

The Widow of Zarephath

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[0 : 0 0] A warm welcome to our service this morning. And as we come together around the Word of God, let us seek his blessing to be upon his word.

Let us pray. Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, our Heavenly Father, we give thee thanks for the privilege and the opportunity of coming together around thine own Word.

And as we do so, we seek, O Lord, that we may have the help of thine own Spirit, for we acknowledge that without thee we can do nothing.

We acknowledge that we are dependent upon thine own Spirit to enlighten our understanding and to lead us into thine own truth.

For without the help of thy Spirit, we are unable to see the vastness of the treasures that is contained in thine own Word.

[1 : 1 6] But we pray, O Lord, that we may discover them through the help of thy Spirit today to enable us to be strengthened in our faith, to enable us, O Lord, to be strong in the Lord and to be a faithful witness for thee.

when we come to understand that the things that we are confronted with in this world is not new. That our forefathers were confronted with the same problems, with the same circumstances as we are today.

but that through faith, that they were able to overcome those things. And we pray, O Lord, that that would be true of each and every one of us today.

That through faith we would overcome our problems and the circumstances and situations that confront us that may leave us tired and weary and even doubtful.

O Lord, that we would be able to overcome them all through the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thee thanks, O Lord, for all thy blessings that thou dost so abundantly outpour upon us every day and for the privilege of being unable to come to the throne of grace to seek thy mercy and to seek thy grace to help us in our time of need.

[2 : 5 4] We give thee thanks that thou hast put this desire into our hearts today to come around thine own word and to meditate upon it.

O Lord, make it a living word for us through the work of thy spirit upon our hearts to receive thy word and that it may be lodged in our heart and bring forth evidence into our lives.

And we seek that for all those who are gathered around thy word today, for all assemblies of thy people, for all who have come to seek thee through thy word this day, that thou, O Lord, would meet with them.

Bless all thy servants who have gone forth with thy word, that they may know the action of thine own spirit upon them, enabling them, O Lord, to proclaim the gospel with all confidence and with all boldness.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless our communities, that thou would bless every home and every family. Thou art the one who knoweth our ways, thou art the one who sucheth our hearts, and thou knowest our needs better than we know ourselves.

[4 : 13] And we pray, O Lord, that out of the riches of thy grace, that it will please thee to meet with each one of us at our point of need.

O remember before thee, O Lord, those who are ill, and seek that thine own healing hand may be upon them. We pray, O Lord, for those who are in mourning this day, those who grieve over the passing of loved ones out of this world, all reminding us that we are sojourners, reminding us that we are all on a journey to our long home.

Grant to us, O Lord, that we would prepare for the end of our journey in this world, that it would be true of us that when that moment comes upon us, that we have been reconciled to our God, that we have peace with God, and that it would be true of us that at the moment of our departure from this world, that we would be entering into the joy of the Lord.

O Lord, we pray to that end, that thou would bless thy word to many souls today. O Lord, that the careless and the indifferent to the claims of thy word would be drawn to thee by thy spirit, that thou would, O Lord, take the blindness from their heart, that the veil would be lifted away, and that they would see their need and the sufficiency of Christ to meet with their need.

that they would be enabled, O Lord, to set their trust upon thee, and that they would come to know thy salvation and the joy that belongs to thy salvation.

[6 : 02] We pray, O Lord, that thou would be with our young people and our children. There are many things to draw them away from the gospel, but we pray that thou would be pleased to raise up a generation that would fear thy no name, and who would be thy witnesses in this world.

Remember thy redeemed people. O Lord, be near to them. Grant to us, O Lord, that we may be faithful witnesses for thee in this world.

We pray, O Lord, for those who are slaves to drink, to drugs, and to the many other vices that have come into the experience of mankind as a result of the fall, that through the gospel that they may be set free.

We pray for those who work among them, and grant, O Lord, that they may see that their labour is not in vain in the Lord. We pray, O Lord, that thou would remember all our communities, all our islands, and our nation today.

Lord, we confess that we have gone our own way, but be pleased, O Lord, we pray thee to return us to thyself, to return us to be a nation that would respect thy law, a nation that would endeavour to follow thy law.

[7 : 26] O Lord, in wrath, remember mercy. We pray for all nations of the earth. We pray for the gospel, that it may penetrate into the hearts of people today, that there would be a harvest brought today for the Lord.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would continue with us for the moments that we are together as we come to read thy word and to meditate upon thy word.

Lord, we come before thee not with our own merits, but we come before thee with the merits of thy son, seeking thy forgiveness. and all that we ask is in his name and for his sake.

Amen. Let us now read the word of God as we find it in the gospel according to Luke and chapter 4 and we can begin our reading at verse 14.

Luke chapter 4 and at verse 14. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about and he taught in their synagogues being glorified of all.

[8 : 43] And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up and as his custom was he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up for to read and there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet his eyes.

And when he had opened the book he found the place where it was written the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind to set at liberty them that are bruised to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book and he gave it again to the minister and sat down and the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them this day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears.

And all bear him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said it's not this Joseph's son. And he said unto them ye will surely say unto me this proverb physician heal thyself.

Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum do also here in thy country. And he said verily I say unto you no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of her truth many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah when the heavens were shut up three years and six months when great famine was throughout all the land.

[10 : 15] And unto none of them was Elijah sent save unto Saraphel a city of Sidon and to a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of this the prophet and none of them was cleaned save Nahum the Syrian.

And all they in the synagogue when they had heard these things were filled with wrath and rose up and thrust him out of the city and led him into the brow of the hill whereon the city was built that they might cast him down headlong.

But he passing through the midst of them went his way and came down to Capernaum a city of Galilee and taught them on the Sabbath days and they were astonished at his doctrine for his word was with power.

And so on may the Lord bless unto us the redeem of that portion of his word. And seeking his blessing and help let us turn to the Old Testament to the first book of Kings and chapter 17.

And we can read from verse 8. And the word of the Lord came unto him that is unto Elijah saying Arise get thee to Saraphath which belongeth to Sidon and dwell there behold I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

[11 : 35] And he arose and went to Saraphath 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.

And as she was going to fetch it he called to her and said bring me I pray thee a marshal of bread in thine hand. And she said as the Lord thy God liveth I am not a cake but a handful of meal in a barrel and a loil in a cruise and behold I am gathering two sticks that I may go in and dress it for me and my son that we may eat and die.

And again at verse 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.

Last week we paused with Elijah at Kirith where he was being fed by ravens with bread and flesh every morning and evening and drinking from a brook.

However the brook dried up because there was no rain. But Elijah waited upon the Lord and the word of the Lord came to Elijah saying arise get thee to Seraphath which belongeth to Sidon and dwell there behold I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

[13 : 02] Now before we come to reflect upon Elijah at Seraphath what I would like to do this morning is to reflect upon the nameless widow of Seraphath.

Last week in the morning we reflected upon another Gentile woman the Queen of Sheba and her visit to King Solomon of Israel. Today we reflect upon another Gentile woman but her status in life was the very opposite of the Queen of Sheba.

It was not wealth but poverty. Seraphath was only eight miles from Sidon the birthplace of Jezebel the wife of King Ahab and where her father reigned as king and leader of Baal worship which Jezebel introduced into Israel.

Historians say that he was the head of the most wicked dynasty then in power. It was also affected by the drought that had come upon Israel for the drought had reached beyond the borders of Israel into the neighbouring lands.

In this city there was a widow and her son. We are not told of the circumstances that led to her widowhood but she is introduced to us at a time when she found herself in great straits at the city gate gathering two sticks to lit a fire to bake a cake for herself and her son of what was left of the barrel of meal and of the cruze of oil and then she expected both of them to die.

[14 : 47] Now there was a time and it would seem that this woman had been a woman of some wealth because she had an upper room or a chamber in her house and in those days to have an upper room was an indication of being in possession at least of some of the finer things of life but now her world had been turned upside down she had fallen on hard times and she finds herself in great poverty she did not have the protection of her husband and in the culture of the day she would have been very vulnerable to abuse and her son lived without the security of having a father she was weak and helpless and turned to the only solace that she had which was to prepare a meal from the handful of meal that was left in the barrel and the little oil that was left in the cruise and to lit a fire and to bake a cake for herself and her son before they died however what we find is that this widow was a very dutiful woman in spite of her devastating circumstances she did not forsake her duty

A.W. Pink says let it be duly noted that this woman did not fail to discharge her responsibility instead of giving way to despair and sitting down she was specially occupied gathering sticks for what she would believe would be her last meal it shows us how important it is for us to be always found in the path of duty even household duties to act out upon our responsibility both materially and spiritually for it was while in the path of duty that God through his servant met with his widow and blessed her she would have missed this wonderful opportunity of meeting with Elijah had she not been doing her duty how important for us to be in the path of duty we read in the

Old Testament of Abraham's servant who was sent to Haran to find a bride for Abraham's son Isaac when the servant arrived at Haran the first woman he met at the well was the very woman who became Isaac's bride and this is the way that the servant commented on his providence I been in the way the Lord let me he was in the way of doing his duty and so providence worked for him in a wonderful way and for the nameless widow of Seraphath she had been in the path of duty acting upon her responsibility she was to discover God's ordering providence she was at the city gates when the Lord servant Elijah arrived some may say that it was all a lucky coincidence that is a verdict that the unbelieving world would come to but you ask the widow of

Seraphath was it all a coincidence you ask Abraham's servant was it all a coincidence and they would testify that behind their providence was the unseen hand of God have you had times in your life when perhaps you ended up in places and with people you never planned and the Lord blessed you this was going to be a day that the widow of Seraphath would never forget she got up in the morning with great sorrow but at the end of the day and for coming days her sorrow was turned unto joy can you recall such days and times in your own life again behind all this is the sovereign hand of God now as we read this morning the widow of

Seraph had this mentioned in the New Testament and there in Luke chapter 4 we read verse 25 but I tell you of a truth many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah when the heaven was shut up three years and six months when great famine was throughout all the land but none none none to Elijah sent save to Saraphat a city of Sidon and to a woman that was a widow it was God's will and purpose to save the widow of Saraphat he sent his servant Elijah so that she might receive the grace of God this is the mystery of the sovereignty of God's saving grace but it also shows us the expanse of the vastness of God's grace this widow was from Saraphat which was outside of Israel like the queen of Sheba that we reflected upon last week the widow did not belong to

[20 : 26] Israel she did not belong to the place of covenant blessings she did not belong to the place of great spiritual privileges yet in the sovereignty of God's saving grace she is not outside the sphere of God's salvation and deliverance whoever you are today whatever is true of you we have met today under the word of God under the preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ and this is no coincidence here we meet today under the sovereign hand of God and like this widow who was greatly challenged by God's servant the gospel challenges you today do not despair for the grace of God is for sinners Jew or Gentile like me and you the living

God sent his servant to Seraph to a certain widow so that she might come to know his salvation and today he has come to you for the Lord is long suffering to us not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance now this word she was greatly challenged for he said to her fetch me I pray thee a little water in a vessel that I may drink the widow politely was going to fetch him a little water which in itself may have been a challenge in a time of drought but the challenge was to get harder as she was going to fetch it he called to her and said bring me I pray thee a muscle of bread in thine hand her response to the to tell

Elijah of her predicament and she said as the Lord thy God liveth I have not a cake but a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruise 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 this challenge came at the right time God is never late the challenge came when the widow had come to the last of her supplies she had come as it were to an end of herself all all she was now anticipating was death God's timing is always right he challenges me and you at the right time his message will always be most timely and maybe today you are having your own personal predicament maybe you have come to an end of yourself your world has been turned upside down whether it's work family or some personal health problem or whatever you are now anticipating the wash you see no lifeline whatever for yourself and you know that it may affect others as well for this widow of

Saripha it was not only herself her but also her son all that was left for her in the world what was she to do what would be her response to this challenge well her words to the prophet are remarkably interesting she said as the Lord thy God liveth verse 12 of 1 Kings 17 as the Lord thy God liveth we are not told how she recognised Elijah maybe his dress or his accent gave him away I do not know but she acknowledges that his God was the living God although this widow was living in the place of Baal worship she confessed that the God of Elijah is a living God but sadly at this stage she refers to the living

God in the second person she says thy God rather than in the first person my God she acknowledges that he is the living God and that he is the God of Elijah but as yet not her God maybe yourself today can follow her sentiments her feelings and attitude you believe that there is a God and you will acknowledge that God is the living God yet you are outside the intimate relationship with God your need my need the need of all sinners is to be at peace with God to be reconciled to God it is not enough to believe that there is a God and that he is the living God if we are to be saved if we are to be forgiven for our sins if we are to be reconciled to God if we are to have peace with

[25 : 59] God he must become our God we must have an intimate relationship with God through faith you see personal pronouns are so important for instance we often sing Psalm 23 but there is a reminder for this there that it is not enough to know about the shepherd he must become my shepherd this widow of Saraphat believes in God and acknowledges that he is the living God she acknowledges that the God of Elijah and the God of Israel are not like the gods of Saraphat that her nation worships now this is a very bold statement from this widow to confess but nevertheless it is not salvation then she is further challenged by

Elijah but this time there is a promise attached to the challenge she said as the Lord thy God liveth I am not a cake but a handful of meal in a panler and a little oil in a cruz and behold I am gathering two sticks that I may go and dress it for me and my son that we may eat it and die verse 13 and Elijah said unto it fear not fear not go and do as thou hast said but make me therefore a little cake first and bring it unto me and after make for thee and for thy son for thus saith the Lord God of Israel the barrel of meal shall not waste neither shall the cruz of oil fail until the day that the Lord send a rain upon the earth how encouraging it is for us to receive the word with a promise

Elijah said fear not how often we find those words on the pages of scripture for instance Abraham left his homeland and we are told that after these things the word of the Lord came into Abraham in a vision saying fear not I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward to Hagar we read that the Lord said what aileth the Hagar fear not for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is to Isaac the Lord said I am the God of Abraham thy father fear not for I am with thee and will bless thee and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham sake Moses at the Red sea said to the children of Israel fear ye not stand still and see the salvation of the Lord which he will show you today for the Egyptians whom you have seen today you shall see them again no more forever through his prophet

Isaiah the Lord says fear thou not for I am with thee be not dismayed for I am thy God I will strengthen you yea I will help thee yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness you know there are many things that can cause us to fear or to be afraid the widow of Saraphath had a handful of meal and had oil from which she was going to bake a little cake for herself and her son and now she has been challenged by the word of the Lord through his servant to go and bake first for Elijah she could justify herself that she feared that there would not be enough to bake a cake for the prophet and then for herself and her son you know there's a story in the New Testament we have there about Jairus whose daughter was sick and eventually died and when they came to the house of

Jairus we are told that one ran out to meet them and said master but when Jesus heard it he answered saying fear not believe only and she shall be made whole he said to Jairus fear not only believe and that is what is happening with the widow of Seraphat she believed the word and promise and she obeyed for we are told that she went and did according to the saying of Elijah now that is real faith she is putting the Lord first and herself second she is putting the Lord first and herself second she could do this only because she trusted God to provide she put her trust in the word and promise of

[31 : 10] God through his servant Elijah she ventured her life and that of her son on God's word and promise where do you stand today in relation to God's word and promise who do you put first in your life the word and promise of God for me and you are believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved in thy house on one occasion Jesus was confronted by a man who had a demon possessed child and he wanted the help of Jesus and Jesus said to him if thou canst believe all things are possible to him that believeth and we are told that the father of the child cried and said with tears Lord I believe help thou mine and believe well may we follow the example of the widow of serapheth and believe the word and promise and

God did not disappoint her for we read and she and he that is Elijah and her house did eat many days and the barrel of meal wasted not neither did the cruise of oil fail according to the word of the Lord which is spake by Elijah each day she would dip her hand into the barrel of meal and there would always be some no matter how much she took out and would always be sufficient and adequate for the day's meal she could tip the cruise of oil to pour from it and the oil would always flow from it how the Bible speaks to us about the riches of God's grace the storehouse of his grace is always full no matter how much we draw from it the storehouse of God's grace is always full why did not

God give her a barrel full of meal there are those who say that it was so that Elijah's presence would remain unnoticed for by now he was a sought out man if she had been given as Charles Spurgeon would say a granary full of meal and a vat full of oil news would have spread and possibly a riot would have ensued that would perhaps endanger her own life and the life of her son and the life of Elijah because then Elijah would be found out and although that is a reasonable cause I think that the principal cause was for the strength and growth of her faith that it was for the faith of this woman of Seraphath of this woman of Seraphath that it was for the strength and growth of her faith to teach her her total dependency upon

God upon his word and upon his promise to be leaning each day upon God's word and promise and that is what me and you need each day to lean upon God's word and promise and in order to do that he was only giving it what was needed for the day he didn't give her a barrel full of meal and a cruise full of oil but she had to come each day and put her hand into the barrel and take out what was required for the day she was to pour the oil and receive what was required for the day so that she would become dependent totally upon the Lord's word and promise and that is what is to happen for me and you that we become dependent each day on the

Lord's word and promise so we receive what is adequate for today we receive the grace that is adequate for us for today Peter in his first letter in chapter 1 writes that the trial of your faith been much more precious than of gold that perished though it be tried with fire might be founded to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ the multiplying of the meal and oil continued daily and Elijah and the widow and the son were getting along very well then one day the calm and peace of the home was interrupted we read there after these things verse 17 and it came to pass that after these things that the son of the woman the mistress of the house fell sick and the sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him a great fiery trial had come upon her she had already lost her husband and now her only son was dead the trial had come upon her not because of her disobedience we might be prone to think that trials come because of disobedience but the word of seraphat was obedient to

[37 : 09] God and his word and we are taught that obedience does not eliminate trials or the testing of her faith and certainly this was to be a real test of her faith the psalmist in psalm 34 writes many are the afflictions of the righteous Matthew Henry writes extraordinary afflictions are not always punishment for extraordinary evils but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces the widow along with Elijah and her son had enjoyed God's blessings however blessings does not accept us from trials maybe that the widow had come to be complacent and self satisfied maybe she was leaning upon God's heaven more than upon the Lord himself notice that in verse 17 it says and it came to pass after these things what things

I think that it is a reference to the blessings that was found in her home David in Psalm 30 writes and in my prosperity I said I shall never be moved Lord by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong and then he says thou didst sight thy face and I was troubled we read regarding the life of Abraham that in his old age he came to face probably the severest trial or testing of his life and it came to pass after these things that God had tempted or God tested Abraham what were these things it must be a reference to all the blessings that Abraham had received from the Lord during his lifetime and especially the blessing of a son in his old age A.W.

Pink writes that it often happens that God exercises his people with the heaviest trials when they have been the recipients of his richest blessings the widow Sarah had many trials in her life the loss of her husband the poverty of widowhood the famine that raged the land but she had come through them all and had come to faith in the living God and was enjoying the blessings of God when suddenly she was plunged into the darkest experience of her life all the previous trials were sore and painful but this one surpassed them all the death of her only son the one in which she had probably placed all her hope for the future in a moment of haste she blames Elijah what have

I to do with the old man of God are coming to me to call my sin to remembrance and to slay my son in her mind Elijah adored the judgment because of some sin in her life we are not told what this particular sin was it makes no difference whatsoever but she believed that it was the root cause of her triumph A.W. Pink writes it is at this very point that the difference between an unbeliever and a believer so often appears when the former is visited with some trouble or loss the pride and self righteousness of his heart is quickly manifested by his I know not what I have done to deserve this I always sought to do what is right I am no worse than my neighbours who are spared such sorrow why should I be made the subject of such a calamity but he goes on and he says but how different it is with a person that is truly humbled that person is distrustful of themselves aware of their many shortcomings and ready to fear that they have displeased the

Lord although the widow of seraph came to the wrong conclusion at this time it does show us that sometimes we are prone to confine conviction of sin to the preparatory work of the beginnings of the life of grace we look for conviction of sin before conversion and truly it must be there but conviction of sin can be at its height after conversion and sometimes near even near the end of a person's Christian life although the widow was all upset and confused Elijah knew what to do he took the matter to the Lord it is always good and beneficial for us when our faith is tested to bring the whole matter to the Lord and we are told that the Lord heard the voice of Elijah and the soul of the child came unto him again and the child revived we are told that

[42 : 35] Elijah took the child and brought him down out of the chamber into the house and Elijah said see thy son liveth we can't just imagine the joy that overwhelmed her heart when Elijah brought her son back to her in Psalm 30 again David writes we've been made endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning trials are special tests they can be the real proving grounds of our profession of faith you see anyone can act when things are going straight forward as it were but when trouble comes unfortunately for some it is a different story read the parable of the sower and the gospel illustrates to us the point that I just made this widow would be among those mentioned in that chapter of faith that we have in the book of

Hebrews in chapter 11 where we read that by faith women receive their dead raised to life again a particularly important truth was demonstrated to this widow and that is the power of God over death for her and all the Old Testament saints a confirmation of the promise there I would put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seat and her seat it shall bruise thy head and thou shall bruise the seal God was demonstrating that he had power over death and this woman received assurance that the word of God is truth she had faith she had already believed but possibly she was harassed by doubts but God's demonstration of his power over death gave her the assurance that was needed it was all pointing to the great message delivered to other women in the

New Testament when they came to where the body of Jesus Christ was buried and they said to them he is not here for he is risen as he said come see the place where the Lord lay well today may we look by the look of faith and be assured that the word of the Lord is truth may we be assured and rejoice in the power of Christ's resurrection may the widow of Serafath the nameless widow of Serafath teach us many lessons today of how we should proceed how we should go on in our life of faith faith in the word of God and in his promise may the Lord bless our thoughts let us pray eternal and ever blessed

Lord we give thanks to thee for thy word and for thy promise and we pray oh Lord that we may indeed be among those who will proceed through our life leaning upon thy word and thy promise in spite of all the trials and the problems and the doubts and the many circumstances and situations that may confront us and cause us grief and pain and hardship but nevertheless we pray oh Lord that through thy word and promise that we may be able to overcome them all we ask oh Lord that thou would continue with us now for the moments that we have been around thy own word that thou would continue with us for the remainder of this day that we may indeed be strengthened through thy word and now may the grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more Amen