

Previously, having delivered God's word to King Ahab and arranging for his shelter at a brook, Elijah took a cue from God that it was time to move on: the brook had dried up signaling the 'end of days' of Elijah's stay. God uses this circumstance as a sign that Elijah is to move on...underscoring God is in our circumstances. Elijah finds care with a widow and her son demonstrating God's provision. Now, a life and death...and life situation arises which tests the faith of all involved.

Notice that both these people, Elijah and the widow, were believers; they were living by faith, faith in God, and faith is always tested. This whole matter of faith's testing is brought before us in the story of the death of the widow's son and of Elijah's prayer as God answers with the result:

1 Kings 17:24: "And 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."

- Grammatical Usage: "**know**" or in the Hebrew, "yada" meaning, "experience; acknowledge"; "**truth**" or "emeth" meaning, "faithful; reliable".
- Literal Interpretation: And the woman said to Elijah, "Now, having this experience, I acknowledge that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is faithful (to God) and therefore reliable.
- Contextual/Comparison: God keeps His Word, God continually uses His Word. This is the record of God's loving dealings with two of His own living at Zarephath, which, significantly, means a place of refining. If we are believers, people of faith, we are all living at Zarephath; in other words, we must expect our faith to be tested. Notice from the incident:

1. THE TRIAL OF FAITH

This is indicated in **v. 17**, and notice about this trial that:

- It was UNEXPECTED. Quite unexpectedly the child fell sick and then died. Trials and testings come just as suddenly in the lives of God's people everywhere.
- It was SEVERE. The child not only became ill, but he died, and all this happened to a woman already bereaved of her husband. Our testing can be severe.
- It was FOR A PURPOSE. That is, it did not just happen by chance. Fate was not in operation here! The Lord allowed this to happen. Notice the words in **v. 17** – "**After this...**" In other words, God was in it all. This thing was from Him. He was putting **Romans 8:28** into action. It all seemed very strange – but read **1 Peter 4:12; 1 Peter 1:7**. All that happened was with God's loving permission and in order to fulfil His purpose. It is just the same in our lives.

2. THE COLLAPSE OF FAITH

What happens when faith is tested? See what happened here in **v. 18**. When her child died the widow turned on Elijah and reproached him and even blamed him for her son's death. Her faith temporarily collapsed, and for a short while she became an unbeliever. God's people often react like this in times of trial and testing, and they ask, "Does God care? What have I done to deserve this? Why has it happened to me?" But notice another thing: when her faith was tested she remembered her sin. It is a good thing when God's chastening cause us to search our hearts and cleanse our ways (**Psalm 139:23-24; Lamentations 3:40**). God allowed the trial to fall upon the widow in order that she might be purified as gold is purified by the process of refining (**Job 23:10; 1 Peter 1:7**). How different was Elijah's reaction! – look up **Psalm 119:75**. He could not understand the reason for this sudden tragedy any more than the woman could; but see how his faith came into operation in this time of testing.

3. THE OPERATION OF FAITH

Whereas the woman's faith collapsed, Elijah's faith went into action! It began to work – (**James 2:17-20**). How did it work? How does faith operate in a time of crisis?

- It keeps calm when the blow falls. Look at Elijah: although he is deeply moved because of what has happened he is trusting God in spite of it. See how gentle and calm he was under provocation (**1 Corinthians 13:4-5**). He did not reproach God; he was calm when the test came.
- It trusts God when His purpose cannot be traced. Elijah could not see what God was doing (**v. 20**), but he knew it was for some wise and loving purpose, so he was willing to trust Him until He revealed it.
- It at once relates the trial to God. Elijah took the child, went to his room, got down before the Lord and related the whole situation to Him (**vv. 19-20**). What a great act of faith that was! Elijah's faith led him to the throne of grace and to the God of grace (**1 John 5:5**).
- It asks God to do the humanly impossible. Look at **v. 21** and compare **James 5:13-15**. Elijah knew the mind of the Lord when he prayed. God does not always lead us to pray for resurrection. When our loved one is seriously ill it may be easier to pray for healing than to trust God for bereavement.
- It is always honored by God, and is thus victorious (**vv. 22-23; Matthew 9:29**). Faith (not presumption) will never be disappointed. If the Lord leads you to trust Him along a certain line or about a certain matter you will never be disappointed (**Romans 10:11**)!

4. THE FRUIT OF FAITH

Verse 23 tells us that Elijah gave the resurrected child back to his mother, as if to say, "See what God has done!" Now read **v. 24**. When she saw what God had done through the channel of Elijah's faith, her own faith was revived and restored. This is the fruit of faith. When we trust God, many things happen! He is glorified, our own faith is strengthened, our character is purified and the genuineness of our faith is proved. Best of all, others are helped and strengthened through our trusting God in a time of crisis.

- Conclusion: In what or whom are you trusting in testing?