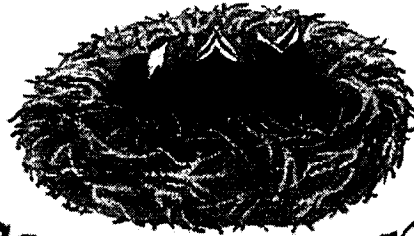


*They shall mount up...*

# ON EAGLES' WINGS



*AERY NUGGETS*

*...with wings of eagles.*

*Isaiah 40:31*

August / September 2010

Elijah and the Woman of Zarephath  
I Kings 17:8-24  
Steven J. Faulkner

Recently while at a picnic at the home of a good friend, I was standing in the yard, enjoying the sounds of all the people having fun, and drinking in the cool, fresh breeze of a late summer evening. Suddenly, a friend stood next to me and exclaimed, "the sun is setting, and it is so beautiful!" Momentarily, I felt a pang of sadness. "Oh, that my eyes could be opened if only for a few moments that I might once again admire those magnificent pink and purple hues," I thought to myself. Then, for just a few seconds, my thoughts returned to that day so long ago when it had become clear to me that blindness would end the career I had worked so hard to prepare for. Now, looking back, I can see God's definite hand of blessing all along the way. But at the first, things did not seem so clear. I recalled the lonely feeling I had as I prayed and waited, trying to see through the thick, gloomy cloud that lay across my path, and wondering what the Lord's plan for me might be, and how I would know it.

I have often wondered what Elijah must have thought as he sat out in the wilderness by the brook Cherith as he realized that this brook was slowly drying up (1 Kings 17:7). God had sent His servant Elijah to this lonely place to protect him and to care for him after he had faithfully delivered God's message to the wicked king Ahab. But just because Elijah had been faithful, his life from that point on was not necessarily made easy. This servant of God would learn many lessons of faith and dependence in the desolate wilderness where God would protect and care for him. We do not read that Elijah questioned why he must be placed in such humble circumstances—sleeping on the ground by a brook out in the wilderness, drinking water from the stream and eating the food that the unclean ravens brought to him. He was not to be cared for by a wealthy person in a comfortable dwelling where he might enjoy tastier food and a softer bed. God had a purpose in all of

this, but this purpose was not immediately revealed to Elijah. And so, the servant of the Lord must live by faith.

And then, just when Elijah's humble existence appeared to have settled into at least a delicate balance, the brook he so desperately needed dried up. I note that Elijah did not question why this life-sustaining brook had suddenly been taken away from him, nor did he venture forth to go looking for more water on his own; he had spent time by this brook out in the middle of nowhere in full dependence on God for every mouthful of food and every drink of water, and he had learned well to wait for the Word of God before moving forward.

Isn't this all an important lesson for Christians today? I notice that Elijah sat by his brook until the water which had sustained his life was all gone, and only then did God reveal to him what he was to do next. Elijah was a man of prayer, so I expect he had occupied his time by the brook seeking guidance from the God of the universe, but I note that this guidance did not come until the eleventh hour—haven't you noticed that this is often the case? But again, there is purpose—the child of God must learn to wait in dependence on the Lord to reveal His will. When the word of the Lord did come, it came without explanation, and the path laid out by the Lord would have been difficult to understand in human terms. We read in verses 8 and 9: "And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee."

God was sending Elijah to a village somewhere between Tyre and Zidon on the Mediterranean coast, very near where





Jezebel herself had come from, there to be cared for by a widow who was poor and on the brink of starvation. It takes faith to wait on the Lord for His guidance while your brook is drying up; and, sometimes it is hard to see the hand of the Lord in the only path that stretches out ahead. Elijah did not question why it was that he was being sent to a foreign land to be cared for by a widow who was as poor as himself rather than by someone of greater means. But, he immediately went to the place where he was sent. We read in verses 10-12: "So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

This woman of Zarephath was indeed in desperate circumstances. It would be hard to see how she could survive herself, let alone take care of the man of God. She was a widow without any income, and the drought had brought about such a famine in the region that she had no food to spare to offer the man of God. She had just a handful of meal and a little oil in a vessel which she was planning to use for herself and her son, but after they had eaten, she didn't know where her next meal would come from. In all likelihood, she and her son were facing starvation. How could this situation result in blessing? Yet, the man of God asked this woman to trust in the Word of the LORD, and to put Him first as we read in verses 13,14: "And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth." And so it was—they all witnessed God's unfailing stores of blessing as He fed them all for many days from a barrel and a cruse that should have long since been



emptied. And, later in this same account, they both witnessed God's power over even death. Elijah's faith grew, I'm certain as he beheld the mighty works of God, and in the end, he was the better prepared for the service of the Lord. On the other hand, Elijah's obedient journey to Zarephath, strange as it might have seemed to the world, had also opened the eyes of a heathen woman to the loving, living God of Grace in whom she would now place her trust for the remainder of her life.

My dear friends, are you at a standstill in some aspect of your life? Perhaps doors have been closed for you, and you are silently waiting to know the will of the Lord. Or, perhaps the one path the Lord seems to have opened for you appears to be forbidding and full of trials. But take heart! God's leading where His dear children are concerned is filled with purpose; He often uses times just like these to build our faith and dependence on Him, that we might be a part of the unfolding of His will. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, and after that, he appeared to experience continual setbacks and difficulties; yet when he had ultimately been elevated to the place of power next under Pharaoh, he could, looking back over it all, say to his brothers, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive," (Genesis 50: 20). God could comfort Israel regarding their captivity with such words as Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." As children of God, we always have the assurance of God's good intentions toward us, even when everything seems to be going wrong: "For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," (Psalm 30:5). Are you a Christian? If so, may your heart be comforted by the wonderful assurance that God can take even the difficulties we experience, and work those out to accomplish His will: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," (Romans 8:28).

*"With mercy and with judgment my web of time He wove,  
and aye the dews of sorrow were lustered with His love.  
I'll bless the hand that guided, I'll bless the heart that planned,  
When throned where glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land.  
(Little Flock 77, Appendix)*

For address correction or free new name addition, write to:

Dale Winters

or

Christine Albury