

LIVING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE BARREL

Text: 1 Kings 17: 5-16

When you re 'living at the bottom or the barrel the only direction to *look, is up.* You have scrapped together all your resources and found only enough for the moment and none for the future. This is where this widow woman was living. Through the prophet, God challenged this woman to look up and have faith again. He challenged her to exercise her faith one more time. It was a challenge because she was "living at the bottom of the barrel." It was a challenge because the need was so great and her abilities were so small. After all, how could God have picked anyone less able to provide for the prophet that her? But that's why He chose her and in return she chose to believe God one

- **Max Lucado writes,** "Faith is the belief that God is real and that God is good.... It is a choice to believe that the one who made it all hasn't left it all and that he still sends light into the shadows and responds to gestures of faith....Faith is the belief that God will do what is right.

God says that the more hopeless your circumstances, the more likely your salvation. The greater your cares, the more genuine your prayers. The darker the room, the more need for light.

God's help is near and always available, but it is only given to those who seek it."

When we look at our circumstances, good or bad, we must always be looking for the provision of God. We must look for the hand of God in every situation. God is always there -- even at the bottom of the barrel -- and He is always ready to provide. Our faith is the key to getting Out of the barrel; but it must meet certain requirements.

I. FAITH MUST NOT LOSE HOPE (vv. 11-12).

A. The widow had lost hope that she and her son would survive.

She was doing the last thing that she knew to do. Evidently she had tried everything possible. But she had lost any hope that there would be provision for tomorrow.

B. The widow had decided that death was inevitable.

She may have been annoyed that Elijah had the gall to ask her to help him when she was the one in need. "Don't you understand, I'm preparing my last meal for my son and me and then we'll be left with nothing! There's no hope for me, why should I worry about you?"

C. At first she didn't see herself as a candidate for a miracle—BUT GOD DID!

II. FAITH MUST BE COMMITTED (vv. 13-14).

A. He commanded her to go ahead with her plans, but put God first.

She was challenged not to be afraid but to give something out of her need. She was already out of options, what would it hurt to honor God? *Go ahead and do what must be done, but do it while giving God the glory for doing the impossible.*

B. The command of God is always followed by a promise.

If you will do this -- God will do that! If you are willing to commit yourself to God's plan God will take care of you.

It's not that God wants us to bargain with Him -- if anything it's just the opposite. What he wants *us to know is that there are certain requirements* that our faith must meet before the wheels are set in motion.

III. FAITH MUST BE WILLING TO ACT (v.15).

A. She was moved by faith instead of reason.

When you're living at the bottom of the barrel you may not have many options but you will always have one -- to obey God

B. I doubt she understood. But she was willing to accept the word of the Lord.

Faith doesn't come by understanding but by hearing or receiving the word. Faith is not the substance of things seen, but of *things* not *seen*.

IV. FAITH MUST BE CONSISTENT (v.16).

A. The miraculous continued because she continued in her faith.

If at anytime she had decided that God wasn't able to take care of her the miraculous would have ceased. But before and after her need was met she was found willing to believe God.

Faith lived out always sustains the child of God.

B. Sometimes God calls upon us to simply keep trusting and wait on Him.

Like the song assures us, *He's always on time*. The chorus says,

He's always on time, I know. He's always on time.
You may be down to the wire, near the deadline,
And if your back is to the wall
He'll be right there when on Him you'll call
He's never too late.... He's never too late...
He's always on time!

Conclusion

The mighty Niagara River plummets some 180 feet at the American and Horseshoe Falls. Before the falls, there are violent, turbulent rapids. Farther upstream, however, where the river's current flows more gently, boats are able to navigate. Just before the Welland River empties into the Niagara, a pedestrian walkway spans the river. **Posted on this bridge's pylons is a warning sign for all boaters: "DO YOU HAVE AN ANCHOR?" followed by: "DO YOU KNOW HOW TO USE IT?"** -- Paul Adams (Rowel. 64)

Living at the bottom of the barrel means we have done all that we can and still not enough. We're disappointed. We're exhausted. It seems there is no way around obstacle. We're at the end of our rope and we're slipping fast. But wait! God's at bottom of the barrel with you. It matters not whether you're in the fiery furnace, lions den or at the bottom of the barrel - as long as God is there with you.