

AN EXAMPLE OF SACRIFICIAL GIVING FROM THE WIDOW OF ZEREPHATH

I Kings 17:8 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,
I Kings 17:9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.
I Kings 17:10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.
I Kings 17:11 And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.
I Kings 17:12 And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.
I Kings 17:13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.
I Kings 17:14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.
I Kings 17:15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.
I Kings 17:16 And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.
I Kings 17:17 And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.
I Kings 17:18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?
I Kings 17:19 And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.
I Kings 17:20 And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?
I Kings 17:21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.
I Kings 17:22 And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.
I Kings 17:23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.
I Kings 17:24 And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

It is my custom to preach at least one message on giving in October, which is our missions month. The Bible says to preach the whole counsel of God. Giving is an important part of biblical truth and teaching.

Jesus said of this woman:

Luke 4:25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;
Luke 4:26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

She was a gentile and Elijah was sent to her to save her life. But God also knew she was a woman who would show great faith. And be used to sustain his prophet.

Think about this, when we give it is not a life or death matter. We give a portion of what we have to missions or as a tithe. Yet after we give it we are not expecting that this will be our last meal. This little widow lady was so poor all she had was a little handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil left to mix it with. She was expecting to make this her last meal and then she would starve to death. Elijah says make him a meal first and trust God to do a miracle and sustain her and her son. Would you give if it might kill you? This is great faith. Is there any greater faith than to risk your life to obey God?

When we talk about faith promise missions giving, is there any example so great of giving by faith than this?

I want to use this story as an example of giving and especially what we call faith promise giving.

***I. OUR GIVING IS ONE OF THE GREATEST EVIDENCES OF OUR FAITH
THIS IS THE ULTIMATE TEST (Giving To His Servants Is Giving To God).***

I Kings 17:10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

I Kings 17:11 And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

I Kings 17:12 And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

1. Note the difficulty that the servant of God may have had in asking this widow to give:

A. Go fetch me some water to drink. Then he added bring me also a morsel of bread.

These were hard times and in hard times people were dying of starvation. What do you think would happen in our country if this took place?

I have seen neighbors get down right nasty for far less than starvation and famine. How sad it is that we would see every man out for themselves in such a time.

Elijah was a stranger to this lady and the Lord told him He commanded her to sustain him. Don't think it wasn't hard for the preacher to ask her to do this.

In the area of tithing, sometimes it is hard to preach on giving when I know people are having a tough time financially.

YET WE MUST TELL PEOPLE TO DO WHAT GOD HAS SAID.

MAL 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Can you think of any time in the Bible that the Lord says to test him and see if he will not come through for you? He does so in the area of giving the tithe. He says to his people, prove me.

The Word Prove me comes from the Hebrew word Bachan.

H974 bachan, baw-khan'; a prim. root; to test (espec. metals); gen. and fig.
to investigate:-examine, prove, tempt, try (trial).

Translated, examine prove proved tempt trial tried triest trieth try

In this case it is not sin to do so. In other cases it is and God says, thou shalt not tempt the Lord your God. But God knows that it may be for some people a hard thing to believe that God will bless them for believing him in the area of giving so He says, prove me, test me and see if I won't bless you.

This is what Elijah told the widow lady to do.

I Kings 17:13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

I Kings 17:14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

I Kings 17:15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

B. This Widow Lady Was Making What She Had Thought Was Her Last Meal.

No greater giving than to give your all.

What would we do if there was a depression in our country??

Could we still give?

C. Giving To God's Servant's Is Giving To God:

Is God in need, Is God hungry, thirsty, etc.?

Matthew 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Matthew 25:35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Matthew 25:36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Matthew 25:37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

Matthew 25:38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Matthew 25:39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

Matthew 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Missions month is a time when we think about the need of worldwide missions, when we refresh our hearts and minds about the need to support preachers who have given their lives to spread the gospel around the world.

II. GOD EXPECTS US TO GIVE TO HIM FIRST.

FEAR NOT: How could he ask such a thing of her when people were dying all around her and she had nothing more than a handful of grain?

Why didn't Elijah say go ahead, eat your little meal and then God will supply more for you to give to me?

It never works that way. God expects us to give to him by faith and then watch and see how He blesses.

I Kings 17:13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

Faith believes God when there is no outward sign that it is going to work out. Believes God even when the outward evidence does not show that we will benefit by doing so.

God says to give the tithe to Him. Giving that tithe may seem a waste, after all, just think what you can do with that money.

That's just it. This little widow lady was without hope until Elijah said trust God and watch Him work.

Best way to survive into the 21st century is to be like this little widow lady and give to God first, and trust Him for a miracle.

Giving to God is just like this:

Tithe.

Missions giving same thing.

If you are going to be like this little widow lady you need to learn to trust God first.

Sometimes it is also hard to trust God with your time. You have so much to do and you are tempted to forsake the assembling of yourself together.

Sometimes it is hard to trust God in giving your tithe. The tithe should come out first. The first check you write should be your tithe.

III. GOD WILL TAKE SPECIAL CARE OF THOSE WHO SUSTAIN HIS SERVANTS.

I Kings 17:14 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

I Kings 17:15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

She and her House Did Eat MANY DAYS!!!!

The most important thing to God is His work of the Kingdom. Part of that work is that His workers are cared for. Remember Jesus said I must be about my Father's business. I believe if

you take care of God's business He will help you in your business. If you neglect His business He just may neglect yours.

Matthew 10:40 He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

Matthew 10:41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

Matthew 10:42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

How can you do something nice for God?
Will you visit Him? Will you send Him a birthday card?
How will you do some nice thing for God?

You do it by doing an act of Kindness to his servants, His Prophets, His missionaries and preachers.

IV. GOD WILL DO SPECIAL THINGS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE SHOWED KINDNESS TO HIS PROPHETS.

I Kings 17:15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

I Kings 17:16 And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.

I Kings 17:17 And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.

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One of the Blessings of supporting the work of God is that you enlist the prayer support of God's servants.

When you are in need and you cry out to God that is one thing, but when God's preachers cry out to God for you that is another.

Knox was a man on fire in prayer. His prayers shook hearts and political leaders alike. Mary, Queen of Scots, a lifelong enemy of Knox, is said to have stated, "I fear John Knox's prayers more than all the assembled armies of Europe."

We need the prayer support of God's prophets.

Those who know how to get power from the throne of God.

Why do you think that Elijah had such a burden for this widows son?

Was it not that she was supporting him all that time and now he wanted God to bless her?

V. APPLICATION:

Will you be like the widow at Zerephath?
Will you trust God to sustain His servants?
In this way you can enlist their prayer support.

1. Two ways you do this: First in giving the tithe.

Malachi 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

Malachi 3:9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

Malachi 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Malachi 3:11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

Malachi 3:12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

2 In giving above the tithe to missions and special needs of other men of God.

Missions month.

Command: Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me **BOTH** in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Application: The greatest favour Elijah did for that widow lady was when he asked her to bake him a little cake first and then trust God that there would be some for herself!

Will you be like the widow of Zerephath?

Luke 4:25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;
Luke 4:26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

Luke 4:27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.