

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

ZAREPHATH WIDOW LESSON THIRTEEN

by Sandy Harber

"And Elijah said unto her, Fear not." I Kings 17:13a

Elijah listened to the widow's explanation of her circumstances. He understood that she was afraid because her resources were nearly exhausted and she was staring into the face of death. And not just her own but her young son's as well.

When she was finished talking, Elijah's first words to her were, "Fear not." Her primary feeling was fear. Fear of a hopeless future with no help in sight. Fear of watching the person she loved most in the world die horribly from starvation. Perhaps fear that this was somehow her fault and a better mother would have been able to provide for her child. Fear of dying and what lay beyond.

One of the emotions I faced as a new widow was fear. I depended on my husband for so much that I didn't know how I could go on without him. I worried I would not be able to pay all the bills without his income. I was left with a big house and no idea how to maintain it. He was the one who knew how to shut off the water if there was a leak or restart the furnace if it shut off. What if the car broke down? Who would shovel snow? I was not used to dealing with these types of problems. Yes, there were people I could call for help but I felt very much alone and that scared me. It seemed that so much responsibility had fallen on my shoulders that I was not equipped to handle.

My refuge was God. I knew that He would take care of me and get me through an unknown future. Still, I was afraid. But I recognized that God does not give us the spirit of fear (II Tim. 1:7). It comes from another source. Satan wanted me to be afraid and doubt the Word of God with all the promises He made to protect and support me. I was in a spiritual battle (Eph. 6:12).

The widow of Zarephath did not have the benefit of a Bible to reassure her with all the wonderful promises of God and warn her of the tactics of the devil. If she believed in the God of Israel her knowledge of Him and His ways was likely limited. She lived in the midst of a pagan society. No wonder she felt hopeless and afraid.

She did not yet realize that the God of Israel had looked upon her with favor and planned a way out of her dilemma. He dispatched His great prophet Elijah to come to her aid. The Bible doesn't tell us how long she had been widowed. We only know that at the time of the great drought she was alone. The husband who had provided for her protected her, loved and cherished her was no more. She was alone.

Then on the day that she expected to be her last on earth, a stranger appeared. A gift from God. And she wasn't alone any longer. "Don't be afraid," the stranger said. And he would go on to explain how God planned to care for her and her son. We don't need to live in fear, either, because God has plans for our lives as well. When Satan's little fiery darts of fear are headed our way we only need to hold up the Shield of Faith to stop them cold and extinguish them (Eph. 6:16).

*"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."
II Timothy 1:7*