

## Trust God's Word

✦ **When guilty fears assail... (vv.17,18)**

✦ **God's promise will not fail. (vv.19-24)**

In the name of Jesus, our ever living, ever loving Savior, dear children of the heavenly Father:

Every year in the spring our track coaches loaded us on the bus, drove five miles, and told everyone to get off and start running. Most could make it back to the dining hall by suppertime. Stragglers really didn't want to eat anyway. And then there was "the hill" in football – bad enough in South Dakota high school, longer and steeper for college in Watertown, Wisconsin. But nothing beat "gut-busters" in basketball. Running stairs took longer, but "gut-busters" usually came at the end of practice when everyone was really tired. On the whistle, run to the first line, touch, run back and touch... second line and back...third... fourth...far end – "Killers" – until Coach shouted, "Showers!"

Sometimes we wondered why better shape didn't win more games. Something about running far and fast, *with* the ball. Coaches need to build players' skills too. God must build endurance, skill and faith. "When other helpers fail and comforts flee" (CW 588:1), learn to **Trust God's Word** especially...

✦ **When guilty fears assail... (vv.17,18)**

Elijah appears suddenly at the beginning of this chapter. His first prophetic act is to tell wicked King Ahab that a severe drought will grip the land for several years until Elijah gives the word. Then the LORD commands His prophet to hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, not far from Jericho. The Savior-God provided for faithful Elijah by a miracle: ***"The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook."*** (1 Kings 17:6 NIV)

Human reason wonders why God dried up the brook. Reason cannot grasp how God's infinite power is always directed by His infinite love. But God has a plan. But people are like ants at the base of a skyscraper who can neither see nor understand a helicopter landing up there. Elijah had to suffer while God conditioned His Remnant of believers to enduring faith. More than "gut-busters," God also skillfully used His Word to convert Hebrews and Gentiles to faith in the Messiah. God's Word punished wicked King Ahab and his power-hungry Queen Jezebel. Reason cannot go where grace and goodness rule.

To the Gentile city of Zarephath the LORD sent Elijah. Centuries later, Jesus mentioned this in Nazareth. ***"I tell you the truth..., no prophet is accepted in his hometown....There were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon."*** Remember what happened? His fellow townsfolk wanted to throw Jesus off a nearby hill. ***"But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way."*** (Luke 4:24-26,30 NIV)

This Gentile widow's faithful obedience feeding the LORD's prophet first was God's skillful way of preserving her and her son in faith. Instead of running out of food for two, then lying down to die of starvation, her oil and flour never failed for three – her son, herself and a full grown man, Elijah. Such a miracle should have convinced her of the LORD's power and love. Yet the LORD knew she needed something more. Skillfully God had to convince her to **Trust God's Word** for the salvation of her soul. God is more than a Coach. He has one goal for eternity. He wants you to win with Him in heaven.

One widow, one son. ***"Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. She said to Elijah, "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"*** She had already confessed her faith in the LORD as the living God when she said to Elijah, ***"As surely as the Lord your***

**God lives....**” (17:12) She was a Gentile. The LORD was the God of Elijah and the Jews, yet she had heard about the one true God and put her faith in Him. But now in the death of her son she sees her sin. She opened her home to the LORD’s prophet, and now this? Why did she need such a stark reminder of sin?

Why do any of us? What do we do **When guilty fears assail** us? When we feel so hopeless and helpless because the few friends who do understand, can’t do anything anyway? Occasionally the “guilties” come calling in good times. Like a parishioner years ago who bought a beautiful new car, then somehow needed her pastor to tell her it was okay: “God gave a blessing. Thank Him and enjoy it!” Hear Peter in the boat with Jesus after the great catch of fish: **“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”** Remember how Jesus would not let it be? He said to Peter, **“Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.”** (Luke 5:8-10) Jesus had a plan for Peter **To Trust God’s Word** for himself and everyone who would listen to **God’s Word**. And the LORD had a plan for this widow. He wants to teach us to **Trust God’s Word**. **When guilty fears assail us**, God’s Word assures us, **“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** (Romans 8:1) We learn to **Trust...**

### ✦ **God’s promise will not fail. (vv.19-24)**

Elijah stayed calm in front of her. Taking her dead son in his arms, he carried the boy’s lifeless body up to his quarters, perhaps a room on the roof. He laid the boy gently on his bed. Then he lost it. The original Hebrew shows Elijah feels sorry for the widow who has suffered so much, but also for himself. After all the trouble he has endured, now death comes to the home where he is staying with such grief for a widow to lose her only son! “How much more, O LORD?” Feel the prophet’s pain, but note the LORD’s patience to let him pour out his heart to God. So should we, for the LORD commands: **“Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.”** (Psalm 62:8 NIV)

Stretching three times on a dead body normally won’t do anything. But for His prophet, **God’s promise will not fail**. Centuries earlier the LORD had revealed the meaning of His Name to Moses on Mount Sinai: **“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness....”** (Exodus 34:6 NIV) Now Elijah has no other help. With all our medical technology neither do we. No power of man can raise a dead body back to life. Elijah cries to the Creator, **“O LORD my God, let this boy’s life return to him!”** **The LORD heard Elijah’s cry, and the boy’s life returned.** Imagine the thrill. Elijah gave him back to his mother: **“Look, your son is alive!”**

But that was not the real victory. Listen closely. Hear how the widow has overcome her **guilty fears** because now she can **Trust God’s Word**. She said to Elijah, **“Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth.”** When we learn to **Trust God’s Word** as absolutely true and reliable even in the face of death, our victory with God is assured. We **Trust** what has **“now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”** (2 Timothy 1:10)

Do you see where the LORD really led Elijah and the widow with her son? They were in a valley at the base of a hill, but not to run sprints. The LORD is so much more than the best of our athletic coaches here below. **“The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want....Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.”** (Psalm 23:1,4) Up to the high country of heaven is where the Good Shepherd is leading His sheep. He knows the best way up the mountain is through the valley where heaven’s highway runs. We can’t stop along the way because predators prowl the rim rock. But as we follow the Shepherd’s voice, **God’s promise will not fail**. Christ has passed this way before – **“through the valley of the shadow of death”** – which He conquered by His own death and resurrection. The cruel and unusual punishment we deserved, He suffered.

*Guilt looks back. Worry looks around. Faith looks up. And when faith looks up, courage and cheer come inside.* **Trust God’s Word** and hold life in your arms, close to your heart. Amen.