

## A Mother's Experience

1 Kings 17:7-16

### Preface

Illus: I remember when I was a young boy. My stepfather was in the Air Force and transferred to Orlando, Florida. We lived there for about two years. Near our home was a small lake. I spent most afternoons at that lake either fishing with a cane pole or shooting frogs with my BB gun. One year when my birthday was approaching, my mother sat me down for a serious conversation and explained to me that we were having serious financial trouble and they could not afford a birthday present for me that year. I understood and was fine with it. But I could tell it concerned my mother deeply.

On the day of my birthday, I expected nothing other than a "Happy Birthday" hug. That afternoon before eating dinner, my mother instructed me to go get her a wash cloth that was in the shower. When I pulled back the shower curtain, there stood a brand new rod and reel in the corner of the shower. It was my birthday present. I was thrilled but confused.

When I asked how we could afford it, my mother explained. She remembered she had some S & H green stamps she had been saving. At the redemption store she was able to get the rod and reel by turning in her stamps.

To this day that experience has a special place in my heart. Mothers always seemed to find a way. Mothers find a way not only to take care of their children but make life special with the little things. Thank God for Mothers.

Today we will look at the experience of another mother who was in survival mode striving to make sure her young son was fed.

It was in the time of King Ahab who was married to Jezebel. He and Jezebel were really into idol worship. They setup a temple and altar to Baal. The Bible says of King Ahab, *"He did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him."*

Elijah spoke boldly before King Ahab. He prophesied of a great drought that was to come as punishment to the kin. Elijah then followed God's instructions and spent some time at a brook where God provided him with food and water in the midst of great famine. It is at this point that we pickup with our scripture reading.

### Scripture

<sup>7</sup> Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. <sup>8</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to him: <sup>9</sup> "Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food." <sup>10</sup> So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" <sup>11</sup> As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread."

<sup>12</sup> "As surely as the LORD your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die."

<sup>13</sup> Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. <sup>14</sup> For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land.'"

<sup>15</sup> She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. <sup>16</sup> For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah." 1 Kings 17:7-26 NIV

### Introduction

The great drought which Elijah had prophesied would come; lasted three and one-half years in all. The lack of crops created great famine in the land. In such difficult times, the widows were often the first to feel the effects. This was especially true of a widow with a child.

So going to a widow for food and shelter was a strange directive from God. God sends Elijah to the widow at Zarephath which was in the heart of Baal worship territory.

But God's ways often seem strange and contrary to our plans. If we are faithful and trusting we will always see His hand in our lives. His plans are always larger than we can imagine.

We can learn some important lessons about God and mothers from this account of Elijah's experience.

## 1. God had a plan

Verse 9 says, “*I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food.*”

It is extremely important that we understand that God has a plan for us. God understands our challenges and struggles and He has a plan even when it doesn't seem logical to us.

Luke emphasizes this in his writings, “<sup>25</sup>*I assure you that 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. <sup>26</sup>Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon.*” Luke 4:25-26 NIV

Notice Luke is saying God had a very specific plan for Elijah. Though He had designated an unlikely widow to carry out His plan, she was the chosen person for the moment.

Too often we sit around feeling sorry for ourselves. We reason that there is nothing God can do with us because of our limited education, our lack of experience, our past mistakes, etc.

Self pity does not discriminate by age. I have seen senior adults feel like they no longer had anything to offer and yet God was using them to carry out his plans.

Illus: I recall speaking with a friend a few years ago about the matter of the church where he was Pastor. I encouraged him to consider finding another church. His response was that no church would want a 50 year old Pastor who had been at a church for 15 years where the church had actually decreased in membership. He was wrong. God had a plan and today he Pastor's a thriving church.

When Habakkuk finally comprehended what God had in store for Israel and the Babylonians, his response was “*I stand in awe of your deeds.*”

When we see despair and are out of our own answers, we must understand that God is in control. God has a plan that is bigger, richer and more rewarding than anything we can imagine.

## 2. She chose to be faithful

Notice that verse 15 says, “*She went away and did as Elijah had told her.*” What an awesome statement about this widow and mother. She obeyed God's command and in faith did what seemed impossible.

If anyone could have conjured up some good excuses for not accommodating Elijah, this widow could have. She was struggling to feed her child. Her resources were next to none.

In fact, the widow was down to the final flour and oil of a last meal for her and her son. No doubt she was dearly concerned about her son's well being. And yet she was faithful and obedient to God's calling.

How could a woman who has no idea how she will provide beyond the current meal, be obedient to God's calling by feeding His servant? The answer is found right in her response to Elijah. “*As surely as the LORD your God lives*” vs 12

The widow believed in a living God. Here is a Gentile woman at the end of her rope and yet her faith remains in Yahweh, the living God.

When she explains her circumstance, she isn't arguing or making excuses. I don't believe for a moment she was going to be disobedient. She had every intention of obeying God.

She was reiterating her limited resources and appealing to God for the intervention to see this matter through.

Sometimes we need to tell God we are out of options. We need to let Him know how desperately vulnerable we feel. Let Him know you're your concerns, but follow through by being faithful.

Illus: A friend asked his elderly mother what she would do different if she could. Here response was, “I would spend less time blaming God and more time leaning on God.”

May we trust God and be faithfully obedient even when the task before us seems impossible.

### 3. God rewarded her faith

Verses 15 and 16 confirm God's reward; "...So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. <sup>16</sup> For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD.."

The woman's obedient response brought her a great reward from God. God performed the miracle of continuously supplying flour and olive oil until the end of the drought.

God gave this woman the confirmation that He was alive and working in her life.

God gave this woman a miracle and used her to further His kingdom. Imagine what a testimony she had for other Gentile women. Imagine what a blessing to know God had blessed her.

There is an ironic twist to this story. The idol worshipers believed that Baal was the god of fertility and hence brought the rain to make the crops grow. God used the great drought to prove there was no Baal, god of fertility. With the drought, the olive trees and other crops could not produce fruit or flour.

The irony is even in the drought and loss of crop, olive oil and flour was being produced in this lady's jars at the hand of the one and only God, the Creator.

If you read beyond our text, you will find that the widow's son later became ill. God provided another miracle in her life by using Elijah to bring life back to the boy.

Her small act of faith and obedience brought her great rewards, miracles from God.

What great rewards does God have in store for you if you will only obey His Word and trust in Him?

### Conclusion

Illus: Show two jars with a little flour and oil. God performed a great miracle by continuously refilling the jars with flour and oil. God did this in response to the mother's obedience to His command.

Perhaps you are down to your final resources? Are you trusting God or blaming God?