

STORY

The Prophet Elijah - I Kings 16-17

TEACHER PRAYER

Lord God, Your mercies are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness. Sometimes suffering is our lot because we are living in a world of sin among the godless. Fill us with Your Spirit, O Lord, that we may commit ourselves into Your care and keeping knowing that You will never forsake Your people but rather will bless them even in the midst of suffering. Be with me to communicate these gracious truths to the children placed in my charge in my Sunday School class. In Your holy name I pray. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Oil - (17:12) Olive oil was used in many ways for many purposes

Flour - 17:12 Likely, barley flour, the grain of the poor people

OUTER AIM

The prophet Elijah confronts wicked King Ahab with a message of a severe draught

INNER AIM

In the midst of suffering God's people are preserved and blessed

BACKGROUND (*Rupprecht Bible History References* Vol. 1, pp. 340-346)

After the division of the Kingdom, both the northern ten tribes (Israel) and the southern two tribes (Judah) declined in proportion to their departure from God. The nineteen kings of Israel were all wicked and led the people into the grossest forms of idolatry. They worshipped before the golden calves as did the Egyptians; they served Baal and Ashtoreth as did the Phoenicians and Babylonians. They even sacrificed their children to Moloch, as did the Canaanites.

It is difficult to understand how the people who had come to know the one true God could sacrifice this blessed truth and serve false gods. This did not happen suddenly. As they continued to commingle and intermarry with the heathen, step-by-step their involvement in the lives and worship of the heathen increased until they could hardly be distinguished from the idolatrous people with whom they lived. The worship of idols became so prominent it seemed that there were no people left at all who still served the living God.

Judah also turned to idolatry. However, in Judah the people enjoyed the leadership of pious kings from time-to-time. Of the twenty kings in Judah, eight could be considered pious men who initiated sweeping reforms to restore the true religion of the one true God.

Idolatry brought Israel to its lowest spiritual point under Ahab, the king of Israel. "Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a wooden image. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him." (I Kings 16:30-33)



STUDENT PRAYER

Lord God, I must confess that often I take things for granted in my life. Sometimes I forget that all things are blessings from Your gracious and loving hands. Lord, help me to see Your love for me in my earthly and spiritual blessings which I enjoy every day of my life. Fill me with Your Spirit that I may thankfully appreciate all that you have done for me in Christ Jesus my Savior and all that You continue to do for me. May I always worship You, the one true God of heaven and earth and give all glory to You in my words and actions. In the name of my Savior Jesus. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Though Ahab deserved nothing but condemnation from the Lord God, He had not yet given up on Ahab. The LORD God sent Elijah, His faithful prophet, to face Ahab directly. This was no easy mission. Elijah knew how dangerous it was. Ahab was a ruthless self-indulgent king. Jezebel, his wife, held an intense hatred for all the priests and prophets of the living God. They were not safe anywhere. Now Elijah was instructed to go to the capital city of Samaria where Ahab and Jezebel lived and bring them this message: "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word." (I Kings 17:1)

The faith that God worked in Elijah is to be noted. He not only carried a message to the King, which would surely infuriate him, but the message would predict a famine over all the country. He too would be affected. Yet, Elijah obediently carried out God's wishes confident that God would watch over him and care for him. He needed to simply walk with His Lord, speak His Word and leave all things to God's direction.

Evidently the king and his henchmen were so completely surprised by Elijah's boldness that he was able to leave without being taken captive or harmed in anyway. Whether Ahab sought to find Elijah and punish him for such behavior, we don't know. It appears that Elijah was in extreme danger, for God Himself instructed Elijah to head eastward "and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan." (17:3) There the Lord would protect him from Ahab and Jezebel as well as supply him with sustenance.

From that day on there was neither dew nor rain throughout the entire kingdom of Israel. The grass and grain withered and died. The livestock began to die and the people suffered from hunger and thirst. In Palestine when moisture is lacking growing things dry up very rapidly because of the heat of the day and the very sandy soil. But this drought continued for three years and six months!

The Brook Cherith was a tributary flowing into the Jordan River. Ravens are rather voracious birds eating everything they find. It would seem they were an unlikely choice by God. Yet, He constantly challenges the knowledge of this world by using creation as He chooses. Zaraphath was located in Phoenicia on the shore of the Mediterranean between Tyre and Sidon. It was about 85 miles from the Brook Cherith. This was the native country of Queen Jezebel.

Another noteworthy example of faith is found there in Zaraphath. What a blessing came to the widow and her son when she took the Lord at His Word in faith. "Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is the truth." (17:24)

APPLICATION

In this world of sin we cannot avoid confrontation. Jesus says, "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

(John 17:14-17)

Sometimes we can get by, simply by minding our own business. We need not try to find ways to bring about a confrontation with our fellowman. Nevertheless, we will not be able to avoid it. Just as surely as we stand up for

God's truth in our words and actions, we will find ourselves at odds with someone or something in this world of sin.

Sometimes, since we live in a country where religious freedom is to be tolerated, we are permitted to speak and practice openly as our conscience dictates. Yet, we may find that people are hesitant to become our friends with us because of our unwillingness to disregard God and His Word in our lives.

Children are under a great deal of peer pressure. They want to be accepted and liked. All of us do. Yet, they are young and haven't experienced the downside of actions and words which are contrary to God and His Word of Truth. For the sake of having friends, they may sacrifice faithfulness to God, become disobedient to parents and disregard the law. The vulnerability of children makes them a prime target of Satan.

It is all-important, first of all, for mothers and fathers to "stand up for Jesus!" Parents need to do this in their family life, at work etc. Children are deeply impressed by actions far more than words. As someone once said, "What you are doing speaks so loudly I can't hear what you are saying."

Secondly, we need to help our children realize that they are first of all Christians. They have been bought with a price. That price is what Jesus paid in coming here to rescue us "that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (I Pet. 2:9, also see the explanation to the second article of the Creed)

Thirdly, if we are called upon to sacrifice Jesus and His Word for "friendship," the price is far too high. Remember, Satan works through people. God works through people. If we care about the would-be friends, we will do everything we can to share with them the love of Jesus rather than confirm them in a godless way by joining them in their error.

Fourthly, we can be assured that blessing will always result from confessing His Truth in word and action in a kind, gentle and loving way. Remember, contending for the Truth doesn't mean that we must be contentious in the process.

Discuss with the children examples from their lives which required a confession of their faith before others in the world. What were the results?

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

I Peter 5:7 - "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you".

James 5:16 - "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

Psalms 37:25 - "I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread."

Deuteronomy 5:9-10 - "I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments."

HYMN CHOICES

The Man Is Ever Blest - TLH 414

I walk In Danger All The way - TLH 413

May We Thy Precepts, Lord, Fulfill - TLH 412

Oh, That The Lord Would Guide My Ways - TLH 416