

AN EMPTY BARREL I Kings 17:8-16

This lesson stems from a series of events, or a series of faith tests for the great prophet Elijah. In preparation for his greatest challenge that was to come in **I Kings 18** when Elijah would rebuke King Ahab and his Baal prophets, God had put Elijah in several desperate situations and this is one of them.

A HOPELESS SITUATIONS

Her Place In Life - I Kings 17:9-10 These verses introduce us to a poor widow woman. The verses tell us of her hopeless predicament. She is a widow in a Gentile place called Zarephath. In the society she lived in most women were totally dependent on the man to provide food, shelter and protection.

Deuteronomy 15:11 In the nation of Israel this situation would have been bad enough but she may have gotten some relief. However, she lived in a Gentile society that knew nothing about God and had no laws to help a poor widow lady such as this woman.

Her Problems In Life – I Kings 17:11-12 As she struggled through her daily existence God's prophet was asking more of her. We find that not only is she poor and without any help but has a son to take care of as well. In her desperation she tells the prophet she has nothing but a few scraps left in her barrel and is preparing a few bites for her and her son and expects to die very soon from starvation.

Her Plan For Life – I Kings 17:12 Her plan for her and her son was simple, our life is over, there is no hope for anything better than to be quiet and die. This woman had reached the "bottom of the barrel" and was hopelessly in a state of depression and despair.

FAMILIAR DESPAIR

Most of us have never faced such hopelessness and despair as this poor widow in Zarephath. However, most of us can say with truthfulness that we have experienced some feelings of hopelessness.

- It might be a sickness in our body that continues to deteriorate.
- Maybe a family relationship or a marriage that is suffering and is about to crumble.
- It could be financial issues have overtaken us to a point of losing our home or worse.
- It very well could be the death of a family member or friend.

Exodus 2:11-15 Moses fled in despair and hopelessness when he killed the Egyptian being rejected.

Jonah 2-4 After Jonah ran from his assignment from God he found despair in the belly of a whale.

Genesis 37:34-35 Jacob went into deep depression and despair when told that Joseph was dead.

SERVING GOD FROM AN EMPTY BARREL

I Kings 17:13-14 The emotional tide begins to turn as the poor widow hears and obeys the prophet, no doubt remembering the vision or the prompting of God about the prophet coming to her, see **(17:9)**.

I Kings 17:15-16 These verses tell us that the widow obeyed the commands of God and God kept His promises to the widow and sustained her for many years.

No matter what we are called to face, no matter what situation or impossibility we find ourselves in we must believe and trust in our God. He has proven to millions and millions that He can be trusted.

Luke 4:25-26 Many years after this experience Jesus would refer to this woman as an example of great faith because of her simple child like faith in a desperate situation.

Romans 8:28-29 God will use every pain , problem and discouragement to develop and grow us up.

II Corinthians 12:9 God promises us His sustaining grace for everything that comes our way.

Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5 No matter how low and how desperate we get He is always with us.