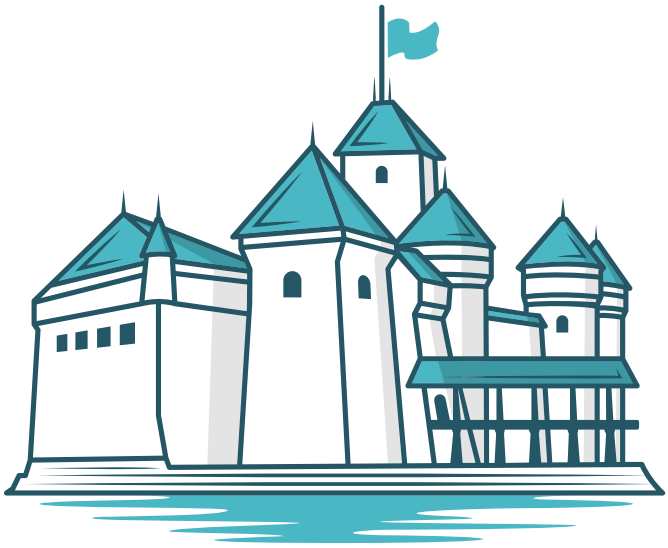

REFORMED PAVILION

Volume 4 Issue 34

November 28, 2026

For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.
—Psalm 27:5

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And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

—Philippians 1:9–11

And This I Pray

The apostle had mentioned earlier that he prayed for the Philippians: "always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy" (Phil. 1:4). He now reveals the content of that prayer: "and this I pray" (v. 9). And what a prayer it was! Paul prayed that God might so fill the Philippians with the fruits of their salvation that they overflowed with those fruits—the fruit of an ever more abounding love, the fruit of spiritual discernment in all things, and the fruit of a pure and godly life in this world. How instructive Paul's petition is for the church of Jesus Christ today. For in Paul's petition for the Philippians is revealed the blessed will of God for his church and his gracious gift to her. Let us consider Paul's prayer and be glad.

The apostle prayed that the Philippians' "love may abound yet more and more" (Phil. 1:9). The saints in Philippi loved God. They loved God's glory and praise. They loved Jesus Christ. They looked forward to seeing Christ in the day of his return. And Paul prayed for these Philippian Christians that in all their loving, their love might abound even more. Paul prayed that they might go from love to more love and to even more love yet. What beautiful fruit this would be in the Philippians! And how different the Philippians would be in their love from the other citizens in Philippi. The men of Philippi were cruel and hateful. They made merchandise of a miserable, demon-possessed damsel (Acts 16:16). They beat Paul and Silas with "many stripes" (v. 23). They accused innocent men openly but acquitted them secretly (v. 37). But God had graciously given the saints in Philippi the fruit of love for God. And Paul prayed that their love might abound yet more and more.

The apostle added to his petition for the Philippians' love that it would abound "in knowledge and in all judgment" (Phil. 1:9). The knowledge—literally, "full knowledge"—of which the apostle speaks is faith. The judgment—literally, "sense" or "perception"—of which the apostle speaks is also faith. The apostle is referring to the fact that faith knows God, and faith knows Jesus Christ. And knowing God in Christ, faith has a spiritual sense and perception of God, his kingdom, his righteousness, his salvation, his glory, and all things that God has revealed in his word. Faith is not blind to God but sees him. Faith is not deaf to the gospel but hears it. Faith is not insensible of Christ but perceives him. Faith is not ignorant of the kingdom of heaven but knows it and senses it. And what does faith do when it sees God, perceives Christ, hears his gospel, and senses his kingdom? Why, faith loves God! Faith loves Christ, the gospel, righteousness, the kingdom of heaven, and all the spiritual gifts of salvation. And the more faith knows of God, the more faith loves him. By the full knowledge and spiritual sense of faith, the Philippians' love—and our love—would abound more and more.

The apostle also prayed that the Philippians "may approve things that are excellent" (Phil. 1:10). By this petition Paul asked God to give the Philippians spiritual discernment in all things. How God's people need spiritual discernment in

this life! Good differs from evil. Righteousness differs from sin. Everything must be weighed and tested to know what is good and evil. And we do not naturally know what is good or evil. Our nature is reflected in the magistrates in Philippi, who lacked all discernment in their rush to judgment against Paul and Silas (Acts 16:22). But by faith God's people try the things that differ in order to discern what is right and good. What beautiful fruit this would be in the Philippians!

The apostle also prayed that the Philippians "may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10). By "sincere" Paul meant pure, unmixed, and unalloyed. Paul was praying that the Philippians would be determined to live free from sin, refusing to mix into themselves those things that are evil. By "without offence" Paul meant avoiding the stumbling stones of sin that trip men spiritually. Paul was praying that the Philippians would not stumble into sin but would instead avoid temptation. When Paul referred to "the day of Christ," he was envisioning the entire life of the Philippians spread out before them, all the way to the far horizon of the return of Jesus Christ on the clouds of glory. His petition, then, was that the Philippians live all their days upon the earth without stumbling over sin or mixing it into their lives. What beautiful fruit this would be in the Philippians!

All these fruits for which the apostle prayed he called "the fruits of righteousness" (Phil. 1:11). The meaning is not that these fruits counted before God as the righteousness of the Philippians. Certainly not! Paul's doctrine of righteousness was not justification by works but justification by faith alone. As he preached in Philippi, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). And as he would write to the Philippians, "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). Paul called the good works for which he prayed "the fruits of righteousness" not because they would make the Philippians righteous but because they are God's sure and inevitable gift to those who are righteous in Christ.

How would God give such fruit to his people? Why, "by Jesus Christ"! (Phil. 1:11). The fruits would not—could not!—spring from the Philippians themselves, any more than a tree can make itself good. Rather, God unites his people to Christ through the living bond of faith. The good works spring from Christ and thus come from the people as the fruit graciously given to them. It is God's will that his people be filled with fruit, and through Christ God graciously gives his people what he wills.

The honor for the fruits of righteousness belongs entirely to God, according to the apostle's conclusion: "unto the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:11). To whom else could the glory belong? Certainly not to the Philippians—nor to us, who spoil with our sin even the good works that God gives us. No, the glory and praise for the good works that God graciously gives us must belong to God alone. And so the apostle prays for God to give these fruits.

What a prayer it is! For therein is revealed the will of God and the gift of God for his people in Christ. And because it is the gift of God, this fruit is sure.

> And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:9–11)

—AL

REFORMED PAVILION

From the Editor

Winter has arrived at *Reformed Pavilion* headquarters, as we in West Michigan awoke yesterday to snow on the ground. With the snow came reminders of great and precious truths. God's sovereignty: "He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes" (Ps. 147:16). Man's smallness: "Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?" (Job 38:22). God's faithfulness: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22). And the forgiveness of our sins in Christ: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isa. 1:18). Though we must now hunker down for another season of cold, how welcome is the gospel, as pictured in the snow!

In this issue is a transcript of a sermon by Prof. Herman Hanko, preached in 2012. The text for the sermon was I Kings 19:7: "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." The occasion for printing this transcript is twofold. First, the sermon touches on many of the incidents that make up the catechism lesson that the children in Remnant Reformed Church will be learning this week. The sermon may provide helpful background as parents teach their children the material. Second, the sermon comforts God's people with the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified. The journey through this world is always too great for the church, but the heavenly food that God provides gives us strength for the journey. For the heavenly food that God provides is Christ. The church may perish outwardly, but she lives by faith.

May the Lord prosper these few pages for his glory and for his people's comfort.

—AL

The Scrivener

Food for the Journey Ahead

> "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."
>
> —I Kings 19:7

Introduction

That, beloved, is the word of God to you and to me tonight, the word which God speaks to us and is speaking to us now.[1] Arise and eat, for the journey is too difficult for thee. Are you prepared to obey that voice of the Lord? It's a command, you know; it's not a suggestion as to a possible wise course of action. It's a command from God himself to you, telling you to arise and eat because the journey ahead is a journey which you will *never* be able to make by your own strength. You need food prepared by angels.

I call your attention to this text under the theme "Food for the Journey Ahead." I ask you to notice, first of all, a great need; secondly, a heavenly meal; and finally, a safe journey.

A Great Need

What a difference there is in the text between Elijah on Mount Carmel and Elijah under the juniper tree

[1] This is a transcript of Prof. Herman Hanko, "Food for the Journey Ahead," sermon preached on November 11, 2012, https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermons/323131337260.

in the wilderness south of Judah. On Mount Carmel he is confident and strong and determined to point the nation of Israel to her God and stand in the cause of God in the midst of a wicked and apostate nation, fearless, unashamed. "Why halt ye between two opinions? If God be God, follow him; and if Baal, then follow him." That was Elijah on Carmel, when he stood face to face with the false prophets and priests of Baal, with Ahab himself, with the whole retinue of Ahab's court, and with representatives from all parts of the northern kingdom. He stood alone, and he was at that triumphant moment on Carmel the epitome of what his name meant. Elijah means, of course, "My God is Jehovah." Fearlessly he proclaimed that. "Though all of you shout yourselves hoarse, saying as loud as you can, 'Baal is my god. Baal is my god,' I stand here to confront you with the fact that Jehovah is *my God*."

And in order to prove to the nation of Israel that the only one true God was on his side and not on the side of the apostates of the northern kingdom, Elijah challenged them to a showdown. "Make an altar to Baal. Put a cow on it. But don't put fire on it. I will also build an altar, twelve stones, one for each tribe in Israel"—which clearly indicated, of course, that Elijah, standing in the name of God, wanted nothing so much as that the northern kingdom would repent of its apostasy and be joined again to the southern kingdom of Judah and the worship of God in the temple, to restore the glory days of David and Solomon. Twelve stones. And on that altar of stones he laid his dead cow, cut up into pieces. And his challenge to Israel was, "What God sends fire, he is the true God."

That challenge of Elijah to the people, by the way, was deliberately formed in this fashion. We must not forget that in the drama of the scene on Carmel. The sacrifice which Elijah prepared was, after all, a picture of Calvary. And Elijah knew that too. The question at issue is not only just Jehovah and Baal; it's what Jehovah can do to save us and what Baal can do to save us. That's the question. Is it true that the heritage of Israel—Elijah was saying that—is it true that the heritage of Israel is its hope of the coming of Christ and the atonement of God himself in our flesh, who would make the perfect sacrifice for sin? Is salvation to be found in the gods that we form with our hands and shape from wood and stone and iron, so that we are the ones who ultimately are responsible for our deliverance from sin? Or does salvation come from above? For the fire that consumes this altar has to be a fire from heaven that pictures the fire of hell and that consumes the one who was sacrificed on the altar of the cross. Those were the issues.

And dramatically and in a powerful fashion, God gave Elijah the sign he sought and said to the whole nation, "Salvation can only be found from me by the sacrifice that *I* make in the person of my Son for the forgiveness of sins and for salvation." Dramatic, powerful.

God did that, I think, for Elijah's sake, to confirm Elijah's testimony before the whole nation because—and here was where Elijah faced his problem—because there is nothing dramatic and earth-shaking about what God does in the salvation of his people; for God is not present, as Elijah was to learn, in a powerful wind that tore rocks to pieces or in an earthquake that shattered the mountains or in fire that consumed everything in its path. God wasn't present in all those things. Only in this still, small voice that was barely audible. God isn't present in the miracles of the Pentecostals. God isn't present in the earth-shaking events of revivals. There is no god who saves in all these things; but God saves quietly, unnoticed, in the hearts of his people by the still, small voice of the Spirit.

And so this was for Elijah's sake, to confirm his witness, *and* for judgment upon the house of Israel. And Elijah had to see that too. God would come in judgment upon the nation of Israel.

But all the people, moved by the greatness of the wonder, fell on their faces and chanted in unison, "Jehovah, he is the God; Jehovah, he is the God." And Elijah was thrilled to the marrow of his bones. He had attained the goal for which he had fought for three and a half years.

And now, here he sits under the juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die. He said, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers."

So Elijah resigned from office. And he resigned from office because it came to him, through the words of Jezebel, that his work was a failure and

that he was incapable as a servant of Jehovah to accomplish the work for which he had been sent. But he had to learn that he was sadly mistaken.

You know, Elijah isn't any different than you and I. It's very difficult to walk the path of a child of God in the midst of the world because there's all kinds of opposition and all kinds of suffering that is involved in walking that way. And Elijah simply admitted—and never was he closer to the truth than that moment—"I am incapable of doing it." That leaves us with a suspicion—and I think that suspicion is valid—that Elijah, in a moment of weakness, thought that the salvation of the northern kingdom rested on his shoulders and that the failure of Carmel was proof that he was not up to the task. And therefore, in a way, he felt sorry for himself. "Poor me. I can't do it." And "I can't do it" as if the whole burden of the work fell on him! As if he was the one who by a dramatic incident on Mount Carmel could persuade the northern kingdom to come to repentance and to repent of its apostasy and to carry on the work of killing the prophets and priests of Baal and kill Ahab and that whore in the palace in Samaria, Jezebel and all her retinue of servants. He had the opinion momentarily that the work was his to do and that he had failed utterly. "I am no better than my fathers. Take away my life. I might as well die. I don't want to be a prophet anymore. I don't get anywhere. Nobody listens to me. Poor, poor me."

And yet, at the same time, there was a holy zeal in Elijah too. He mentions to God the terrible wickedness of the nation. "They kill thy prophets; they slay thy people with the sword. And everybody's dead, and I'm the only one left; and now they're seeking my life, and they're threatening to kill me within twenty-four hours." At the same time, you see that while Elijah felt sorry for himself, he was filled with a burning and unquenchable zeal for the cause of God. He wanted the northern kingdom to repent. He wanted them to forsake their Baal worship. He wanted them to unite with Judah. And he wanted the kingdom of God once again to be established with the center of its kingdom on Mount Zion and in the worship of God in the temple. And he labored night and day to accomplish that goal too. But he was weak and frail, and so his own self-pity got in the way.

It's interesting that the angel should say to him, "You better eat the food that I prepare for you, because the journey is too hard for you." And that's a word of God to us, beloved. The journey is too hard for us, the journey that makes us pilgrims and strangers in the earth and the journey that is required of us to go from here to heaven. It's a difficult road, I tell you, for all kinds of reasons. And certainly God is right when he says to you and me, "The journey is too hard for you." That's true, for example, because many of God's people—most of God's people at one time or another—find the way in which God calls them to walk difficult because of the circumstances of their life. The young mother who loses her husband cries out, "I can't go on! It's too much for me!" An elder in the church, confronted with the hardness of the heart of an unrepentant sinner, finally despairs. "I can't go see him, because I get nowhere." Ministers have the same problem. I don't mind telling you about the fact that there are times—there have been times in my ministry when on Sunday morning, prior to my going to the pulpit, I *pleaded* with all my heart that the Lord would do something to me so that I didn't have to go to preach. It's too hard, too difficult. Every child of God faces that. And it isn't always the burdens of life which God places upon us, but it's the difficulty of walking faithfully in the way of God's commandments and the daily, constant, incessant struggle with sin. I can't do it! Sin overwhelms me. What's the use of fighting? Momentarily the devil seems to be vanquished, only to come back again with double power and drag me by his long fingernails and claws into his clutches, where he rules in my life. I can't fight anymore. The temptations of life are too great. I can't resist them; I can't go forward.

And for the church of Christ as a whole, there isn't any question about it that as we near the end of time and as the signs of Christ's coming become increasingly clear and the days of the antichrist loom within sight, though still on the horizon, we face the question, how can I ever be faithful when those days come? How can my children be faithful when faithfulness is demanded under what are seemingly impossible circumstances? Lord, I can't do it. And any officebearer in the church, and I presume any officebearer who holds the office

of believers, reaches those points in his or her life when he says, "Lord, I resign. The burdens of the office are too great. The calling unto which I am called by thee is more than I can bear."

I don't have any doubt about it that there is always a certain element of self-pity in this. We're more concerned for ourselves and our own well-being—as Elijah was too—than we are for the honor and glory of God. And so we feel sorry for ourselves. We have it so *bad*. We have it worse than anybody else. Nobody seems to understand what I'm going through. How can anyone share my burden when they don't know what it's like to live under the pressures and carrying the burdens which God has placed upon me? I feel sorry for myself. There's always that.

And that self-pity is spiritually one of the most dangerous things that a child of God can face. Don't ever let yourself, beloved, get trapped in the trap of self-pity. Don't do that. It's the worst thing that can happen. But we all face the moments that Elijah faced, and there we sit under the juniper tree. "Lord, let me die." It wasn't that long ago that someone prominent in the church called me up and said, "*Oh*, I wish I could just die!" Life is difficult. The angel knew that. And the angel, in knowing it, said to Elijah, "I'm aware of the fact, Elijah, that the way is too hard, too great, for thee; so I'm going to give you something to eat that will enable you to continue the journey."

A Heavenly Meal

And so the angel prepared a meal for Elijah, a very simple meal, from all appearances: a cake baked on coals, which the angel prepared, and a bag of water—a skin, a cruse, of water. And he said to Elijah, "Arise and eat. This will enable you to walk the journey you have to walk."

Now, that was a miraculous meal. You understand that, do you not? It was a miraculous meal because the angel made it, and he didn't get flour that was next to Elijah under the juniper tree, and whatever else you have to put into dough in order to make a cake or loaf of bread. He did it by the power of the place from which he had come, heaven itself, that God provided the ingredients. And the food which he made was made with ingredients that came from heaven, not from the earth. I don't know if it tasted any differently than a loaf of bread that was made with flour and water and yeast. I don't know. Doesn't make any difference. The ingredients were heavenly. And as such, it was a reminder to Elijah of the manna with which God had fed Israel in the wilderness. And in fact, one of the psalms, Psalm 107 it is, isn't it [Psalm 78:25], where the manna which God gave to the Israelites while they were in the wilderness is called by the psalmist "angels' food." They ate angels' food. And Elijah couldn't help but be struck by that when the angel baked a loaf of bread for him on the fire.

Now, we all know that the manna with which God fed Israel in the wilderness—and therefore the food, the cake or bread, that the angel prepared for Elijah—was a picture of *Christ*. Jesus makes that clear when he argues in Capernaum with the Jews about the miracle of the five thousand who were fed with five loaves and two fishes. "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and are dead." And Jesus, by doing that, claims to himself that, although that manna in the wilderness in itself could not keep alive, it pointed to one who was the bread of life, the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And the command to Elijah—and I have no doubt in my mind at all that Elijah understood that—the command to Elijah was, "Eat and drink *Christ*. For the journey is too hard for thee."

That was the issue, was it not? That was the issue on Carmel. Would God provide the sacrifice for sin, or would Baal? How can the sinner be justified before God and be declared righteous before the throne of the majesty on high? Can he be declared righteous by the power of a god who cannot see and cannot hear and cannot do what is asked of him? Or can Jehovah God alone provide that sacrifice? He can and does, in Christ. And so Elijah's meal pointed ahead to Christ. Don't worry, Elijah; you're so concerned about your seeming defeat on Carmel that you forgot all about Christ! Now eat him, and drink his blood; and then you will have food for the journey ahead.

That's what I meant when I said to you this word of God comes to you tonight—and it's coming to you this week—that you may come to the table of the Lord, as the bread and the wine are laid out

before you and you are commanded to take, eat; and take and drink. The command is, eat the food that I provide because the journey is too hard for you. You aren't going to make it. You mustn't think you can. You mustn't try by your strength. Eat this food and drink that *I* prepare. Then, no matter how difficult the journey may be, you'll be able to travel.

You understand, of course, that in referring to Christ, the angel was pointing Elijah to the fact that he is the perfect sacrifice for sin. No sacrifice which the priests of Baal bring can do anything at all. In fact, the sacrifices which the priests of Baal bring are blasphemous, denials of God, a lifting up of the pride of man. "I am able to save myself. I am able to carry the load. I'll struggle myself to make my way through these problems. I'll keep a stiff upper lip, no matter how difficult the pathway of life becomes. I'll manage. I don't need you; I don't need any help; I don't need God. I'll make it myself." And God shows in a powerful and unmistakable way, "You can't do it. You can't do it. The way is too difficult."

To accomplish the tasks that God gives you to perform, and to fulfill your daily obligations in the home and in the church and in the world, there is only one food that will suffice; and that one food is Christ—not the Christ of Bethlehem but the Christ of Calvary, who made the perfect sacrifice for sin. I must, my beloved people of God, I must bring you again to the cross. There's nowhere else to go. The perfect sacrifice of Christ, who on Calvary was *God* paying for our sins and doing that which we cannot do.

And as God, who paid for our sins, he made a perfect sacrifice. Please, please don't ever think that there is some small sin in your life for which he did not die: some slip of the tongue, some moment of God-forgetfulness, some blasphemous word, some unclean thought, there momentarily and then gone, for which Christ did not die. He died for them all. I can't count my sins. I can't know them. I have to pray with David in Psalm 19, "Forgive the secret sins I do not know. Thou knowest them." And Christ knew them and died for them and paid the penalty of hell for every single one.

But he did more than that. He earned for us the grace that we can pursue the pathway of life in which God calls us to walk; the strength, the strength that we need no matter what the way may be, no matter how difficult, how heavy the burdens, how great the trials. Strength comes from Christ, and the ability to perform our tasks is given us of sovereign and irresistible grace. Come, rise and eat. The journey is too hard for you.

There it is. It's there in the preaching of the gospel. That's why in every, every sermon, if the minister does not lead the congregation to Christ, he's unfaithful in his calling. That's the only place where we can go. And there, and nowhere else, do we see the wonder of God's mighty works which he does on behalf of his church, the great work that was performed when he himself in the person of his Son paid with the blood of his Son for our sins, went to hell that we might be freed from sin. There, on the cross.

When we eat and drink Christ, as Christ makes clear to that multitude in Capernaum after the miracle of feeding the five thousand men—he makes clear that to eat him, eat his flesh and drink his blood, is to believe in him. There's an article in our Belgic Confession on the Lord's supper. You should really read that tonight. Maybe if you have a little bit to eat with your family after church, you can read that together instead of reading the Bible tonight. Read that article on the Lord's supper. In that article you will find an expression that you never will find in any of our other creeds. It says in there that the food that we receive in the Lord's supper—which is, after all, only the gospel for our eyes, the cross of Christ displayed before us in the broken bread and the poured-out wine—that's the food of our *souls*. And that food of our souls we eat and drink with *faith*, which is, and now I quote, "the mouth of the soul." That's the way our Belgic Confession puts it. When that first came to my attention, I shook my head a little bit. That's a peculiar expression. But nevertheless, it's true. The bread which we need for the difficulties of the way is not the bread that nourishes the body but the bread that nourishes the soul.

That was the great mistake the rich fool made when he had built new barns and they were all full of the grains of his harvest, and he said to himself, "Soul"—he talked to his soul—"Soul, take thine

ease; eat and drink and be merry. For thou hast many goods laid up for thee for many years." The *soul* eat meat and corn and barley? The soul? It's all right for the mind, for the body, but it won't do for the soul. The only food for a depraved, a totally depraved, soul is Christ. And the mouth of that soul, says the Belgic Confession, is the instrument of faith, by which we eat and drink Christ. We believe in him.

And to believe in him means that we confess, first of all, that all our sins are forgiven in his perfect sacrifice. He earned for us the righteousness of God, so that we are before God without sin. He did that. When God sees us in Christ, he sees us as saints, not sinners. That was what Balaam was forced to prophesy. "Curse Israel." "How shall I curse whom God has blessed? I see no iniquity in Jacob, neither transgression in Israel." Why not? "Because the shout of a king is among them." Jesus Christ himself, shouting triumphantly from hell, "It is finished. All that is necessary for the salvation of my church is accomplished, God himself paying the price." When we believe that, believe that with all our hearts, not live in doubt, not questioning our salvation, not always moaning about our sins, not always complaining about how difficult the way is, that we are incapable of fighting against our sins anymore; no, Christ is enough. And he is not only our righteousness, but he is strength sufficient for all the journey, with all of its burdens, with all of its struggles, with all of its sorrows, with all of its seemingly impossible tasks. Life even when persecution is our lot. How shall we ever walk that way? Christ. He's enough. He's enough for our responsibilities in our homes. He's enough for our calling in the church.

"What doest thou here, Elijah?" God is provoked. "What are you wallowing in self-pity beneath the juniper tree?" That's what God says to us when we say, "Lord, I can't do it. I can't do it. It's too much." He says to us, "Quit! Quit that! Don't talk that way! I am your strength. I am your help." How does Paul put it in I Corinthians 10? There has no trial overtaken us which is greater than we can bear, but God provides the way of escape through Christ, who is our strength, our help. When we lay hold on him by faith and say, "I belong to my faithful savior, Jesus Christ," then we say with Paul too, in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Christ. His sacrifice.

A Safe Journey

And so we can make the journey, as Elijah did. That was an amazing journey Elijah made. He went on the strength of that food forty days and forty nights. Apparently he never stopped, and apparently he never slept. But it took him forty days and forty nights of constant travel, when the distance was—from Beersheba to Sinai—less than three hundred miles. Now, that's a long trip to walk. But it doesn't take you forty days and forty nights to walk that. But Elijah had to take forty days and forty nights to make the trip because four is the symbolic number in scripture for our life in this world. We wander in the wilderness; and therefore Elijah, in those forty days and forty nights, walking in the strength he had received from the angel's food, could not help but be reminded of the forty years of wandering of the people of Israel in the wilderness. He retraced their steps. And God said to Elijah during those forty days and forty nights, "Did those people ever lack anything? Didn't I give them manna from heaven, angels' food? Didn't I give them water to drink from the rock? Didn't I give them a cloud that gave them shade during the blazing heat of the summer day and a cloud of fire by night to lead them in the way that they could go? Was there ever a time when I forsook my people? Was there, Elijah? Do you think I'll forsake my people? Do you think I will do that? Do you think I'll forget all about Christ, as unbelieving Israel did in the wilderness and as you're doing, sitting there moaning under the juniper tree? Think I would ever do that?"

And so Elijah had to go to Sinai, where God revealed himself in thunder and the blare of a trumpet and in lightning and in fire, because God had to show Elijah, "There are wicked, plenty wicked in the church, as there was in the wilderness. And I come in judgment upon them, and the house of Ahab will be destroyed, and all those wicked Baal worshipers will come under my fierce wrath"—as still is true today. Earthquakes, snowstorms, hurricanes, whatever they may be, are the *roar* of a furious God against the workers of

iniquity. He will surely kill those who worship Baal, and their judgment shall be full. That's Sinai. Those who keep not my law will be killed and suffer untold anguish under my wrath. But I have preserved unto myself, Elijah, in Israel too, seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Do you really think that I can't take care of my church? Maybe my church is not what you thought it ought to be. And maybe there aren't enough saved to suit you. And maybe, just maybe, you're interested in and zealous for the wrong things. But I won't forget my people. I will preserve unto myself a remnant—but not by earthquakes and not by raging fires and not by powerful winds but through the work of the Spirit, who carries out the great, heavenly, amazing work of the cross of Jesus Christ in the hearts of my people. And they will receive from Christ the food they need for the journey.

That's God's word tonight. Hear it. Hear it next Sunday morning when you come to church. Arise and eat, for the journey is too hard for you. But with *this food*, you will arrive safe in your destination, your Father's house. Amen.

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