

BOOK OF 1 KINGS
ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW-PART 2
1 KINGS 17:17-24

Introduction

Some of the most difficult times in the life of a child of God are when deep trials and/or sufferings come our way and leave us shattered and empty and wondering what just happened and why! I'm talking about times when we seem to have more questions than we have answers!

When these trials come into our lives, they can hit us like a lightning bolt, quick and unexpected—and can leave us dazed, in shock and even questioning God and shaking us to the very core of our faith!

And yes, we, just like God's servant, Job, are prone to question "*Why?*"

Why is God allowing this to happen?

Why does I feel like I'm a target all of sudden?

The next question that arises might be "***Will I survive this?***" or "***How am I ever going to survive this?***" Because frankly speaking, we feel "*at the end of our rope*"! And when we feel "*at the end of our rope*", we can have a difficult time getting through the murky waters of difficult trials!

Listen to me, we need to realize that even though we may not see it at first and may not even want to believe it—God has a purpose for us as His children in each and every trial that we face!

I want us to see this as we look further at Elijah and this widow. Here we have two Believers. One is a man of God—called by God, directed by God, used by God, and protected by God. The other is a widow woman—also called by God, directed by God, used by God and sustained by God!

The LORD placed this odd couple together for His purposes in each of their lives! Elijah was **not primarily there for the widow, but for the LORD!** The widow did what she did **not primarily for Elijah, but the LORD!**

I. WE SEE THE DEATH OF THE WIDOW'S SON! (17:17)

Now, up to this point we have seen how that God has been blessing and providing for Elijah, this widow, and her son each day during the drought! They ALL have been enjoying the miraculous provisions!

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However, in spite of God's provisions for them all, something then appears to go very wrong—the widow's son fell sick! Well, that wasn't supposed to happen! Or was it? As the son fell sick, no doubt there was praying on the part of both Elijah and this widow woman!

Now, understand tragedy has already hit this widow woman once...she already lost her husband in death and now her only son is very sick and then the unthinkable happens—her son dies!

It has been one trial after another for these two.

Elijah is being sought out by Ahab—He is on Ahab's "*Most Wanted*" list! The brook dried up in his first hiding place...so God moved him and He faced the trial of a dangerous trip to Zarephath.

This widow had lost her husband to death, she faced the stress of a depleting food supply because of the drought and then was asked to choose between her and her son's life or Elijah.

She obeyed the LORD and had been taking care of the needs of this man of God up until this point! Then, unexpectedly, the widow's son got very ill and died!

Even though this mother was doing her duty to God and the man of God was being cared for in her home, her son still died. Our flesh might cry out with her about the unfairness of it all!

Our age, location, circumstances, or spiritual maturity do not exempt any of us from trials. Trials and trouble can sometimes show up when we least expect it They can even show though as we are obeying the LORD and serving Him the best we know how and even while we are enjoying God's blessing otherwise!

II. WE SEE THE GRIEVING OF THE WIDOW! (17:18)

When things have been going bad for us, but then turn around for us and are going well...in fact, even going better than we expected, it is easy to respond well! (*Vs 12, 15-16*)

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However we need to be cautious because if our circumstances begin to sour, we can begin to doubt and even point a finger of accusation—which we see she did at Elijah.

It sounds very much as if she is blaming Elijah for her plight! But listen, Elijah did not kill her son!

She is grieving and bitter. Bitterness can appear in the early stages of the grieving process. To resolve grief, a person must work through the various stages of grief if they are to get on with their life as God would have them to!

A. Stage 1—Denial and Numbness

The pain and hurt can be so intense that sometimes we can't even sense God's presence in our life as we are going through the valley of our loss! But we need to understand that God is there for us as His children, even when we can't sense Him!

Some make the mistake of seeking escape by using the world's ways to deaden the pain—(i.e. drugs or alcohol).

Those things only compound one's problems and are not the answer to the pain.

B. Stage 2—Anger and Bitterness

Sometimes the tendency of people when they are suffering or when they are in sorrow is to forget the goodness of friends, family, or even God.

Anger may come like a tidal wave out of nowhere. Some folks lash out at those nearest to them like this widow does toward Elijah. In this stage people may blame others, or God, or even themselves.

In this widow's life, her affliction spurred examination of self.

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It appears that maybe some past unresolved sin was brought to her remembrance here.

Realize though, that not all trials are caused by sin. The drain on emotional energy in this stage leads to the next step.

C. Stage 3—Depression

Depressed people can tend to go into an emotional or social shell bearing their grief alone! But for a child of God, that is not the answer! The LORD has given us as His children a support system in the Body of Believers we belong to.

Believers are to help bear one another's burdens! As we do so, we fulfill the love of Christ!

Galatians 6:2 "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

Shared grief is bearable grief. We must remember not to shut people out when we are grieving.

D. Stage 4—Acceptance

This is the stage where we choose to go on with life with the peace and joy of the LORD. How do we get to that point? **We must work through our grief by seeing God as He is, that He knows what we are going through, and that He still loves us and still has our best interest at heart!**

Different people grieve differently. In *John 11:20-21* at the death of Lazarus, Mary was passive and withdrawn, while Martha was more verbal, almost hostile toward Jesus!

In the acceptance stage, we may discover the vast purpose of God or we may not. That question that mentioned earlier—*"Why did God allow this to happen?"* We ask that because we desire meaning in what happens to us.

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When we look at our trials from **OUR viewpoint**, it tends to leave us angry, frustrated, discouraged or with some other not so helpful emotions!

When we spend time with the Lord in prayer and in His Word, and begin to look at our trial from **GOD's viewpoint**, that's when He can help us find encouragement, patience, faith, peace and even joy in the midst of our sorrow!

Isaiah 55:8-9—For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Realize the truth that grief can be conquered!

2 Corinthians 2:14—Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place.

Allowing God and others to help us in our grief can allow us to help others who are struggling with grief in their life!

2 Corinthians 1:3-4—Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

III. WE SEE ELIJAH'S SUPPLICATION FOR THE WIDOW'S SON! (17:19-21)

Elijah did what Elijah knew to do...he went to the LORD in supplication prayer! Sometimes it is the only thing we can do—Pray!

Psalms 46:1—God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Elijah prayed earnestly, crying to the LORD and pleading with Him!

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He prayed specifically for a particular answer. He prayed boldly in *verse 21, "...let this child's soul come into him again."*

Bold praying honors God. It indicates great faith and confidence in the LORD and His power. It indicates a closeness to the Lord too. Elijah prayed privately. This is when we do our best praying and really get down to business.

Elijah demonstrated here his compassion for both this boy and his mother. But more importantly, Elijah demonstrated his great faith in the LORD!

He asked for a miracle that had never occurred before, the raising of a dead person. Elijah believed God could do it!

IV. WE SEE GOD SHOWED HIMSELF MIGHTILY! (17:22-24)

God heard Elijah's prayer and the boy's soul returned to the boy! (Because the soul leaves at death!)

Is anything too hard for our God? No! Nothing is!

Elijah was going to have to trust the LORD not too many days ahead in his dealings with Ahab and Jezebel! No doubt, this incident was a much needed boost to his faith!

This widow woman was about to have Elijah leave her house and she was going to have to trust the LORD in spite of the man of God not being in her presence anymore! This incident strengthened her faith!

Jeremiah 33:3—Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

John 15:7—If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

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Conclusion

Notice that in the end, **this severe trial brought great blessing to both Elijah and the widow woman! Great blessings CAN come out of great trials!**

Out of sickness, death, and doubt, the LORD brought for health and life and faith to the glory of God!

The answer to this prayer would strengthen Elijah's faith for the great showdown at Mount Carmel. He learned to believe God for even more great things!

The widow says, *"Now by this I know that thou art a man of God and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth!"*

How was she convinced? It was watching the LORD work through this trial.