

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

GOD'S WIDOW

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 unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

Luke 4:25-26

The LORD often accomplishes HIS purpose in the earth in a manner which is totally contrary to the fashion in which men would assume that HE would work. In order to build a man up the LORD breaks him down, in order to make a man rich, HE makes him poor, in order to cloth him, HE strips him naked and bare. Because of this it is impossible for the natural man to comprehend the nature and scope of HIS work among men. Paul described this phenomenon like this, *"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."* (1Cor 1:27-29) The writer of proverbs also commented upon it when he wrote, *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."* (Pro 14:12)

The LORD had many followers during the early halcyon days of HIS ministry. Multitudes flocked to HIM in order to see the wonders wrought by HIS hands and to eat of the food which HE seemed to bring out of thin air. But as time went on and the searching and convicting nature of HIS message began to sink in; more and more of them fell away and walked no more with HIM. Some began to fear the reprisal of the Jewish leaders who despised HIM and some simply could no longer abide HIS message which took away a man's reason to hope in his own ability to deliver himself from certain destruction.

Religious men love instruction which encourages them to perform deeds, pray prayers, and carry out acts of devotion which they assume are pleasing in the sight of GOD. They like checklists of dos and don'ts, by which they can compare themselves to others. They grow downright hostile however, when they are told that they have no power or ability to do anything which would gain them favor in HIS sight.

They love the doctrine of predestination as long as they think they are the predestinator. The same is true of the doctrine of election. As long as men are assured that they are the ones who choose GOD they feel quite satisfied. But let someone point out that the scripture says that GOD is the ONE who does the choosing and they grow angry.

We see this illustrated in chapter nine of Paul's epistle to the Romans as well as in the reaction of these Jews when the LORD told them of the widow and the leper. *"And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath."* (Luke 4:28) They were so angry, in fact, that they would have thrown the LORD off of a cliff had HE not hid HIMSELF from them. Yet the LORD worked in the hearts and minds of HIS disciples to cause them to

cleave to HIM and delight in HIS message. (see John 6:67-69) There will always be a contrast between those who are caused to bow in submission at HIS feet and those who are left to their nature to balk and “but” when confronted with HIS absolute power and dominion and HIS right to create some vessels unto honor and some to dishonor as it may please HIM.

There are some lessons we can learn from Elijah’s visit to the widow’s house which illustrate the manner in which the LORD is pleased to deal with those who are HIS elect.

Elijah was sent to this widow whose circumstance was no different than many other widows which were in Israel at the time. This was a time of great famine and no doubt others were perishing for want of sustenance. The elect of GOD are sinners of the same sort and type of those who perish and it is only GOD who makes them to differ. (see I Cor.4:7) There is no indication that this woman had done anything to make herself worthy of such a visit. Even as none of the elect are shown grace for any other reason than that they have been made the recipients of HIS mercy. (see Mat. 11:26)

Elijah was sent to this widow because she was highly favored among all of the widows which were in Israel. GOD is pleased to send HIS messengers to declare the good news of the gospel to those whom HE has predestined to hear it. As Luke writes of those who believed, *“as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”*(Acts 13:48) The LORD said, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”* (John 10:27)

Elijah came to this widow in the midst of her poverty and took away the last thing that she had confidence in. When he showed up she was gathering a few sticks so that she might make a fire to cook up her last little bit of oil and meal into a cake so that she and her son might eat their final meal and then die. The health and wealth preachers would have us believe that Elijah went down to her house with a sack full of groceries to help her in her time of need. Yet he came there empty handed and commanded that she give him her last bit of food and in so doing stripped her of even the little that she had. So does the SPIRIT of GOD when HE visits one of HIS own. HE is sent to *“reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”* (John 16:8) HE is very adept and able to cause a man great despair when the man is made to survey his own innate poverty and weakness. (see Job 42:5,6)

Elijah increased the widow’s poverty in order to give her a gift she could never have imagined. She had no idea that he was about to supply her with a continual supply of bread. (see I Kings 17:14-16.) The LORD JESUS CHRIST is the BREAD of heaven which if a man eat he shall never again hunger. HE is pleased to come and feed HIS sheep and they shall never perish. *“And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.”* (Isa 42:16)

Elijah was sent to a widow whose heart the LORD prepared. The LORD told Elijah, *“Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.”* (1Kings 17:9) This is the same fashion in which the LORD sent Paul to preach to Lydia, *“whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.”* (Acts 16:14) The LORD ordained to apply HIS blessings upon her house in preparing her heart and causing her to be obedient.

Elijah continued to bless this widow by abiding in her house. When her only son was dead he restored his life, lest she should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. GOD does indeed subject HIS own to manifold trials but HE is faithful to deliver them. *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”* (1Cor 10:13)

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