

1 Kings 17:8-16 Elijah: A Widow and God's Provision

Previously, we left Elijah taking a cue from God that it was time to move on: the brook had dried up signaling the 'end of days' of Elijah's stay. There are three aspects of our relationship with God with which many struggle. The first has to do with God's guidance: "Does God guide?" Yes, Elijah was divinely led, but at a step at a time (**Psalm 37:23**). The second matter has to do with God's discipline. Why do troubles and trials come to the believer? According to our text and **Hebrews 12:3-11**, to build our faith and glorify God. The third matter has to do with God's provision. According to **Genesis 22:14**: "**The Lord will provide**" as not only Elijah but those connected to Elijah...those supporting God's ministry through him...found out.

1 Kings 17:13: "And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear""

- Grammatical Usage: "**fear**" or in the Hebrew, "yare" meaning, "doubt; dread".
- Literal Interpretation: And Elijah said to her, "Do not have spiritual doubt putting you in an emotional state of dread."
- Contextual/Comparison: God keeps His Word, God continually uses His Word. After Elijah had been at the brook Cherith for about a year it dried up. Did that mean God had failed? No, it meant God was about to lead him on. Where to? To Zarephath, where He had commanded a widow to sustain him:

1. THE WIDOW'S UNRELIEVED DISTRESS

We do not know how long she had been a widow, but we are told she had one son. Probably she had been well provided for, but now she was suffering as a result of the drought. We are told that:

She had come to the end of her resources. **Vv. 10** and **12** tell us she was about to take her last meal with her son. Have you come to the end of your resources? Has your money, health, friends, patience, etc., all gone? Take comfort from this story and from **Psalm 84:11-12**.

She was a believer, and yet in distress. **V. 12** indicates this. God knew all about her extremity, as **v. 9** assures us, but He was working out His purpose for her as well as for Elijah. He was causing **Romans 8:28** to be true of her, and also **Psalm 138:8**. If you are experiencing trouble it does not mean that the Lord has forgotten you.

She had lost hope. **V. 12** tells us that she thought she was preparing her last meal before she and her son died! Why did she lose hope? Because her eyes were upon the barrel and the little cruse of oil instead of upon the Lord. If we pin our faith to anything other than God and His provision, we shall certainly lose hope and our faith will falter, but if we put our faith in God He will never fail us (**Isaiah 41:10**).

2. THE PROPHET'S UNDAUNTED FAITH

Any man of smaller faith would have faltered and failed when the brook dried up, but not Elijah! His faith was evident in that:

He had faith to take God at His word (**vv. 8-10**). Elijah lived on the word of the Lord, as we should (**Matthew 4:4**; compare to **1 Kings 17:8, 14, 16**). When our actions are regulated by the Word of God and our lives are lived in the center of His will, we have nothing whatsoever to fear. Elijah's faith was very strong, as was Abraham's (**Romans 4:17-21**).

He had faith to make an unusual request (**v. 13**). How strange that he should say to this poverty-stricken widow, **"But first make a small cake of bread for me!"** What does this mean? It means that he was standing before her as God's representative and that he was telling her to put God first. This principle is clearly brought out in **Matthew 6:31-34** (particularly note **v. 33**). When we are prepared to give God the first place we may be quite sure that our provision is guaranteed.

He had faith to declare God's faithfulness. **V. 14** tells us this. Appearances were all against him, but Elijah had the word of the Lord upon which to rest and faith is simply taking God at His word. Thus, he was able to tell this woman that because God had said He would provide, He would provide. Notice the lovely word to her in **v. 13** – **"Don't be afraid...!"** The Lord says that to us over and over again – "Christian, don't be afraid!"

3. THE LORD'S UNFAILING SUPPLY

From **vv. 15-16** we see that as the woman obeyed the Lord the supply was given. Are you concerned about the matter of supply? Have you a pressing financial need and you wonder where the supply is coming from? Perhaps the Lord is leading you to set up home and you are wondering how you are going to provide (?)... or you are wondering how you will be able to make ends meet when you can no longer work? See what an old man said in **Psalms 37:25**: **"I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread"** and remember that God's supplies never fail where there is faith (**Matthew 6:32; Philippians 4:19**). Concerning this gracious supply that the Lord made for Elijah and the woman, notice:

- The promise of it. **Vv. 9** and **14**: remember that all the Lord said and did for His servant then He is saying and waiting to do for you today.
- The duration of it. **V. 14**: notice the three important words **"until the day..."** How long will God supply our needs? – "until the day when we shall no longer walk by faith but we shall walk by sight in His glorious presence!"
- The sufficiency of it. **Vv. 15(b)** and **16**: it is the story all over again of **Philippians 4:19**, of God's promising to meet all our need. He never gives us too much, often He only gives a daily supply, but always He gives us sufficient (**2 Corinthians 4:16**).

Remember **Isaiah 25:1**: **"O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure."**

➤ Conclusion: What is the measure of your faith?