelve barrels of water there. But, that is another blessing to look forward to, when we find out, in heaven. Elijah called down fire from heaven two other times. Later, see if you can find them in II Kings. But for now, let's keep reading:

"And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Keshon, and slew them there."

I wouldn't make a big deal of it, but did you notice that God sustained the life of His servant by a brook, and in contrast, took life from Satan's worshippers by a brook. God showed them His power and answered Elijah's prayer. Was that the end of it? No, not at all.

In fact, He called them to action, didn't He? I think that's how God operates most of the time. He hears our prayers; He answers and then says, "What are you going to do about it?" Our God is a prayer answering God. He provides for our needs. Why? He provides because He sees that the only real lesson, the only real growth, is not just in Him meeting our needs, but also in us going out and acting on the lesson.

Isn't it also interesting that the action God called His man and prophets to do was to get rid of sin and the perpetrators of sin - the prophets of Baal? Now there is a combination we can expect to see again, in fact, hopefully soon in our own lives.

We put our petitions before God. God hears and answers. Along with answering those prayers, there is motivation and encouragement to use them. Certainly one of the first places we need to begin as we show our faith and our love for a prayer answering God is to look in our own lives. We need to find those sin filled areas and ask for God's cleansing.

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Chapter 8 – PARTNER LANGUAGE

“What do you mean?” or “Say what?”
“Where are you getting these confusing statements?”
“I’m not comfortable around you when you talk like that.”

The phrases above are responses you’ve probably heard more than once. Whereas you’ve watched a team of workers that function together as one. More often than not, the difference is that one worker only knows about inches and pounds while the other always talks centimeters and kilograms. God used this communication requirement for partnership, in reverse, at the tower of Babel. He mixed up their languages and destroyed their evil efforts without firing a shot.

God’s ultimate desire is to have all those that have trusted His Word and followed His Will to enjoy His fellowship in Heaven for eternity. This will work to its utmost when we all take up residence in the new Heaven and new Earth, speaking the same language...God’s language of love and obedience.

I believe the underlying purpose in all that we learn, all that we do, and all that we accomplish is to learn first hand the meaning of

FORGIVENESS,	FAITH,	LOVE,	VICARIOUS,
PEACE,	SUFFER,	SACRIFICE	SECURITY

and therefore real fellowship. We PREPARE for heavenly fellowship while on this earth, ONE.... DAY.... AT.... A.... TIME....

1. Place the 8 words on a sheet of paper with plenty of space between them.
2. Near each word put key words of an experience or event in your life that taught you the bone-deep meaning of that word.
3. Be prepared to share that experience and meaning, with your testimony, to a friend you see who is struggling with learning that same lesson.

The previous chapter dealt with the fellowship Elijah and Elisha had with each other. (Note: if you have difficulty remembering which prophet came first, just think which comes first in the dictionary.)

I believe Elisha's life had greater meaning to him because of the similarities of the two lives and the understanding Elisha gained from Elijah.

Chapter 9 - THE FORK THAT KILLS!

Not worth a plug nickel!

After destroying eight hundred and fifty of Jezebel's top-line prophets of Baal, Elijah's life wasn't WORTH A PLUG NICKEL!

Elijah is at a crossroad in his life. All the experiences that have happened to him were preparation for decisions **to be made**. Now let's remind ourselves of some things regarding our prime participant, in all that we've covered so far:

1. Elijah stood before a wicked king and told him God was going to judge the king's sin;
2. He was miraculously fed by ravens by the brook Cherith;
3. God used him to provide meal and oil to a starving family;
4. God used him to bring life to the widow's son;
5. By God's direction, Elijah called fire down from heaven;
6. Eight hundred fifty wicked prophets had just been killed by the hand of Elijah....

This chapter doesn't deal with pickle forks or pitchforks, but ones far more dangerous -- the preverbal fork in the road -- decisions in your life and mine. Some forks in our Life-Road are irreversible and lives depend on us taking the right path. We can expect then, that Elijah is going to easily stand his ground and do just as God directs him... But I Kings 18:46 says;

"And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel."

Throughout scripture, the "hand of the Lord manifests itself in different ways as detailed by its meaning. In some places the "hand of the Lord" means a covering; to SHIELD FROM VIEW. This would have been helpful to Elijah but such was not the case here.

In other portions of scripture "the Hand of the Lord" referred to COVERING FROM HARM. It would seem the Loving God of heaven and of Elijah saw a cleansing needed in Elijah's heart and His provision was different. The "hand of the Lord" in verse 46 refers to God's hand POINTING A DIRECTION (powerfully) for our man to follow.

The fork in the road is most often pictured as split paths or directions to travel. The real fork is a choice, not by vision, but a conscious decision by one's character, based on preparation and good reasoning. More about this later.

We should remind ourselves that Mt. Carmel is on a small peninsula sticking out into the Mediterranean Sea, due west of the Sea of Galilee. The verse we just read, tells us that Elijah ran about thirty miles southeast to Jezreel.

At this point, we begin seeing some undesirable actions based upon the wrong fork or choice, our main character made previously. With the news of what Elijah did to her prophets of Baal, Ahab's wife wasn't interested in the abundance of rain, or growing crops, but HIDE. The hide of one named ELIJAH. Her exact message is found in I Kings 19:2:

"Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."

You and I both have been in situations where one of Satan's band has cast threats and warnings toward us. It's those moments we show our character and spirituality. With all of the prestige and 'press' Elijah has been given, almost in disbelief, we read further:

"And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

Unlike Elijah, if you are one of those very wise folks that like to plan ahead; make decisions about events that may happen in your future, consider this. In the Garden of Eden, when did Satan get his hooks in Eve? That's right. When she was alone. God has made us social creatures for many crucial reasons. Hebrews 10:24 and 25 teaches us one.

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

In the same way that "supportive" and "solid" shale of chapter two helped maintain the strength of the wall, the verses above give us the responsibility to build up; encourage to love, the rest of the assembly. We're to watch out for our fellow Christians. These verses are typically speaking of the scriptural New Testament church but apply just as credibly to our own family or Christians we work with.

This deadly choice in Elijah's life-road had much to do with his vision. 1 Kings 18:22 and 19:10, 14 clearly spell out Elijah's mistaken belief he was God's only hope for a leader or prophet of His people. That would seem to me to be plenty of reason to gather as many of like faith nearby as possible. But the above verses say Elijah separated himself from his servant.

Before we rush to the cave experience, to be dealt with in a moment, let's learn a valuable lesson regarding our Heavenly Father and how He treats His children that take the fork that can lead to destruction.

"And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God."

What a tender compassionate God we have. Elijah had not selected God's best will for his life as he ran scared. But God provided for Elijah's needs from heaven itself. Have you been keeping track of all the ways that God has fed those that are His? Let's list them:

- ³⁵/₁₇ Ravens
- ³⁵/₁₇ Miracle oil and meal
- ³⁵/₁₇ Obadiah's smuggled food
- ³⁵/₁₇ Angel food cakes

God doesn't hold anything back in providing for us. He catered Elijah using the animal kingdom, the two poorest people on earth, Obadiah circumvented the laws of the land, but the last is best. God sent an angel directly from heaven to save Elijah from starvation. That same God, the God of Elijah wants to provide for us and even more!

Elijah, like us sometimes, sinned by making the wrong choice in his heart. Sin is doing things we know God doesn't like. Besides teaching us what is sin, God also provides a Gift of Eternal cleansing from those sins. At the back of this book, the Roman's Road states, from God's Holy Word:

...But the Gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ His Son.” Romans 6:23

The provision of angel food cakes reminds us that, just like God, we need to hate the sin but love the sinner. Watch for those taking that fork in the road that brings death, and share the promises and provisions of love and forgiveness we've received.

Can you by tears feel the separation, the emptiness of the lost and disposed, and understand what Elijah felt before the cave? As he stands on the hill and sees an earthquake and all its power, he feels only emptiness. Intense light and heat of fire, but still no comfort. In all the ages past and future, God speaks with a heart broken for His sheep that have gone astray, in a soft voice, "Won't you repent of your sin and trust in the shed blood of my own Son, Jesus Christ, to give you a clean heart?"

**God's greatest provision is
Not sustenance but salvation.**

Today is the day of salvation.

On to the next chapter >>

Chapter 10 - APPLES FROM A CHERRY TREE

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE? A soft furry bunny hops thru the yard toward the family garden with her eyes set on succulent turnip tops. OK so far; right? Across the yard comes Barfy, the neighbor's dog. You get the strange feeling that Barfy has love on his mind. Actually, we've described enough of the picture for you to see a law about to be observed.

Guess what? All flowers aren't alike! Startling revelation right? Neither are snakes, stones, snowflakes, pets, or people. In Genesis God established a law that said that only apples come off apple trees. Well, actually He said more than that. He said several times "be fruitful and multiply" and added "after his kind."

You really need to internalize this. There's more here than you imagine. There is beauty and enjoyment of a bouquet of contrasting colored flowers or a blend of different elements of a symphony.

Quiz Time ⇨ your young person wants to learn to play the tuba. Do you send him/her to a sweet potato teacher or a tuba teacher?

See you've got the picture. If you want to grow your own applesauce, don't plant cherry trees. Further, if poor quality or low fruit yield is evident, the tree, vine, or plant is ailing and needs attention. In this respect, people are like plants. Therefore, show me what's produced and I'll tell you much about what produced it.

I'll bet many evenings were spent close to the flickering firelight as Elijah told Elisha the events in his life and what he learned from them. About six years they spent together teaching, questioning, and seeing God working out His plan no matter what. Hold onto your socks and turn to II Kings 4:32.

"And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes."

Elisha must have thought a great deal about the similarity of this event and the one Elijah was a part of. Could the events and lessons that Elisha received from Elijah have been preparation for many "opportunities" that were to come to Elisha?

Yikes! Maybe I better start paying better attention to how God moves in the lives of those close to me!

It even makes you wonder if history repeats itself. Look at II Kings 4:1-2

"Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what has thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil."

Here we go again...

"Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbors, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest."

I get excited thinking of that widow woman as she finally took all those pots back to her neighbors she'd borrowed them from and explaining the miraculous presence of God's sustaining power, honoring her faithfulness within her own house. If only the neighbors realized what they were hearing, was only half the story.

Since we re studying Elijah and not Elisha, we'll not cover the many other parallel events of the two prophets listed in II Kings; except for a very intriguing one regarding Elijah's coat or mantle. A mantle is one's "overcoat"; a large rectangular covering usually worn over both shoulders, much the same as a poncho is worn today. Look at I Kings 19:19....

"So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him."

Keep your mind's eye on this mantle as it becomes a special indicator in these verses:
(II Kings 2:6-8):

"And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan. And He said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground."

And then....

"And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over."

This coat used first by Elijah to split the Jordan River, and then by Elisha was to produce a crucial transition of power and authority in the eyes of the sons of the prophets. Verse 15:

"And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him."

Now let's face facts. Elisha knew of several flaws in the character of Elijah, but that didn't deter him from "pestering" Elijah to give him a double portion of his spirit. Verses 9-12:

"And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces."

This chapter set out to show the many similarities of the two prophets. That's the cherries from a cherry tree. But we earthly parents, as with our heavenly Parent, desire that the fruit be better; that each generation would be more like the Master, than his father before him.

Elisha asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit and it showed. Except for Moses, Elisha performed more miracles than any other prophet. But more commendable was that unlike Elijah, Elisha never complained about his lot, fled from his enemies, or lost his courage.

It's not possible to receive a mantle from our predecessor and divide the waters as Elisha did, but turn to John 14:12.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

Go back and read that verse again.... No! I'll wait; go read it the second time! Since we can use every verse in God's Word to lead us to truth that verse means exactly what it says. Being led of the Lord, we'll do greater works than He did.

And He created the universe!

It really takes a study of the remainder of John 14 to appreciate all that's inside verse 12. The frosting on this cake, I mean chapter, "APPLES FROM A CHERRY TREE", is contained in the first half of John 15. Verse 8 says:

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

TIME'S A WASTIN'!

On to the last chapter >>

Chapter 11 – SERVICE WITH HEART AND FEET

GOD'S UP TO SOMETHING!
HE'S REALLY UP TO SOMETHING!

WE'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT HE'S UP TO,
UNTIL WE GET OFF OF WHAT WE'RE DOWN ON!

It's terribly discouraging when we try so hard to do those things we believe God wants us to do, and somehow thought more would come of it. My father told me, that activity doesn't get things done. Activity that's focused through good planning gets things done. The most active chicken in the barn yard is one that just got his head chopped off! That isn't what he planned, no wonder he didn't get ahead. (<grin> Sorry...)

Plan

God wants us to follow His leading. So choose objectives (goals) that are definable. "I'll do better at memorizing scripture this summer..." is not something that can be described in certain terms and therefore gives us no way to determine if "I'm doing OK". That's just activity. Satan loves these vague attempts at Christian service. Plan your work.

Remember the quiet time in chapter two, we found to be SO important? With fervent prayer and sometimes fasting, ask for God's hand to point to specific endeavors. Write them down. Add a best guess completion date and even write down a way to reward yourself if the objective is met on time.

For many, just after one's morning devotions are great. Even plan for some unexpected waiting periods through the day, to use time wisely that God has given you. Put the names and info about a missionary family in your pocket and use that time to intercede for them at the throne of prayer.

Size

Size your goals. Be wise in deciding how a big goal can be broken up into smaller goals. "God, I'm not big enough to take on all the trashy-mouthed people at work. Lead me to just one, that I'll show my love for their soul. Then give me the next one..."

The Holy Spirit has a wonderful way of putting peace in your heart as He shows when goals should be done. Many times, my pastor has given wise counsel in these areas.

Furthermore, it's not possible to take several "I'm gonna' do better at ""goals" and decide which should be done when and how...

Sort

Know which objectives are 'important' and which are 'urgent'. So often, Satan sidetracks us before we determine which is which. In almost every case, the 'important' ones should be done first. It's usually wrong to do the quick and easy first. This is a deceiver, if there ever was one.

Lead

Lead even before the meeting starts. Create and distribute the agenda before meetings if God has given you the privilege of leading. You'll be surprised what happens when you define blocks of the meeting time on the agenda, before the meeting...

Flexible

Interruptions happen every 10-15 minutes that can destroy you. Just don't blame God. He has fascinating ways to deal with them! Remember.... It's not how much we do, but the value of what we get done.

Delegating

When delegating responsibility or in real discipleship, agree on objectives. If the other fellow is given an objective, have him repeat back to you, what he thinks you said.

Follow-up

Distributing meeting minutes with action items with their ownerships works great. It'll start the follow-up meeting with a whiz-bang. Be gracious with people, but firm and serious with God's time. That's just good tithing rules...

Lee Shelton, on one of his Creating Teamwork tapes tells of his little neighbor Nancy:

Nancy: "Hi Mr. Shelton! It's Girl Scout cookie time. Last year you bought 2 boxes."

Lee: "OK. I'll buy 2 more."

Nancy: "But.... Mr. Shelton - Susan and Karen are both off to college. Wouldn't it be nice to send them a surprise box of Girl Scout cookies?"

Lee: "OK. 1 for my wife, 1 for Karen, and 1 for Susan."

Nancy: "But you bought 2 for your wife last year!" Lee: "OK. Give me 4 boxes of cookies."

Nancy: "Could I ask you a couple more questions? Last year you bought Samoa Choc. and Choc. fudge. Were they good?"

Lee: "They were delicious." Nancy: "I have only one more question.... how long did they last?"

Lee: "OK. Give me 8 boxes and get outta' here!"

That year Nancy sold 63 boxes of cookies. Three years later she sold 400 boxes to the same number of customers....

God wants us to be prepared in every way possible, to be the ambassador He wants us to be, with true humility. We're in training to be rulers with Him and allow Him to do the exalting. We are MORE THAN CONQUERORS as we let Him lead.

END OF DOCUMENT