

The Miracle of the Widow's Son Raised to Life

1 Kings 17:17-24

1 Kings 17:17-24 – *“Now it happened after these things that the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. And his sickness was so serious that there was no breath left in him. So she said to Elijah, ‘What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?’ And he said to her, ‘Give me your son.’ So he took him out of her arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. Then he cried out to the LORD and said, ‘O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?’ And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, ‘O LORD my God, I pray, let this child’s soul come back to him.’ Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived.*

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 lives!’ Then the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is the truth.’

Background Notes

1 Kings 17:17 says “after these things.” After what things? After Elijah moved from Cherith Brook, and after he settled into his new home with the Gentile widow in Zarephath, and after they lived on God’s continuous supply of flour and oil – after all these things. We don’t know how much time went by before the widow’s young son died.

At first the widow blamed Elijah. She said, *“What do you have against me, man of God? Have you come to me to remind me of my sin, and to kill my son?”* Well, Elijah let that comment go untouched. He simply took the young child to the room where he was staying. First he prayed. Then he “stretched himself out” on the boy three times, and the boy came back to life! (This was a miracle – not some type of artificial respiration!)

This was a very unusual experience for Elijah: a Jewish prophet, a dead Gentile boy, and Jewish Law’s ceremonial restrictions on touching dead bodies. Elijah took quite a step of faith. And the widow changed her tune when Elijah brought her boy back to her – **alive!** *“Then the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth.’”*

Doctrinal Point

1. God's care is larger in scope than just meeting one person's need.

Why did God have Elijah stay with this poor Gentile widow at Zarepheth? Of course He did it to meet Elijah's needs – and that's true - but there was much more going on. Elijah was witnessing about the one true God to the Gentile woman, and challenging her worship of a pagan god. Remember, Phoenicia was "Baal country." And other people in the area heard about the Lord God of Israel as well. Furthermore, God was proving to Elijah that He could take care of him and protect him - right in Jezebel's home territory!

In the New Testament, we see the larger scope of God's care for Elijah. When the Lord rebuked the people at Nazareth for their unbelief, He said, *"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. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon"* (Luke 4:25-26). Who would have thought that when God cared for Elijah through the widow at Zarephath, he and the widow were being prepared as "Exhibit A" for the Lord Jesus to use - more than 900 years later? When the Lord Jesus spoke at the synagogue of Nazareth and rebuked the people for their unbelief, he used the faith of the widow of Zarephath as an example! God's care is larger in scope than just meeting one person's need.

Maybe God is meeting your needs right now in a most unusual way, and you're wondering why. Why is God caring for me in this particular way? Wouldn't it be easier to care for me in the normal way? Remember, God's care is larger in scope than just meeting your personal needs. There may be much more going on behind the scenes!

Many of you know my wife, Margie, is a foster mother for newborn babies. We started doing this to play a small part in encouraging young women to choose life rather than abortion. We also saw it as the way God was caring for the needs of babies who were awaiting adoption. But we've been reminded many times of the larger scope of God's plan. We've seen a number of adoptive parents more open to the gospel because of the great blessing that has come to them - a child! God's care is much larger in scope than just meeting one person's need.

2. God's crises are larger in scope than just testing a person's faith.

When we say "God's crises," we mean the crises that God allows to come into our lives. They're more than just a test of our faith. God has much more in mind.

Why did God allow this crisis to come to this woman? Her young son died - what a major test! She said, *"What do you have against me, man of God? Have you come to me to remind me of my sin, and to kill my son?"* What sin? Was it a specific sin in her past, or perhaps just a reminder of her shortcomings as a sinner? We don't know. But God used this crisis to bring her shortcomings to mind and awaken her conscience. And God can use a crisis to awaken our consciences as well.

But God had much more in mind than just a test of the widow's faith. It was a test of Elijah's faith, too. At first Elijah seemed to question God: "Lord why did you allow this to happen?" (v20). But Elijah passed the test, and in faith he saw God do a great miracle! Elijah took a tremendous step of faith, and no doubt major growth in his life of faith. This was especially seen in his willingness to take the body of a dead Gentile boy in his arms, and lie on top of a Gentile body. Maybe God was preparing Elijah for this event when He used ravens, those ceremonially unclean birds, to provide food at Cherith Brook.

And the woman certainly grew in faith. How do we know? Even though in her grief she blamed Elijah, she did allow him to take her son. And when she saw her son had been brought back to life, her faith took a major growth spurt: "*Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is the truth*" (v24).

Furthermore Hebrews 11, that great chapter on examples of great **faith**, says, "*Women received back their dead, raised to life again*" (v35). I think we can safely conclude that verse is speaking about the Gentile widow at Zarepheth!

So we see that God's crises are much larger in scope than just the *testing* a person's faith. He wants to see our faith *grow* and become stronger as well. That's what happens in a crisis. Maybe God has allowed a crisis to come into your life. Remember - He's not only testing your faith. He also wants your faith to grow. You see, in a crisis you can go one way or another. You can turn to the Lord in simple trust and grow in faith - or you can turn away from Him in anger or bitterness.

In our first week of Bible College classes this year, one of the guys received word that his fiancée had been killed in a car accident. He and his fiancée had agreed that he would take some time before their marriage to get a solid foundation in the Word of God, so he would be prepared for whatever the Lord called them to do in the future. At that point, in the midst of a tragic crisis, even as a Christian you can throw in the towel and say, "How could You let this happen? Forget it, God." Or, even in your grief you can turn to the Lord and trust in His ultimate plan for your life. You'll not only pass the test of faith, but you'll actually grow in faith! It's great to see how this student is growing in faith, even as a result of the tragedy in his life. Not knowing the reasons why, but definitely trusting - and recognizing that God's crises are larger in scope than just testing a person's faith.

Practical Application

1. Are we willing to help people who false accuse us?

In verse 18 the grieving mother blamed Elijah: "*What do you have against me, man of God? Have you come to me to remind me of my sin, and to kill my son?*" She blamed Elijah for her son's illness and death.

If you were Elijah, what would you have done? Elijah didn't let this comment get to him. He didn't get angry, and he didn't quit. Elijah was like Moses. Remember, the people of Israel blamed Moses for the hardships of the wilderness. God Himself was angry with them and said, "Step aside, Moses! Let me take care of those people for you. I'll wipe them out and start a new nation through you!" And Moses - in a great example of love and grace - Moses stepped up before God and interceded for the people.

Like Moses, Elijah didn't take that comment to heart. He didn't say, "Forget it. I'm not to blame, and I'm getting out of here." No. He quietly told the distraught mother, "*Give me your son.*"

Are you willing to help people who falsely accuse you? Some years ago my wife and I were leading a youth group. We were volunteers - not paid leaders, and we were putting in a lot of time and energy. But a few parents had the audacity to tell us that we should put in more time because their teens were not being entertained! I felt like saying, "That's it! I've had it!" But we're so glad we hung in there. The subsequent years have proved that the youth ministry was well worthwhile in the lives of those teens!

Are we willing to help people who falsely accuse us? Or is our skin so thin that we're ready to quit if we're criticized? Is that true of you? How about your church? Do you just attend? You're no longer involved in ministry here because you couldn't handle a false accusation? Let's be willing to help - even if we're sometimes wrongly accused.

2. Are we willing to help people we don't *like*?

You may be saying, "What do you mean – people we don't like?" Well, as Christians we're to **love** our neighbors. We're to **love** those who spitefully use us. We're even to **love** our enemies. But sometimes it's easier to *love* people than it is to *like* them!

I'm sure that Elijah, as a believer, *loved* the boy and his mother - but I wonder if he really *liked* them? Maybe the boy was a pain in the neck. I can imagine many days in that little house when the boy was running up and down the stairs, yelling, crying, pestering, disrupting, and getting on Elijah's nerves. And maybe a scolding and complaining mother got on his nerves too! But Elijah was right there to help when help was needed.

Are we willing to help people we don't like? Or do we want to help only our friends, or the people we like? Maybe you've taught Sunday school, and you know that some kids are naturally easy to like. You *love* all the kids in your class, but unfortunately there's always that one kid who's very hard to *like*. You fight that negative feeling all the time. Are you willing to help that "unlikeable" student?

Are we willing to help people we don't *like*?