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Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

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Active Faith 1 Kings 17:8-16

Lesson Background and Introduction

Most scholars believe that the books of 1 and 2 Kings, originally a single book, were written after the fall of both halves of the divided kingdom of Israel but before Judah returned from Babylonian exile in about 539 BC. The author of these books, whom some believe to be Jeremiah or one of his contemporaries, drew on hundreds of years of historical sources. He viewed Israel's history through the lens of God's covenant with His people as described in Deuteronomy. The author of 1 and 2 Kings meticulously organized Israel's history to make it obvious to his fellow Israelites that they were suffering exile and humiliation because of their lack of faithfulness to God's covenant. Throughout the books of 1 and 2 Kings, the Lord honored the faith of individuals—whether kings, prophets, or the lowly—who remained true to the God of Israel. The exiles who first read 1 and 2 Kings struggled to understand why God allowed them to be handed over to their enemies and how they might find forgiveness and restoration. The history served in part to assure them that God would honor their faith, no matter where the people found themselves. Our narrative is set in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Ahab (874-853 BC). The details of his reign reveal the king's unwillingness to trust God to reward the northern kingdom if they would remain faithful to the terms of the Mosaic covenant (1 Kings 16:30-33). God initiated a covenant with His people that was similar to political treaties that earthly kings entered into with a newly conquered population. As king, Ahab had been charged with the task of being a steward of the covenant, just like every king before him (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). The blessings and curses of the covenant should have provided every incentive needed for Ahab to lead his people into a season of covenant renewal. However, his contempt for the covenant and the Lord could not have been clearer. Ahab placed no stock in God's sovereignty or in His ability to reward the faithful or judge the wicked.

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Elijah's Provision - God sent His servant Elijah to Zarephath. This was enemy territory for Elijah because the evil Queen Jezebel, who sought to wipe him out, came from that area along with her Baal worshipers. Yet, God sent Elijah there and promised to provide through a widow. Elijah arrived at the city gate of Zarephath and there he found a widow gathering sticks. In those days, a wife whose husband died barely survived. By faith, going on God's promise alone, Elijah, a Jewish man, asked a poor Gentile woman for water. When she was on her way to get a cup, he told her to also bring him a morsel of bread. The widow politely respected Elijah's God. She regretfully informed the prophet she didn't have bread, only a little flour and oil which she was preparing for her and her son. It would be their last meal before starving to death.

The Widow's Provision - Elijah declared the Lord would sustain the three through the famine. Neither the pitcher of meal nor the source of oil would run out until the drought ended. And that's what happened. The Lord made good on His promise. Each time she went to get what she needed, He miraculously provided more flour and oil.

God's Lessons in Hard Times - When facing a hopeless situation, like the widow at Zarephath was in, there are important lessons to keep in mind. First, God will provide. We must look beyond the obstacles to seek Him and His direction. He listens to His people and cares for them. Also, we should reflect on the many biblical characters in Scripture who faced extremely hard times, but put their lives in God's hands. Joseph is one example. His jealous brothers tossed him into a pit which eventually landed him second in command to the Pharaoh in Egypt. Without bitterness he told his brothers, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Gen. 50:20). When God allows His children to go through difficult times, there are many valuable lessons to be learned and great value on the other side: "When he has tested me, I will come forth as gold" (Job 23:10)

(Adapted from the Echoes Commentary)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:
We are saved by faith, not works, but we live out our faith by loving others and caring for their needs

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK:
James was concerned that the church take care of the widows and the orphans, and he also wanted them to rely not on empty words but to act on their faith with deeds of love

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:
But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works
(James 2:18 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", June 29, 2017)

Series: Responding to God's Grace

UNIT: Responses to God's Faithfulness

NEXT WEEK

Humble Faith
(Luke 7:1-10)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

The Prophet's Faith (1 Kings 17:8-11)

Faith to believe God's command (8-9)

Believe because it is the actual word of God (1 Thess 2:13)

Believe because it is the truth and it will bear fruit (Col 1:5-6)

Believe because it comes with the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 1:5)

Believe because it gives birth as one of the firstfruits of God's creations (James 1:18)

Believe because it is living and enduring (1 Peter 1:23)

Faith to obey God's command (10)

Obey God's commands by being a slave to righteousness (Rom 6:15-18)

Obey God's commands by living a life that proves obedience (2 Cor 9:13)

Obey God's commands so that we will know God (1 John 2:3)

Obey God's commands by living in God (1 John 3:24)

Obey God's commands by being ready to do whatever is good (Titus 3:1)

Faith to ask for needs (11)

Ask for needs seeking the compassion of God (Mark 9:21-24)

Ask for needs seeking the help of God (Luke 7:2-5)

Ask for needs trusting in the power of God (Luke 5:12-13)

Ask for needs through faith (Luke 13:23-25)

The Widow's Faith (1 Kings 17:12-14)

Faith to give sacrificially (12)

Sacrificial giving done willingly (2 Cor 8:12)

Sacrificial giving offered the right way (Gen 4:2-7)

Sacrificial giving out of love (Eph 5:1-2)

Sacrificial giving to help others (Phil 4:16-18)

Sacrificial giving through steadfast faith (2 Tim 4:6-8)

Faith to believe in God's provision (12-13)

Provisions through the glorious riches of Jesus (Phil 4:19)

Provisions through the Word of God (Deut 8:3)

Provisions that will abound in every good work (2 Cor 9:8)

Provisions through the fear of God (Ps 34:9)

Provisions through being made rich in every way (2 Cor 9:10-11)

God's Faithfulness (1 Kings 17:15-16)

Faithful to fulfill His promises (15)

God is faithful to His promises and does not violate His covenants (Ps 89:33-36)

God is faithful to His promises and remembers His covenants (Ps 106:43-45)

God is faithful to His promises of redemption (Ps 111:9)

God is faithful to His promises of upholding His people (Isa 42:6)

God is faithful to His promises through Jesus' blood covenant (Matt 26:28)

Faithful to provide eternally (16)

Eternal provision through the covenant with God's people (Jer 32:37-41)

Eternal provision because His presence is eternal (Ps 21:6)

Eternal provision because His kingdom is eternal (Dan 4:3)

Eternal provision because of His unfailing love (Isa 54:10)

Eternal provision because God cannot lie (Titus 1:2)