

Elijah

God's man to a nation in crisis

Facing Tragedy

Lesson 4

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1 KINGS 17:24 KJV "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."

Tragedies are an event that can bring devastating results. Often times, individuals look at tragedies as affecting everyone else but them. However, no one or no family is immune from tragedy. Tragedies will come eventually on every person and every family. Tragedies can effect every age group, social group, race, and any other human factor. No one is safe. No one is immune. No one has a vaccine to prevent tragedies from occurring in their life.

One of the most difficult events or tragedies in life to go through is the death of a loved one, especially a child. In the classic movie, *The Tale of Two Towers* (*The Lord of the Rings*), when King Theoden makes the statement at his son's grave, "No parents should have to bury their child." There is probably not a more difficult time in life than for a parent to endure the death of a child.

In 1967, psychiatrists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe examined the medical records of over 5,000 patients as a way to determine the stressful events in life that might lead to illnesses. Patients were asked to tally a list of 43 life events based on a relative score. Here are the five most stressful events according to their study:

1. Death of a spouse
2. Divorce
3. Marital separation
4. Imprisonment
5. Death of a close family member

Facing death, whether one's own or that of a loved one, is one of the most difficult events in life. There is only one thing that

1 Kings 17:17-24 KJV "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. 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? 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. 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? 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. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. 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. 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."

makes facing death less difficult and that is hope and victory in Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 KJV "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Elijah had to face this event with the widow woman and her son. Elijah traveled to Zarephath to a widow woman and her son so the Lord could provide for both Elijah and them. During his stay with her, a tragic event happened in her life, her son fell sick and died. Through this recorded event, sev-

eral important truths concerning tragedies can be learned.

I. Tragedy can happen at any time

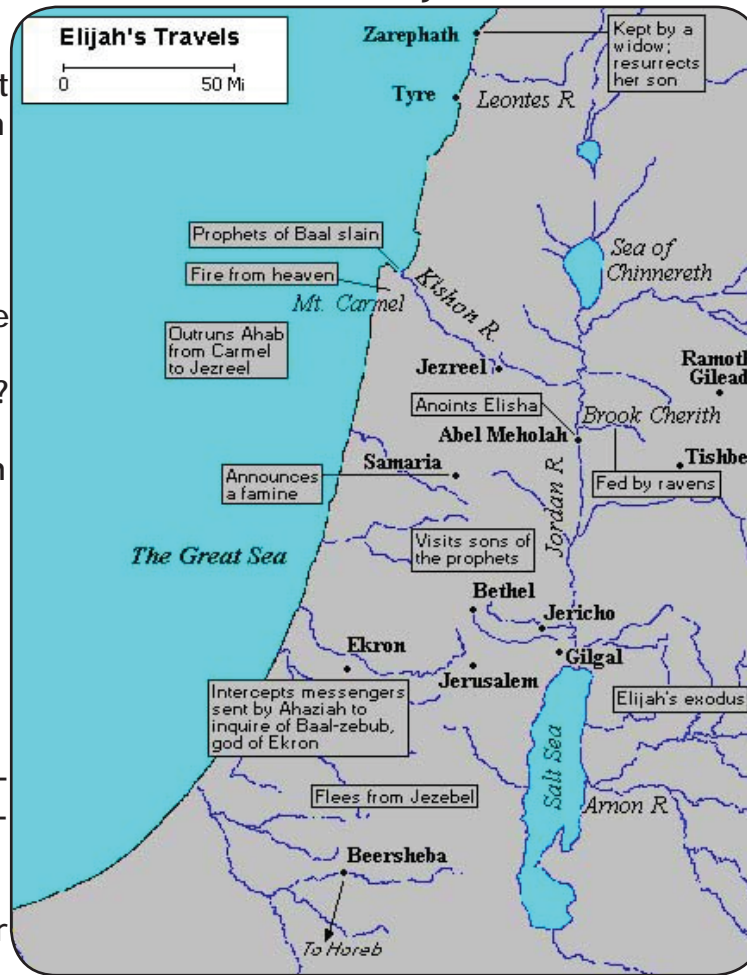
1 Kings 17:17 KJV "And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him."

There is no indication of how long that Elijah had lived with the widow woman

and her son. He could have been there only a few days, few months, or longer than a year. He was there when tragedy hit the family. The widow already had a very difficult life. She lost her husband who was the provider for the family. She was faced with possibility of starving to death with her son because she only had enough resources for one final meal. She had faced some very difficult situations in her life. Now, she must

face one of the most difficult situations, the sickness and death of her son.

The son fell sick suddenly and died suddenly. The illness is not given but there is no doubt that the young child died. The phrase 'no breath left in him' refers to his life being ended. The word can be translated as breath or spirit. In anyway, the child



had died.

There is no home today that is exempt from tragedies. So often in life, these tragedies happen at a second's notice. From natural to unnatural disasters, tragedies can affect the life of the family. No family is immune. Tragedy comes suddenly as in this case.

II. Tragedy can bring cruel responses

1 Kings 17:18 KJV "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?"

Notice the anguish in her statement. Notice the misunderstanding that she utters. The widow woman is facing one of the most difficult times in her life and she lashes out at the very one who helped to preserve her son and her life. She throws an accusation back at the man of God. Often times in the midst of tragedy, a person will lash out at the very ones who are the closest.

She blames her son's death on Elijah and on God. She lashes out in anger and sorrow. She is responding like many have done when tragedies strike. She is asking why did God do this, was it because of my sin? She is angry and hurt. She does not understand why her son had to die.

She blames her son's death on herself and her sin. The tragedy reminded her of the sins in her life, whether present or past, it does not say. She blamed his death on her own sinfulness. This is not uncommon. In the wake of tragedy, some think that if they had not committed some past sins then it would have never happened. Or, if they had been a better person, it would not have happened. Granted, all tragedies do stem back from the sin curse but all are not directly caused by sin.

John 9:1-3 KJV "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was

blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

III. Tragedy can be an opportunity for the Christian

1 Kings 17:19-23 KJV "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. 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? 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. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. 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."

A. Elijah did not respond back in the same manner

Elijah has always been known as a rugged, hard-hitting prophet of God who took God's message boldly to King Ahab. He was a hard and rugged man. Yet, when the widow woman lashed out at him, he showed great patience and kindness by the manner in which he responded.

1. He responded with kindness

Proverbs 15:1 KJV "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."

He could have responded back coldly and hurtful to her in defending the Lord and his position. He could have argue that this is life is hard and cruel. He could have argued that after all I have done for you and this is how you respond. But, he did not. He knew the pain and hurt in her heart. He knew that she loved her son and that she needed patience, care, and concern.

2. He responded with comfort and hope

He asked her to give him her son. He took the burden off of her and put it on himself. He took the weight of the child out of her arms and transferred them to his own.

Galatians 6:2 KJV "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

Elijah knew the anguish of her heart. He knew that she was distraught over the loss of her son. He knew that she had a burden on her heart. Because of this, Elijah was patient and kind. He responded in such a manner to give her comfort and hope. A Christian should bring comfort and hope whenever possible. However, a Christian should never give a false hope.

B. Elijah prayed

When Elijah took the child from his mother, he carried the child to his room and cried before the Lord. The word is the Hebrew word, אֲדַרְדֹּק, which means to plead or to cry unto. Elijah prayed with a passion and desire toward the Lord.

Elijah's prayer is an example to us on how we need to pray for others.

1. Elijah prayed with passion

James 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

The fervent prayer is a prayer of pas-

sion and zeal. It is a heartfelt prayer. It is a prayer that comes from the depth of the heart for the person. It is not a prayer of repetition but a prayer that is felt, expressed, and carried before the throne of Grace.

2. Elijah prayed with compassion

1 Kings 17:20 KJV "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?"

The meaning is, "Thou, O Lord my God, according to Thy grace and righteousness, canst not possibly leave the son of this widow in death."¹

Elijah prayed unto the Lord asking the Lord not to allow this additional tragedy to rest on the widow woman. His heart went out to the widow and her sorrow and pain. His prayer was for God to restore the child's life back to him.

3. Elijah prayed specifically

Elijah prayed that God might restore back the life to the child. He prayed for restoration.

4. Elijah prayed with persistence

Elijah did not just utter one little prayer and let it go. He prayed before he started working with the child. He prayed after he had begun working with the child. He prayed with persistent.

Prayer should be offered up to the Lord in a persistent manner. Prayer should be offered more than just once. Christ tells us that men ought to always pray and not faint.

Luke 18:1-8 KJV "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not

¹ Title: Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament Vol. 3: 1 Kings-2 Chronicles Edition: Second Publisher: Public Domain

to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

Christians should be persistent in their prayers for others.

5. Elijah prayed with knowledge

Elijah knew that life was in the hands of the Lord. He knew that the Lord gives and restores life. He knew that it was not in his hands but in the Lord's hands. God is sovereign and He will accomplish His will so Elijah prayed asking God to accomplish His will in the life of this child.

6. Elijah prayed expecting an answer

Elijah knew that the Lord would hear his prayer. Elijah was a man of faith. Elijah was a man who trusted in the Lord and knew that the Lord heard his prayer. God did hear his prayer and answered it by bringing the life of the child back into his body. God restored the life of the child.

God hears the prayers of the righteous.

James 5:17-18 KJV "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

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IV. Tragedy can bring blessings

1 Kings 17:23-24 KJV "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. 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."

Tragedy, it is hard to imagine, can bring great blessings. This is not the first time that I have read or heard of a tragedy bringing another person to the Lord. There have been times when a faithful saint has been called home to glory that it brought a wayward son, daughter, or friend to Christ.

The miracle was the first recorded miracle of a person receiving life back after they had died. This miracle leads the widow woman to a faith in the God of Israel, Jehovah.

V. Two miracles at the widow's house

In our previous lessons, it was discussed how that Baal was seen as the fertility god that would bring blessings on the harvest and the family. It was discussed how the families needed two things in order to insure their survival: children and harvest. Those who worshipped the idol god, Baal believed that he and the goddess Ashtoreth had control over these things and had to be appeased with sacrifices and immoral activities.

However, Elijah showed the widow woman who was the true Lord and that it was Jehovah. It was Jehovah that provided the harvest of the oil and meal. It was Jehovah that brought life back into her son. It was Jehovah who truly on the throne. These two miracles proved how powerful Jehovah is and how powerless Baal was.