

Sermon: Faith of Our Mothers; Date: May 13 2018

Delivered by: Dr. Philip G. Ryken, president, Wheaton College

Bible text explored: 1 Kings 17: 7-16

⁷And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

⁸Then the word of the LORD came to him, ⁹“Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” ¹⁰So 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, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” ¹¹And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” ¹²And she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” ¹³And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.’” ¹⁵And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah. [ESV]

Review and application:

1. After God prompted Elijah to announce to King Ahab a years-long drought, how (*1 Kings 17:2-6*) had God provided for him?
How do you think Elijah’s faith was tested (v. 7) as the brook gradually dried up?
2. Why would God’s next instructions (vv. 8-9) seem like being told to jump out of the frying pan into the fire? (See *1 Kings 16:31-33*.)
How had the extension of the drought to Sidon exposed the inability of the fertility God Baal to provide rain?
3. What prospect (vv. 10-12) was facing the widow gathering firewood?
How does the widow’s response, (v. 12), suggest that she was not yet aligned with the LORD God?
4. How (v. 9) was Elijah’s own faith challenged by this encounter?
5. Does Elijah’s response (v. 13)—asking a woman on the brink of starvation to feed him first—strike you as an over-the-top obstacle to her placing her faith in his God?
Can you recall a time when it felt like God was testing you in this way?
6. What reason (v. 14) did Elijah give for the widow to accept his dare?
7. How did Jesus refer to this event (*Luke 4:25-26*) to demonstrate how disbelief blocks the blessings God is ready to bestow?
By contrast, how does God provide for even the desperate needs of those who are ready to “make a faith deposit in God’s bank”? (See *Psalms 34:8-10*.)
8. How was the widow’s response (v. 15), without waiting to have all her questions answered, rewarded?
9. God’s intervention in response to trusting faith isn’t limited to biblical times. What evidence for this (from Corrie Ten Boom at the World War II Ravensbruck Concentration Camp) did Dr. Ryken cite?

10. Is God's daily provision any less a miracle than, say, the feeding of the 5,000?
Take some time to thank God for his provision.
11. How does this narrative underscore God's special care for the marginalized in society?
(See *Deut. 10:18*).
Does your outlook and generosity increasingly align with his?