

Title: Crying Out in Faith: Trusting God Through Hardship and Unanswered Questions

Sermon Summary: Drawing from the account of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17, this sermon challenges believers to examine their theology when life does not unfold as expected. The pastor explores how God's sovereignty does not guarantee a pain-free life, but does guarantee sufficient grace for every hardship. Through the widow's crisis, Elijah's desperate prayer, and parallel New Testament accounts, the sermon calls believers to shift their focus from pain and blame to faith and worship, trusting that God's purposes are often displayed most clearly in the midst of suffering rather than in its absence.

Key Points:

- Genuine faith requires action before seeing results, illustrated by the widow giving from her last resources before receiving provision
- God's sovereignty means He is not obligated to work according to human expectations or formulas
- False theology assumes that blessings follow obedience in a predictable, pain-free pattern, but Scripture consistently shows otherwise
- When hardship strikes, the natural human response is to assign blame, as the widow blamed Elijah for her son's death, forgetting the provision she had already received
- Focusing on Christ rather than on pain is what enables believers to endure suffering, just as Paul learned that God's grace is sufficient in weakness
- Crying out to God in genuine, passionate prayer is both appropriate and powerful, as Elijah's example demonstrates
- Not every difficulty is the result of personal sin, and not every trial is an attack from the enemy; some hardships exist so that the glory of God may be displayed
- Believers are called to rejoice in hardship, not because pain is pleasant, but because God's grace is present and active within it
- Theology should be grounded in Scripture rather than in feelings or personal assumptions about how God operates

- The Holy Spirit leads believers into truth and gives them the mind of Christ to discern God's voice and purposes

Scripture Reference:

- 1 Kings 17:13-22, the account of Elijah, the widow of Zarephath, her son's death, and the miraculous restoration of life
- 2 Corinthians 12, where Paul describes his thorn in the flesh and God's declaration that His grace is sufficient
- James 1, the call to consider it pure joy when facing trials of many kinds
- James 5, the reminder that Elijah was a man just like us, affirming ordinary believers' access to powerful prayer
- John 9:1-3, Jesus correcting the disciples' assumption that the blind man's condition was caused by sin
- John 11, the account of Lazarus, where Jesus delayed His arrival so that the glory of God could be revealed through resurrection

Stories:

- The widow of Zarephath giving her last handful of flour and oil to Elijah before herself, resulting in a miraculous and sustained provision of food throughout the drought
- The death of the widow's son and her emotional accusation that Elijah's presence caused it, followed by Elijah carrying the boy upstairs, crying out to God three times, and the boy being restored to life
- The pastor's personal reflection on growing up on a farm, using the principle that there is no harvest without planting as an analogy for faith-driven giving and action
- The account of Mark Grantham, a member of the congregation who received a life-saving lung transplant and joined the men's group remotely, expressing not grief but a resolve to complete God's mission with his extended life
- Jesus walking on water with Peter as an illustration of how believers begin in faith but sink when they shift their focus to surrounding circumstances
- The healing of the man born blind in John 9, used to counter the assumption that suffering is always a direct consequence of sin
- The raising of Lazarus in John 11, illustrating that God sometimes allows death and grief so that His glory may be more fully revealed