

Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

Times of Trial

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 17.17-24.

Key Verse "I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me." Psalm 119.75 RSV

Everything seemed to be going well. Elijah had taken temporary lodgings with the widow. God's daily provision seemed tenuous but was sufficient despite the drought. They were *living by faith*. Faith is always tested. See 1 Peter 1.6-9; 4.12-14. Hebrews 12.6-11, Philippians 1.29. God allows many different events as a test of our faith. This may be in the form of illness, loss of income or property, the death of those on whom we depend. It may be persecution, hostility of neighbours or associates, vilification of our character or reputation. Peter tells us to be sure that we are not the cause of this adversity by our own unthinking, unloving attitudes or actions. But sometimes trials just come along anyway, as it did to this widow.

First, There Was an Unexpected Trial

It Was Sudden The child simply fell ill and died. She was so helpless. There was nothing she could do. Things can come to us all in this way.

It was Severe. Not only to the child, but the widow. She had already lost her husband, and now her only son. She was alone and destitute. When Elijah left as he would after the famine she would be without support, cast onto cold charity. She had every reason to be bitter.

Second, The Widow's Faith Failed

The widow lost hope. Instead of looking to God for help, she saw only ruin and lost hope. Like Israel's cry to God '*Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.*'

The widow feared she was being judged by God for past sins. v18.

How easy it is for people to forget that our sins are forgiven, that God counts us as blameless and we are saved by grace See Ephesians 1.3-7 and 2.8-10.

She blamed Elijah despite all his help.

What happens when we attack those we love because of trouble in the home. "*If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*" Galatians 5.15.

Her faith faltered. She looked at her problems, at her circumstances, at her resources and was overwhelmed, just as Peter was in the midst of the storm. What was the retort of Jesus, "*O man of little faith, why did you doubt?*" Matthew 14.30 We need to pray for those under pressure that their faith not fail. Luke 22.32 They need our help, not our criticism.

Third, We see the Way Elijah Trusted God

The widow's attack touched Elijah

where he was most vulnerable. Elijah reacted badly to personal attack. See 19.1-3, and the enemy knows to attack in the place where we are weak. This time Elijah responded appropriately. We will do well to learn from the way he coped with the widow's hurtful words.

He took the attack calmly and did not

hit back even though emotionally moved. See Ephesians 4.32, 1 Peter 4.8, Hebrews 10.24.

He took on the problem as his own

v19. See Galatians 6.2 He took the dead child from her breast and carried him to his attic room, to bring the problem to God. He did not make a show. See Matthew 6.6.

He called on God to do the impossible.

He asked God to resurrect the child. Is it reasonable for us to ask God to do a thing like this? It is reasonable to ask God to do anything! See Luke 18.27. Is it reasonable for us to expect that God will do this? We know that He can, See Luke 1.37, but will He? The answer to this valid question depends upon the

individual, his or her walk with the Lord and their ability to accurately know the mind of the Spirit in relation to the issue at hand. See 1 Corinthians 2.14-16, 1 John 2.19-27. Discern these verses carefully, for these people were spiritually aware. They were not novices. We should not assume a spirituality we do not have, but we should seek after it by a close, humble day by day walk and talk with God through His word. For a more complete description of Elijah's action compare Elisha's action in 2 Kings 4.34, and Paul's in Acts 20.10. We assume that the actions of these men were appropriate to the occasion, but the power of resurrection lies with God alone. We cannot call down the power of God, by simply copying someone else. To do so is a sham.

Last, The Widows Faith was

Strengthened. Note her growth in faith In v12 she speaks of 'the Lord thy God'. In v18 she knew Him as God, now v24 she knows His word to be truth. This woman was a Phoenician, not Jewish, and this is significant progress. We see a similar progression in John 4.46-54.

When we simply trust God, many wonderful things happen. We should view every trial as another opportunity to trust the Lord in some new way, no matter how far along the pilgrim pathway we may have travelled. Let us ever be willing to share Him with our fellow pilgrims. Esther 4:14 "*who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*" may be true also of us.

Welcome Glen Park Gospel Church
Lower Road, Eltham North
Sundays 10.30 am

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