

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

ZAREPHATH WIDOW LESSON FOURTEEN

by Sandy Harber

"And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth." I Kings 17:13-14

Elijah brought the word of the Lord God of Israel to the poor widow of Zarephath. As a prophet of Jehovah he was used to conveying God's message to the people. That was his job. Usually he delivered God's messages to multiple people in a public setting. Sometimes he was sent to confront King Ahab directly. This was probably the first time that God used him to bring a message to one lowly individual who was not even one of God's chosen people.

And what an amazing message it was! God foretold the future and He promised to work miracles on her behalf. The meager resources she was about to use up were in the hands of God. And He imbued those resources with the power to reproduce for as long as He withheld the rain. The little barrel of meal would not be empty as long as the drought continued. The cruse of oil would never run dry until rain once again fell on Israel.

"Go ahead and do what you planned to do," (i.e. make bread for yourself and your son) Elijah said. "Just make a little cake of bread for me first. Don't worry. God is going to ensure your little stock of meal and oil never runs out."

The choice was hers. Would she make bread for this stranger or would she stick to her original plan and use her resources for herself and her son? It all came down to faith. Did she believe what the prophet was telling her or did she doubt?

The most important decisions of our lives are made by faith. Salvation comes by faith (Eph. 2:8-9). The widow's life literally depended on her response to Elijah (and God). Would she obey and make that cake for the prophet? Or, would she doubt and make bread for herself and her son only? Would the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil continue to flow if the widow left Elijah to fend for himself? God's plan for the widow was that she sustain His prophet through the drought (v. 9). But she had free will. She could choose to put herself first. She could doubt God's promise to sustain her as told by His prophet. Would the widow and her son perish if she made the wrong choice?

Faith in God's Word gives us life eternal. But it also brings the abundant life here and now. We gain comfort and confidence through trust in His promises. We find purpose - a reason to get out of bed every morning - in His plan for us. We have an anchor in the storm and peace in the midst of tribulation through faith in our Heavenly Father. Happy is the man who trusts in Him.

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Psalm 34:19