

Blessed to Be a Blessing

Introduction:

Tonight we look at another positive example of an individual who sought to be a blessing to a foreigner of Israel.

Once again, tonight's consideration is how a foreigner expresses more faith in the God of Israel than do the Israelites.

Luke 4:25 "But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land;

Luke 4:26 and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.

Zarephath was a city of Phoenicia. The inhabitants of Phoenicia were worshipers of Baal who was considered the most powerful of the Canaanite gods. Baal was viewed as the god of fertility and rain. Thus, there was great irony in God withholding rain from the land for the space of three years and six months. It was a direct affront to the worship of Baal.

In the midst of this standoff, God provides for a widow of Zarephath.

The great focus of this story is God's provision for his prophet in the home of a pagan widow.

What is odd about God's provision is that it is a foreign land to a foreign woman who is a widow.

The lesson is to be a reproach on the nation of Israel, who does not welcome God's prophet and amazement at the gracious act of this widow who does welcome the prophet Elijah.

Mat 10:41 Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward.

Mat 10:42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."

I. God's instruction to Elijah.

A. God had definitely prepared a widow to provide for Elijah.

1 Ki 17:8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying,
1 Ki 17:9 "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there;
behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."

- B. How God had prepared this woman is a mystery.
- C. However, God's care for this woman is in keeping with His revealed will.

Deu 10:17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.

Deu 10:18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.

Deu 10:19 And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt.

II. Elijah seeks the widow's help.

- A. How Elijah knew that this widow was the woman that God had prepared, or even whether or not Elijah knew that this woman was the widow that God prepared we do not know.

1 Ki 17:10 So he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink."

- B. Elijah asks the widow to make a great sacrifice on his behalf.

1 Ki 17:11 And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand."

III. The widow's response.

- A. It is clear from the widow's response that she does not have a personal faith in God.

1 Ki 17:12 But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die."

- B. The widow is at a point of despair.

1 Ki 17:12 (NASB) But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread,

only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die."

IV. Elijah encourages the widow.

A. He informs her that God will provide for her and her son.

1 Ki 17:13 Then Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first, and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son.

1 Ki 17:14 "For thus says the LORD God of Israel, "The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth."

B. The widow responds in obedience to Elijah's instructions.

1 Ki 17:15 So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for many days.

C. God's word to Elijah is fulfilled.

1 Ki 17:15 So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for many days.

1 Ki 17:16 The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah.

D. The widow now becomes the focal point of God's provision and protection not Elijah.

1 Ki 17:15 So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for many days.

1 Ki 17:16 The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah.

V. The widow's grief

A. After experiencing the Lord's protection her son now becomes grievously ill.

1 Ki 17:17 Now it came about after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was so severe, that there was no breath left in him.

- B. The widow expresses her grief to Elijah.

1 Ki 17:18 So she said to Elijah, "What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance, and to put my son to death!"

- C. Elijah intercedes for the widow.

1 Ki 17:19 And he said to her, "Give me your son." Then he took him from her bosom and carried him up to the upper room where he was living, and laid him on his own bed.

1 Ki 17:20 And he called to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, hast Thou also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying, by causing her son to die?"

1 Ki 17:21 Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the LORD, and said, "O LORD my God, I pray Thee, let this child's life return to him.

- D. God answers Elijah's prayer.

1 Ki 17:22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him and he revived.

- E. Elijah restores the child to the widow.

1 Ki 17:23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother; and Elijah said, "See, your son is alive."

- F. The widow expresses confidence in Elijah and trust in God.

1 Ki 17:24 Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."

VI. Lessons:

- A. God has a way of humbling all of His servants.
- B. Sometimes God's people are treated better by non-Christians than they are by Christians.
- C. Sometimes God supports His work with people who have the least amount of means.

- D. There can be unexpected blessings in being faithful to God's people and God's work.
- E. God uses some very strange circumstances to increase our faith.
- F. God sovereignly prepares people to receive His truth.

1 Ki 17:9 "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."

God today sovereignly prepares people to receive His truth.

- G. God sovereignly oversees circumstances to create faith in Him.