

Nameless



c. 865 BC

“Why aren’t you here when I need you so much? I can’t do this alone. It’s too hard.”

Sadness mixed with disappointment, as the woman bent down to pick up a little wicker basket; her black skirts stirring up the dust from the dirt floor. In her mind’s eye she could see her husband’s handsome face set in a frame of black curls, dark dancing eyes smiling back at her. Then suddenly, just as she thought she could reach out and touch him, the comforting picture was gone again. Sometimes she was afraid that perhaps a day would come when she wouldn’t remember him so easily. Yet how could that be, when she still loved him so much?

“How could you leave us? How could the gods punish us so by taking you from us?” she muttered to herself, as she turned towards a pile of old rags lying on top of a makeshift bed. From beneath them she heard a weak little voice cry: “Mama!” As she moved the rags aside, a smaller version of the picture from her memory looked up at her, his brown eyes sunken in his head and his dark curls lank and dull.

“It is OK, my son; I’m just going outside to gather some sticks. When I return I will make some bread for us. You rest for

a little while longer.”

“Will Papa come too?”

“No, my son, Papa cannot come to us now... the gods will not allow it. Rest now. Soon I will return.”

Her thin fingers gently twisted his curls as he snuggled down among the rags once more. Soon her darling little boy was asleep and she felt it was safe to leave the house to look for sticks. She hated leaving him when he was so weak, but the fire pit was now cold and the last of her dung pats used up. Heading outside, she wrapped a tattered shawl around her shoulders, hoping to find a few sticks to fuel a fire that would allow her to feed her son for one last time.

Her heart felt too heavy to carry with her. The weight of it bowed her head lower than usual as she put her foot out into the narrow street. Neighbours didn't seem to suit the name any more. Since her husband died they had acted as if she didn't exist, passing her in the street without so much as a sympathetic look. Had everyone forgotten her name? No one seemed to use it any more. In some ways she understood: life was tough for everyone in Zarephath since the drought of neighbouring Israel had started to touch their borders, but as a widow there was no one left to help meet the needs of her family. All she had left was the hope that her little boy would die before she did. She dreaded the thought that he might be left to face death alone.

The breeze from the nearby harbour cooled her hot skin as she stepped over the open drains that wound their way through the narrow alleys of the walled city. The merchant ships still sailed into the distance, laden with trees, ceramics and the red-purple dye that brought Phoenicia its fame. But each time they

returned they brought less and less food, as Israel was unable to meet the trade agreements set up years before, because of failing harvests. No rain meant no harvest. No husband meant no employment and nothing to barter with, which in turn meant no food.

As she passed the shrine to Astarte, wife of the Baal god Hadad, she grumbled, complaining about all that she had sacrificed there to this goddess of love and war. It appeared that Astarte favoured war over love, as she had ignored the pleas for healing for her husband.

“The grain sacrifices would have been better used to feed my son than to be wasted on a god who only brings heartache.”

She now cared little if Astarte heard her. The Baals might promise to be the bringers of life, but she hadn't seen it in her home.

Reaching the city gate, the noise of the traders in the square served only to amplify the nothingness she felt inside. Guilt dogged her steps as she watched others buying and selling from the stalls, still able to provide for their families. Even the cows and camels had food of sorts. The laughter of everyday living mocked her. Joy was an emotion she hadn't felt for a long time, while sadness and despair were her daily companions. A few sticks lay unclaimed beside the gate and she bent towards the ground to pick them up.

“Please, bring me a little drink of water in a cup,” said an unfamiliar voice behind her.

Turning to see who was speaking to her, she saw a foreigner coming through the city gate. To be truthful, he looked more like a vagrant than a respectable traveller. His clothes were

dishevelled and his hair matted. His unkempt appearance told the story of a long journey, with as much dust on his body as on the road he had travelled. An Israelite, she reckoned; escaping from the famine, she thought. Yet inside lingered a strange feeling that she was somehow expecting him... there was just something about him. Whatever it was, her own need identified with the stranger at the gate and she set off to get him a drink.

“Please... bring me a little bread as well.”

She couldn't believe her ears.

Is he so blind that he cannot see I'm starving too?

Turning again to face the stranger, she let it all spill out, giving voice to the desperation of her own situation.

“As the Lord your God lives, I don't have any bread. All I have left is a handful of flour at the bottom of the bin and a drop of oil in the jug. I'm out here gathering sticks so that I can cook one last loaf for my son before we both die!”

The stranger's voice softened as he replied. It had been a long time since she had heard someone speak so tenderly to her; yet his words made no sense.

“Don't be afraid,” he said. “Go ahead: bake your bread and give me the first little loaf. There will still be enough left for you and your son, for the Lord God of Israel has promised that there will always be enough flour and oil left to feed us until the famine is over, and the rain falls once more.”

Never before had she heard such a thing, yet over the years she had heard rumours of Yahweh, the God of Israel. He was the God who didn't like rival gods; who had parted the Red Sea when he delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. There were so many stories, but what she liked best about Yahweh

was that he had given instructions on how to care for widows and provide for the poor. He could teach Baal a thing or two, as far as that was concerned, she thought. But surely this God of Israel didn't care for *her*? He couldn't possibly know her name, or even know that she existed. Yahweh was the God of Israel, not of Sidon.

Shrugging her shoulders, and with the slightest tinge of excitement rising in her heart, she decided that she had nothing to lose. Quickly picking up whatever sticks she could find, she headed off home to do as the stranger had asked. Baal had never promised her anything before; but now the Lord God of Israel had said that neither she nor her son would die... Surely that was worth taking a risk for.

Her hands were shaking as she kneaded the dough. There seemed to be so little. How could it feed all three of them? The smell of bread cooking caused a stirring under the rags once more.

“Mama, can I have some bread, please?”

The pleading, hungry eyes of her only son made her waver for a second, but something inside was calling her to do as the stranger had said.

“Soon, little one, soon. I must first feed the stranger at the gate; then I will make bread for us.”

He was too weak to argue, causing her to groan at the thought that perhaps a stranger might eat what was meant for him. She had used the last of the flour and oil. Would the God of Israel really come through for her now?

The man looked very grateful as she placed the bread in his hands. She could hear him thank his God for the food before

he put it to his mouth, but she didn't wait to hear what he was saying. Her feet moved faster than she thought they could as she ran back to her one little room that she called home. Holding the grain barrel in her hands, she started to shake it, her eyes tightly closed. She was afraid to look. It didn't feel any heavier, but as she shook it caused something to move in the bottom of the barrel. As she opened her eyes a tear dropped down into the barrel, creating the most beautiful little flour dust cloud she had ever seen! It was true... just as the stranger had said. The Lord God of Israel was a god who kept his word. Never did bread taste so good!

The neighbours wondered what the widow of Zarephath had to laugh about that night!

Sleep came easier when hunger pangs weren't disturbing her rest. Now, lying in the early morning light, holding her son closely for warmth, the widow was feeling the first glimmers of hope in a long time. The barrel and the jug sat in their usual place in a recess in the wall, calling her to check to see if the promise was as true on this new day as it had been the day before. Her heart was beating loudly with both excitement and fear. Excitement that it could be true... Yahweh really was a God of miracles. Fear, that she could be disappointed as she had been by so many gods before. Hearing a stirring noise from the little room her husband had built on the roof of their house, she knew that the stranger was awake and that she needed to rise to fix breakfast.

Breakfast. What a beautiful word! This time she lifted the barrel with her eyes open; a little voice within assuring her that the promise would stand. And there it was... flour... not

a barrelful, but enough for breakfast! The boy couldn't believe that they were going to eat on two days in a row. His mother told him for the first time that there was a God in Israel who had promised that they would live and not die.

“What about Baal, Mama?” the little boy whispered, puzzled, his eyes fixed on the statue sitting on the shelf above his bed.

Hurriedly she covered the statue with a piece of cloth, hiding it from view: “Baal has shown us no help. We will hear what the man from Israel says about his god.”

It didn't take long for the stranger to tell them stories of Yahweh. He explained that the Living God was not fashioned by man's hands, and although you couldn't see him, you could see his handiwork. He told them the story of Israel's wanderings; of the many times their sin had angered God, causing his judgment to come. The widow learnt that God always did what he said. Every day she discovered it was true, as she went to the barrel and jug; every day she was able to make food for her household.

Elijah – for that was his name – kept himself to himself, treating her with respect. He didn't go out in public very often, choosing to pray frequently in the little room on the roof of her house. There were times when he mended some things for her, but what delighted her most was to hear her son laugh as Elijah told him stories of the great adventures of the Children of Israel. They cheered and whooped together when the giant Goliath fell after the young David had downed him with a slingshot; and sat goggle-eyed at the descriptions of all the animals queuing up to get on board Noah's ark. They were the times she smiled, and

the times she missed her husband the most, wishing that he too could experience the change in their home since they began to hear of the God of Israel.

Every day they were becoming stronger. Every day, she went to the barrel and jug, and every day there was enough. At first she was tentative as she gazed into the barrel, wondering how long this would go on for, but soon trusting became as natural as breathing. Her little boy started to grow in height and strength, eventually able to help with a few chores. Running errands for the neighbours brought small rewards of other daily necessities; soon he was feeling like the man of the house. One day, when he was older, he would be able to support his mother the way a son should; and make his father proud.

“Time for breakfast, little one!” she called across the room one morning.

When there was no reply from below the quilt that she had made from the rags, she set to other forms of waking him. Just like many other little boys, he felt that morning always came too early. Leaning over him, she pulled back the cover and pounced, tickling him and laughing: “Get up, sleepyhead. Can’t you smell breakfast?” Pulling back in shock, she immediately saw that something was wrong. His skin felt hot, and his body lay limp against hers as she tried to waken him. The boy barely stirred, except to release a moan from his dry lips. Rushing to the water jar, she poured a little drink for him and then wet a cloth to try and cool him down. Panic was rising; her palms were sweaty, and her heart pounding in her chest.

You can't be sick, little one; I love you and need you so.

Breathing deeply, she tried to control the emotions that

were overwhelming her... emotions that were taking her back to that fateful day her husband wouldn't wake up.

"It started just like this... exactly like this," she whispered to herself, rocking the boy in her arms.

She stayed in the same position for hours; just rocking him and singing softly all the little songs he had loved when he was even littler than he was now. Helplessness entered her world once more, only this time she felt that no one could help her. He was her world... her reason for being; all she had left of her darling husband. A large, hot tear dropped on his forehead as she tried to imagine life without him, the joy of her heart. He was the sunshine in her drab existence; the reason to get up every day.

She was a mother, just like any other, who loved her child more deeply than they could ever imagine... whose heart would never only belong to herself, once that tiny baby is placed in her arms.

The hours simply rolled into each other without her noticing the time passing. But with the passing of those hours the child grew weaker, the coaxing of his mother unable to do the only thing she longed for: to waken him from unconsciousness. The pattern of his breathing was changing, and the widow had never felt so alone... so desperate.

All this time Elijah sat in his little rooftop room, listening to a mother sing, plead and weep for help from somewhere for her child. He was a solitary man, called by God to bring his word to the Children of Israel; yet on that day the dilemma of one little boy who had nibbled his way into the prophet's soul was on his mind.

The cry of death suddenly filled the house. The widow howled as grief and disaster filled her soul and her home. The boy was dead! Her crying echoed up and down the tightly packed alleys of Zarephath. Elijah ran down the crude steps leading from the roof and into the living space. In front of him was the saddest scene he had ever witnessed.

She had sunk to her knees on the dirt floor, unable to stand any longer with the weight of the child in her arms and the weight of grief in her heart. Utterly broken, she wept, swaying as she did so, holding tightly to her only darling little boy; the harrowing noise of her grief piercing the soul of the hearers. Elijah stood there, his own heart deeply touched by the scene playing out before him.

Suddenly, she noticed him standing there. Rising to face him, her countenance blackened with anger and accusation.

“What are you really doing here... you... man of God? Look, my son is dead – is that what you wanted, all along?”

The words poured from her lips in her need to blame someone for the tragedy that had just occurred.

“Did you come here just to show me how sinful I am?” she continued, “and then to punish me for my sin? Is that what this is all about?”

Before she could say any more, the same man who had bravely faced King Ahab spoke with a tenderness that he probably didn't know he possessed. No clever comments; no pointing finger; no accusations; he simply said to this devastated mother: “Give me your son,” and reached out his arms towards her.

His quiet words settled her for a moment, giving her that split second to think. *This man's words gave us life before, she*

thought, as she looked at the barrel and jug on the shelf in the corner. Then a little prompting from deep inside said: "Do as he says."

Quietly, she put the most precious possession she had into the arms of the stranger, and she sank back down onto the floor. Elijah rushed up the stairs to his room with the dead child held close to his chest. Never before had he held such a precious cargo in his arms.

Sitting on the floor in the room below, the widow quietly rocked, her arms empty. She could hear Elijah speaking, but the thickness of the roof prevented her from making out his words. He sounded angry, or perhaps distressed; she couldn't decide which. It made her nervous. She didn't want him to make his God angry; she had heard what could happen when God was displeased with his people. Yet Yahweh had the power to perform miracles. The barrel and the jug had taught her that. And, unbelievably, there was a strange sense of peace around her since Elijah had taken her son to the upper room.

Breaking away from her thoughts, she noticed the silence, then the sound of steps crossing the roof. She held her hand across her mouth and waited. Terror, fear and a strange excitement vied for room in her heart.

The door opened and Elijah returned. He was still carrying the boy, but now a huge smile crossed his face. The child's head was resting against his chest... no longer hanging over his arm. She was frozen to the spot.

"Look, your son is alive!" said the prophet, handing the boy back into her embrace.

Laughter and tears mingled together as they danced

around the small room. Joy and delight dethroned sorrow, as the little boy hugged his mama, declaring, “I’m hungry; have I missed breakfast?”

“In a minute, little one, in a minute,” she replied, wiping her tears with her skirts. Then she placed him back on his bed, and took Elijah’s hands in hers. “Now I know that you really are a man of God; and that the words that you speak are from the Lord, and that his words are always true!” And deep inside her soul, she felt that the God of heaven was pleased with her declaration of faith in him, as she felt his peace wash over her soul.

“Now,” she said to Elijah, “I have breakfast to make for two hungry men!”

And laughter filled the room.

There were no more visits to the Baal shrine for the woman or her son. Day by day, she learnt more about the one true and living God from Elijah. His presence and power didn’t stop at the borders of Samaria eighty miles away, nor did he only care for those within its boundaries. As the woman listened to Elijah tell of how he came to be in Zarephath, she realized that the God of heaven must have known her name to send him to her house. She may have been poor and widowed, rejected as unimportant by the people of her town because she had no husband, but she knew she was not invisible to God. And she also knew without a shadow of a doubt that the God who knew her name, loved her deeply – deeply enough to show his kindness to a pagan woman in a foreign land. For that he would always have her heart.

Almost two years had passed since she had met the stranger at the gate, and one morning Elijah brought his walking staff down to breakfast with him. Looking at the gnarled piece of wood staring at her from the corner, she knew what was coming.

“It’s time,” he said. “Time to go to see Ahab again.”

The widow was about to protest when Elijah put his hand up to stop her.

“I told you that this day would come. God has spoken, and I am his servant.”

She served slowly, trying to stall the inevitable; yet there was impatience in Elijah that told her of his desire to obey quickly. Sadly, she filled his little leather bag with what she could spare for his journey. Eighty miles was a long walk.

For those two years he had lodged at her house, and in one sense he was no longer a stranger. Her life and her home had been changed during that time – changed for the better. She knew that she and her son would miss him, but as he walked through the city gate for the last time she was not afraid, for the Lord God of Israel had not left with him. She had experienced Yahweh as the living God, and he lived in Zarephath as well as Israel. Of that she was sure.

And Elijah didn’t stop to look back as they watched his figure fade into the distance.



AD 1987

Centuries later, and hundreds of miles from Sarafand (present day Zarephath), also living in a seaside town, was another woman to whom life had not been kind. Although this woman's husband was alive and well, their marriage was strained by their difficult daily circumstances. They too had only one child, a daughter.

"Are you sure you can manage?" the woman asked, pushing her arm into the sleeve of her coat. "I don't have to go, you know. In fact I don't want to go; I'd be happy to have an excuse; just say the word."

"Go," replied her tired-looking husband. "When was the last time you were out for the evening? I'll manage fine."

"You could hardly call going to a church meeting a night out, now, could you?" A sarcastic smile crossed her face as she finished buttoning her coat. "It's just that I've said 'No' to Joan so many times that I thought if I went this once she'd get off my back and leave me alone. Poor thing thinks that this woman who's speaking tonight might be able to help me. Help? The last thing we need is help from church... much good it's done us up to now."

"She's only trying to be kind. Please, love, behave yourself... and try to enjoy it."

She tutted, and leant forward to give him a peck on the cheek, but a grunting noise from the corner of the room stopped her mid-kiss. Struggling to remove her coat again, she knelt on the floor beside her little girl, whose limbs had stiffened and were shaking in a seizure. Gently turning her slightly on to

her side, they watched, helpless as always to do anything but wait until the ravaging of her body stilled once more. Wiping the foam from the side of her mouth to ease the passage of air through her clenched jaw, the parents looked at each other in despair.

“I’m staying home,” she said. “I can’t leave her like this.”

The noisy breathing ceased and the child wriggled, moaning as she did so.

“There, sweetheart; it’s all over,” she said, slipping her arms gently under the child’s slight body and scooping her on to her knee. The little girl blinked and a hint of a smile crossed her beautiful face. Smoothing the kink in her lovely red hair, the mother sighed, cuddling her precious child close.

“You’re going,” said a firm voice from the kitchen. “I’ll give her her medicine now and that will settle her. Tonight is no different from any other. Trust me; I can manage.”

As he appeared, brown glass bottle in hand, the woman sighed in her husband’s direction. He was right. Tonight was no different from any other. The little girl’s seizures were a devastating part of her condition, caused by a brain disorder. For years now every kind of medicine had been tried, but none of them could stop the distressing seizures that tormented their lovely daughter. At best they were controlled for a few hours. But it was the nights that were the worst. How she dreaded the nights.

The noise of tooting from a car horn outside made the little girl smile, pulling her mother away from her thoughts.

“OK, OK, I’m coming,” she said, gently returning the child to her cosy cushions on the settee. Kissing them both, she

left father and daughter to the evening bedtime routine, rushing outside coat in hand.

The coastal drive was breathtaking as I approached the seaside town where I was due to speak that evening. The azure blue sea may have looked like the Mediterranean, but there would be no swimmers in its freezing waters. A few small fishing boats were already making their way out of the harbour; anxious to land a big enough catch to pay the bills and keep food on the table for their families. It was a difficult life, and many in this area of Ireland had followed the family tradition of fishing for a livelihood. As a city girl I was filled with admiration for the fishermen; any sense of romance I felt quickly dispersed as I watched the boats sail away into the distance.

The church hall was already buzzing when I arrived. The ladies had been working hard for this special event, and thankfully it was paying off, as women streamed in to take their seats. The supper tables around the walls were bedecked with flowers, making an austere building welcoming and colourful. There's something lovely about the happy chat of women who have escaped the pressure of domesticity for a short time. It has such an air of relaxation and anticipation.

By the time the meeting was ready to start, the large room was well filled; only a few empty seats remaining at the front. I had been ushered up to the platform with the rest of those taking part, feeling rather conspicuous sitting in full view of all present. However, it always amazes me how much you can see when in front of an audience. There's the last-minute dash

to turn off the mobile phone, or the bag of sweets passed down the row; or those who are desperately trying to fit in a month's conversation with a friend before the proceedings begin. Then there are the faces... all kinds of people from differing life situations. And I often wonder why they have come and what are the dreams and longings of their hearts.

It was as I was looking around and soaking up the atmosphere that I first noticed one lady in particular. She looked uncomfortable and embarrassed, as her friend rushed her to the front seats just as the meeting began. Her friend sang with great gusto, while she merely mumbled into the hymn sheet. I groaned inwardly, wishing that they didn't insist on singing hymns at these events, making the visitors feel even more like outsiders. As the minutes rolled past, I had to correct myself for looking at her so often. But she looked so sad, so tired. The impression portrayed was one of attendance under duress; longing to be somewhere else, rather than this environment that seemed so foreign to her.

The soloist soon had the ladies eating out of her hand; the words and music filling the room with the reality of God's help through heartache. Except for the lady on the front row. Her face was now red, her eyes firmly fixed on the floor, her arms tightly folded against her chest.

She looked furious.

As I went to the podium to speak, I wondered what was making this lady so angry. I didn't have long to wait for the answer – only the length of my talk. I'd spent forty minutes speaking from my heart of how, as a young mother, I had discovered that our first child was born with a genetic

condition that had left her profoundly disabled. I told them honestly and openly how angry I had been with God; totally unable to understand how God could allow this in my life and afraid of what lay ahead for us as a family. Unfolding my own journey with God towards acceptance and peace, I explained emotionally the detour my healing had taken when our third child, at this time still a baby, was born with the same condition as her older sister. I could see all over the room that I wasn't the only woman there who had suffered disappointment or tragedy. Yet my desire that night was not to leave them merely with a sad story, but rather to tell them how God was helping me to face each and every day with his presence and his promises in my life. The God of heaven, I believed, was able to help in every single situation of life.

The clatter of cups brought pleasant relief from what was probably a difficult meeting for some of those present. When my hostess left an empty seat beside me to check up on things in the kitchen, I noticed out of the corner of my eye the "angry" lady being manhandled towards me by her well-meaning friend. I gulped and prayed a quick: "Help, Lord!"

Pleasantries didn't last too long, as the lady got straight to it, giving an explanation of the picture of anger that she had displayed throughout the meeting. She told me of her beautiful, redheaded daughter at home. She was twelve now; severely disabled, tormented by seizures. So badly was the child affected that she had to sleep in her bed, between her and her husband. It was obvious that the poor woman hated the night time; dreaded it, in fact. At times it seemed that she hadn't been listening to me at all; hadn't heard that my daughter also had seizures and

that I knew just how she felt. But her pain was so acute that she didn't believe anyone could know what she was going through. Her heartache was isolating; or perhaps it was the wall that she had built around herself that was the truly isolating object in her life. A wall of anger and bitterness, cemented together by heartache and sorrow – this was a wall I simply couldn't scale.

So I let her rant and complain, recognizing that I could so easily be standing in her shoes. Platitudes were not what she needed, so I said little. My heart sank, however, when she said with all the conviction she could muster: "Don't speak to me about God! He doesn't even know I exist! You may think he's interested in you, but he doesn't even know my name! Not once... not even once has he ever answered *my* prayers... for *my* child. He doesn't know me and I don't want to know him!"

By now the ladies sitting around us had gone quiet, as her voice was raised, her friend trying to persuade her to leave before she created even more of a scene. As she walked away, angrily shrugging off her friend's hand from her shoulder, my heart broke for her. Even though she wouldn't believe it, I too knew the kind of pain she was experiencing: a mother's pain for her suffering child.

The long journey home was so different from the one I had made earlier. The lightness of my mood had been replaced by a deep sadness. Sadness for this lady who cared for a needy, sick child every day, with no hope for the future and no help for today. She was miserable, angry, lonely and desperately disappointed with God. I felt that I had failed her... failed to help her realize that God *did* know her name and cared for her more deeply than she could ever imagine. As tears dripped onto

my lap, I did the only thing I could for her: I prayed... prayed that God would reveal himself to this nameless woman with the broken heart.

Nine months had passed, and spring was just around the corner. It had been a difficult winter, with our eldest daughter's health problems taking a dip into the dangerous. Still, she was holding on, surprising the doctors by her tenacious grip on life.

One morning, having just completed her little sister's physiotherapy routine, I heard the click of the letterbox.

"Ah, Joy, it's the postman," I said, tickling her tummy as I went to the hall to collect the mail. Only one of the letters was exclusively for me, and the postmark got me wondering who could be writing to me from there? It was a letter from the minister's wife of the church on the coast.

"Do you remember," she inquired, "the lady who was so cross with you at our spring event?"

What a silly question, I thought; *that's one lady I'll never forget!*

"Well, she's asked me to write to you," she continued. "In fact her very words were: 'Tell that woman, who spoke that night, that I know now that God knows my name; and that I've asked him to be my saviour.'"

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry; my heart felt as if it was bursting as I read the rest of the story.

The minister's wife went on to tell how the woman's plight had deeply touched a few of her ladies, who then started to build a bridge of little kindnesses to her heart. Simple small

things at first... an apple tart or a pot of soup; perhaps a pile of laundry ironed when her daughter was ill, or a bit of weeding done to pretty up her garden. Eventually, she had trusted a few of them to babysit, enabling her and her husband to have their first night out together in years. Slowly, brick by brick, the wall of bitterness began to be dismantled, until one day she turned up at church with her husband and their little girl. Now surrounded by a small group of people who really cared for her, she began to see that it was God who had put her on their hearts. Perhaps he did care for her after all.

She finished her long, beautiful letter by telling me how one day the lady asked her if she remembered the bit from the Bible I had mentioned that night. It was from Isaiah 43, and as the minister's wife read her the first two verses: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you," the lady stopped her.

"I want Jesus to be my saviour. That woman was right... he does know my name, and I want him to be with me the way he was with her."

The angels were not the only ones rejoicing at that news!

Almost a year later, I received another letter. This time it came from the lady herself. It was short and to the point. She wanted me to know that her beautiful little redhead was for ever free from her dreaded seizures. She had died just the week before; now God was walking through the "waters" with her and her husband. They were not alone.

As I held her letter in my hand, I wept for her loss, rejoiced for the hope she now had in heaven because of Jesus and thrilled

God Knows Your Name

at the thought of a God who knows our name and acts on our behalf... whatever the century... whatever the location... whatever the situation.

About “Nameless”

C. 865 BC

Read for yourself the biblical account of the story of the widow of Zarephath in the Old Testament book of 1 Kings 17:8 – 18:1.

AD 1987

This is the true story of an encounter between the author and the people mentioned in the chapter.