

Elizabeth's Faithfulness

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest of Abijah's division named Zechariah. His wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both were righteous in God's sight, living without blame according to all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. But they had no children because Elizabeth could not conceive, and both of them were well along in years. - Luke 1:5-7 HCSB



Zechariah probably started out his career with high hopes. When Elizabeth married him, there was talk about the priesthood, about education and place in the community. Time wore on and Zechariah was never called to the urban ministry and all the recognition that went with it. He was called to be a priest, but out in the countryside. The other priests that served in the Temple on a regular basis might have even looked down on him, considering him a “bumpkin priest.” The only reason he got to be in the Temple on that fateful day was because that duty was given by rotation.

Zechariah and Elizabeth remained faithful, however. The Living God, Yahweh Shaphat, God our Judge declared them righteous. You can't get a better commendation than that. With all the time and all the disappointments, they continued to serve and to live without blame.

One of their greatest disappointments was that they had no children. I wonder how many children Zechariah had dedicated to the Lord during his ministry? I wonder how many births Elizabeth had assisted. Each time, the events had to have been painful for them. They prayed for years about the matter, but like Paul, the answer they received was, “No. My grace is sufficient for you.”¹

Finally, during Zechariah's one big shot, his 15 minutes of glory, his opportunity to stand in the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple, he had an unexpected encounter. Zechariah's mind reeled. He was stunned. Small wonder that when the angel spoke the magic words, “Your prayer has been answered”, Zechariah's faith stumbled. It had been so long that he might have even momentarily thought, “Which prayer?”

However, Zechariah at least had the angelic visitation. He at least had his temple ministry. Elizabeth spent all those same years, probably keeping the house, washing Zechariah's robes, patiently waiting. To my mind that is a far more difficult task. To remain faithful when the very thing you want most is kept from you is the ultimate litmus test.

During the Christmas season, people are often disappointed. They are disappointed in their experience, in their expectations, in their families or in themselves. Families get together; someone is rude and fussing and fighting occurs, spoiling the pristine quality of the “perfect” holiday.

Get over it. Life's hard, especially if you consistently go against the stream and try to do what's right.² People are rude. They're forgetful. They're ungrateful. We rarely get what we want. Determine to be like Elizabeth; be faithful anyway.

¹ 2 Corinthians 12:7-9

² Hebrews 11:35-40