

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles to 2 Kings 4 –

We are continuing our study through 2 Kings

And for the past couple of weeks, as we have studied the ministry of the prophet Elisha, we have seen over and over again that his ministry was one of grace.

His miracles, the way he interacted with the people – demonstrated grace.

Every miracle, different from the one before – yet they all point to the same person.

You see Elisha's ministry was not to reform the Kingdom of Israel; Elisha's ministry was to point to the One that was to come and reform not only Israel but, the entire world, that is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In our study last week, we saw how the Lord showed grace upon Jehoram, the King of Israel.

Even though the scriptures told us that he did evil in the sight of the Lord.

He may have not been as evil as his father Ahab – but he still allowed the worship of pagan gods in Israel.

He deserved judgment – yet, God showed grace to Jehoram –

God reached out to Jehoram even though he was evil –

Church, never forget that in the same way that God showed grace upon Jehoram – He showed grace to you and me – while we were still sinners.

He reached out to us – first.

[Rom 5:8 NKJV] 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[1Jo 4:19 NKJV] 19 We love Him because He first loved us.

This morning, we are going to study another event – one where the Lord, through the prophet Elisha, shows grace and demonstrates that He is faithful.

Not only does she receive grace, a path of deliverance is provided for her.

And it is a path where faith is required.

Let's pray...

[2Ki 4:1-7 NKJV] 1 A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD. And the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves." 2 So Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" And she said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil." 3 Then he said, "Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors--empty

vessels; do not gather just a few. 4 "And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones." 5 So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought [the vessels] to her; and she poured [it] out. 6 Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "[There is] not another vessel." So the oil ceased. 7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt; and you [and] your sons live on the rest."

So here at the beginning of chapter four, we are introduced to a widow and her two sons.

The scriptures do not provide any details about them.

We don't know their names

We don't know where they lived, we don't know what tribe they were from, we don't know the husband's profession, his cause of death or even the reason for the family's poverty.

In fact, this is the only place where we find this widow and her children mentioned in the scriptures – in these seven verses.

All we know is that misfortune has befallen upon an upright family.

[2Ki 4:1-7 NKJV] 1 A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD. And the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves."

This anonymous woman – has just lost her husband.

Her husband, when he was alive, he dedicated himself to serving the Lord – that is what the sons of the prophets did.

To make matters worse, the husband left behind a debt – he maxed out his credit cards – and the widow appears to have no way of repaying the debt.

The creditors, they want to be repaid

So, they are coming for the widow's two sons – to take them away until they pay off the debt.

Back then, when one took out a loan, it was customary to use your children as collateral – this is frowned upon today – but it was the norm back then.

Now, the problem that the widow was facing was that if they took her two sons, then she would lose her livelihood.

Women, for the most part, were not allowed to work during this time.

They were dependent upon their husband and children to provide for them.

If they take away her children, she would be forced to live a life of destitute – meaning that she would have to beg in the streets in order to get by.

So this widow finds herself in a desperate situation.

And we see here in verse 1, that she cried out to Elisha.

Notice that she didn't cry out to Elisha to do something about it – she didn't say, "Elisha, stop the creditors from taking away my sons"

Her cries were one of desperation.

2 So Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" And she said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil."

Elisha hears the cries of the widow – and I had you make a note of what the two questions he asked her.

What shall I do for you?

This is a very hard question to answer.

Especially for the woman facing the loss of her children.

It seems a little callous when you first read it. What do you want me to do???

Elisha could have set up a gofund me page or negotiated with the creditors or even resuscitated the woman's husband.

All of these could have alleviated the situation. However, I don't think that Elisha expected an answer to this question.

Church,

We too, will face many instances in our lives where we will cry out to the Lord without having any idea on how He is going to resolve it.

It could be a cry for healing, a financial situation, a legal situation or during a time of great pain and distress.

We must remember that it is not up to man to tell God what to do.

As believers, we are to simply to trust in the Lord and allow Him to resolve the situation according to His will.

And that is exactly what happens here to this widow.

The second question that Elisha asks -

What do you have in the house?

You see, for the widow – it would have been a lot easier to tell Elisha what she didn't have in the house.

And the reason is because that is what we tend to do when things are bleak.

We become so focused on the problem or the need that we miss out on what God can do with the provisions that He has already provided.

Turn with me to John 6

Here we have an event that is very familiar to many of us – it is Jesus multiplying the bread and fish to feed the multitude.

[Jhn 6:4-11 NKJV] 4 Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. 5 Then Jesus lifted up [His] eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" 6 But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. 7 Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little." 8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, 9 "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?" 10 Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. 11 And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed [them] to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, **as much as they wanted.**

The same question that Elisha asked the widow – Jesus asks of the disciples.

What do you have in the house?

What do we have to feed the multitude that is following Me?

And their response – we don't have enough to go buy bread and then Andrew responds with, we have a little boy's lunch that consists of 5 loaves and two fish.

And we all know what happened when Jesus gets hold of the 5 loaves and two fish, He fed everyone until they were full.

Five loaves and two fish are insignificant in the hands of the disciples – but in the hands of God – He provided for all of their needs.

Up to fifteen thousand were fed, if you include the women and the children – remember, 5000 was the number of the men.

So, Elisha asks the widow to take an inventory of what was in the house and she says, "I have nothing but a jar of oil."

I don't have much but a little oil.

Church, how many times in our lives have we felt like this widow.

We are going through a trial and begin to feel helpless and then we realize that we still have a little something and God uses this "little something" to bless us mightily.

These little things could be something physical like the jar of oil here for this widow or it could be something spiritual like a bible verse that we have memorized that we cling onto as the world around us is crumbling down.

It could be the tiny bit of hope that causes a prodigal to return home.

The word that is used here for jar – is the word for flask – meaning that this jar of oil was not used for the purpose of cooking but for anointing.

So it is not like she had a 50 gallon drum of oil sitting in her home.

**3 Then he said, "Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors--
empty vessels; do not gather just a few."**

I want you to notice Elisha's instructions to the widow.

Elisha doesn't instruct her to do the impossible – everything that he tells her can be easily carried out and within the means of the widow.

Go to your neighbors and borrow vessels.

The vessels have to be empty – meaning that they couldn't be filled with cookies or flour and Elisha also makes sure to tell her to not only collect a few vessels.

Now, there are many parallels between the faith of the widow here in 2 Kings 4 and the faith of the army of Judah and Israel in our study last week.

Because last week, God promised deliverance and provisions based upon the number of ditches that they dug up in the desert – God filled those ditches with water.

Here, God's deliverance and provisions are going to be based upon the number of empty vessels that the widow collects.

4 "And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones."

Once the widow and her sons had collected all the empty vessels – they were to go into their house and start to pour the oil into the empty vessels.

Here is the catch, once she and her sons began to pour – they couldn't stop pouring to go borrow more vessels -

That is why Elisha instructed her to not only collect a few.

Once the empty vessels that were collected were all full – the oil would then cease.

Just like in our study last week, once God started to fill the ditches with water – the time for digging ditches was over.

The soldiers dug the ditches by faith, not being able to see the storm in the distance – they had to rely on their faith that God was going to deliver them and provide for them just like He said He would.

In the same way, the widows faith and obedience to the Lord's instructions was going to be proportional to the blessing that she was going to receive.

5 So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought [the vessels] to her; and she poured [it] out.

So here we see the obedience of widow.

She obeyed God's instructions through the prophet Elisha.

And as a result, God marvelously provided.

Her sons brought her a container, and she began to pour the only oil that she thought she had into it—and to their amazement, it just kept coming out!

It came out as a steady stream of oil until the first container was full; and then, they quickly put another container under it until it was full; and then, another; and another; and another!

Just like the loaves of bread and the fish that we saw earlier in John 6.

6 Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "[There is] not another vessel." So the oil ceased. 7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt; and you [and] your sons live on the rest."

When every empty vessel had been filled with oil – the oil ceased.

So the widow goes to Elisha and tells him what just happened.

Now, I want to take a closer look at the miracle.

Especially the significance and symbolism in it.

Especially on the application for the believer.

- Oil – this is an easy one. Oil in scripture is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 25, we have the parable of the wise and foolish virgins – five of them had oil in their lamps and five of them didn't. Five of them were ready for the return of Jesus Christ and five didn't. And in the parable, Jesus makes the distinction between those that are Spirit filled and those that are false believers.

[Rom 8:9 NKJV] 9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. Meaning – one cannot be a true Christian without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

- Vessels – we are the empty vessels. In order for the Holy Spirit to be poured unto us - we have to be empty – the problem that many of us have is that we are full of other things and therefore, do not allow the Holy Spirit to be poured into us.

We can be filled with hate, bitterness, jealousy, pride, complacency and many other things.

But Paul commands us to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)

I believe that the many vessels are in reference to us coming repeatedly before the Lord to have the Holy Spirit poured unto us time and time again.

This is something that we must do often.

How do we know when it is time to come to the Lord once again?

By whether or not we are producing any Fruit of the Spirit.

- **The closed door** – once the door was closed, no more vessels could be collected. There is a day coming for each and every one of us when that door will be closed as well. We will have to give an account of what we did for His kingdom. We will have to give an account of how many vessels we collected.

[Eph 2:10 NKJV] 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Church, I want you to notice that Holy Spirit purposely leaves out quantity of oil obtained.

The scriptures do not tell us whether the widow and her sons collected 50, 500 or 5000 vessels.

And as we read the story, I am pretty sure many of us wondered how many vessels did the widow collect?

We try to picture her humble home filled with these vessels of oil up to ceiling.

All we know is that the widow was able to repay the debt with the money they received from selling the oil, she was able to keep her sons with her and she was also able to support herself with the oil that she sold.

And I believe there is a good reason for this –

You see, the importance of the story of the widow and the oil lies not in measuring the woman's faith but in emphasizing God's faithfulness.

Again, the importance of the story of the widow and the oil lies not in measuring the woman's faith but in emphasizing God's faithfulness.

If the widow would have collected double what she collected, God would have been faithful to provide the oil to fill out those vessels as well. This is what this miracle is all about.

I believe that this miracle also provides a great picture of how God wants to use us.

We don't have to have some special skill or great gift to be used by God in a great way.

We just bring Him what we have and offer that to Him.

As we pour ourselves out, He blesses it & turns it into blessing, both for us & others.

And here's the thing – as long as we keep pouring, He'll keep blessing

God will provide the oil because He is faithful

And He will give us as much oil as we are willing to receive.

But first, we have to humble ourselves and come before Him empty.

Amen.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.