

2 KINGS 4:1-7 "GOD'S PROVISION"

This particular section of Scripture is greatly comforting to Lucy and I.

- Speaks to the needs of those dedicated to ministry their whole lives
- Speaks to the usual lack of retirement funds for most in ministry
- Speaks to the minister's fear of how their widows and children will survive without the husband.

1 A certain woman from the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, "**Your servant my husband is dead.** Now you know that your servant was a fearer of Yahweh, but the creditor came to take **two of my children** for himself as slaves.

- **A certain woman** – no a Prophet's wife that is named, just a "certain woman"
 - If named – well, many could say they were special in so many ways
 - Wealthy relatives
 - Won the lottery
 - No, any Minister's wife, any Prophet's life-long help-meet.
- **Loss of her husband**
 - Man of faith in the midst of many pagan idolaters
 - **Spurgeon:** "Her husband had been among the persecuted, and having been, by oppression, deprived of all that he had, it came to pass that when he died he left his wife and children in distress: from which I gather, that holy men may be in the worst of circumstances, and yet it will be no proof that the Lord has forsaken them."
- **Probable loss of her 2 children**
 - Child slaves who must repay their Mother's debt through work.
- **C.H. Spurgeon:** "Wealth is no sign of divine favor." ¹

¹ C. H. Spurgeon, "The Filling of Empty Vessels," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 13.

- **Not hard to get to a point where it becomes difficult to understand why God has you walking the path you're walking.**
 - Difficult walk:
 - Your poor decisions
 - Other's poor decisions
 - Circumstances
 - God seeking to glorify Himself
- **Perhaps Elisha had heard of the plight of this Prophet's wife**
James 1:27 Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you. ²
- The Lord is very interested in the fatherless and widows.
Deuteronomy 10:18 **He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow,** and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.
Psalm 68:5 **A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows,** Is God in His holy habitation.
Psalm 146:9 The LORD watches over the strangers;
He relieves the fatherless and widow;
 But the way of the wicked He turns upside down.

Jeremiah 49:11 . . . **let your widows trust in Me."**

Any destitute today?

Any forlorn over their financial future?

- “Let this encourage any here who are just now very low in circumstances. **You are where prophets and saints have been.** God can lift you up, and would do so if it were really for your good. Be more concerned to act like a Christian in your present condition than to escape from it. Remember, however poor you are, your Master was poorer, and that whatever else you have not, you still have a share in his love. Seek to be rich in faith if you be poor in all besides. You can honor God much in your present condition, you can learn much in it,

² Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013), Jas 1:27.

you can prove much the divine faithfulness, you can exercise much sympathy towards others; therefore be not impatient. Since other men both greater and better than you have trodden this rough road, bow before the determination of God's providence, and ask for grace to be patient under your affliction.³

- **Yahweh knows exactly where you are today**
- **He knows every one of your needs.**

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is **common to man**;

but God is faithful, who will **not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able,**

but with the temptation **will also make the way of escape**, that you may be able to bear it.

1. Common to man

a. **Luke 11:4** And forgive us our sins,
For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

**And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.”**

b. **James 1:12** **Blessed is the man who endures temptation**; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

2. God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to resist

a. **James 1:13** Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; **for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.**

b. **1 Peter 5:8–9**

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

³ C. H. Spurgeon, “The Filling of Empty Vessels,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 14.

9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

3. God will make the way of escape

a. The “escape” was His provision in the face of complete lack

2 Elisha asked her, “What shall I do for you?”

Tell me, what do you have in the house?”

Then she said, **“Your servant has nothing in the house except a jar of olive oil.”**

- **The Lord asks us the same: “What shall I do for you?”**
 - Not because He doesn’t know
 - He wants you to know exactly whom your provision came from.
- **Her Husband’s meager estate, empty now**
 - Faith must activate
 - 1 Timothy 5:5** Now a true widow, a woman who is truly alone in this world, has placed her hope in God. She prays night and day, asking God for his help.
 - No one to be responsible for her care
 - Her sons are too young to provide for their Mother
- **Olive oil – to be used for food and fuel**

3 Then he said to her, **“Go, ask for yourself some containers from the streets, from all your neighbors. You must collect as many empty containers as you can!**

4 You must also go and shut the door behind you and your children, and you must pour out oil into all of these containers and set the filled ones aside.”

- **Points of action:**
 - Dig some ditches in this valley (*2 Kings 3:16*)
 - Collect some containers
- Jesus can fill every emptiness
- Jesus can fill every believer with the Oil of joy – the Holy Spirit.
Ephesians 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; **but be filled with the Spirit,**

5 So she went from him, and she shut the door behind her and her children. They were bringing containers to her, and she kept pouring.

- **Isn’t this our duty as children of the Lord?**

- Bring the empty vessels to Him
- Watch Him fill each vessel for the Master's use
- Watch as those vessels become a useful part of the Body of Christ
- How many of us have brought empty friends to church?

He will keep on pouring!



- This built faith in her sons as well

6 It happened that when the containers were full, she said to her son, "Bring near me another container," but he said to her, **"There is not another container."** Then the olive oil stopped flowing.

- She asked for one more – but they had all been filled!
 - The Lord will not allow His precious Holy Spirit to be spilled on the ground.
- Why does the Lord tarry?
 - **C.H. Spurgeon:** "As long as there is one of God's people unsaved, as long as there is a seeking, repenting sinner yet unpardoned, there will be found to be merit in the Savior still to flow out, till every vessel that needs to be filled with mercy shall be filled, and that to the very brim."⁴

⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, "The Filling of Empty Vessels," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 16.

How many empty vessels will He fill this morning?

- I know exactly how many he will fill:
 - As many as those that come to Him empty – until there is not another empty
- Wouldn't the empty soul long to be filled with the Lord's joy?
- Wouldn't the empty heart long to be filled with the Lord's love?
- Wouldn't the empty spirit long to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
 - **OH LORD, bring me another empty vessel!**

7 So she came and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the olive oil and repay your debt. You and your sons can live on what is left over."

- How much would it take to provide for your future?
- After this, I wouldn't wonder how the Lord would provide for my needs!

1 Thess. 5:16-18 (NLT) ⁵

16 Always be joyful.

- This is a command. A Christian's joy does not spring from his circumstances, but from the blessings that are his because he is in Christ.⁶
- "The Christian who complains, remains in sadness and depression, really breaks a commandment: in some direction or other he mistrusts God—His power, providence, forgiveness"⁷

17 Never stop praying.

- Continual prayer is not prayer that prevails without any interruption, but prayer that continues whenever possible. **The adverb for continually (*adialeiptōs*, also in 1:3) was used in Greek of a hacking cough.** Paul was speaking of maintaining continuous fellowship with God as much as possible in the midst of daily living in which concentration is frequently broken.⁸

18 Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

⁵ Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013), 1 Th 5:16–22.

⁶ Thomas L. Constable, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 708.

⁷ A.J. Mason, "The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians," in *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 8, p. 145

⁸ Thomas L. Constable, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 708–709.

- The two previous commands deal with one's **time** (“always” and “continually”);
- this one deals with his **circumstances**.
Christians are to **give thanks** to God in every circumstance of life. The fact that God works everything together for good for those who love Him (Rom. 8:28) is the basis for this entreaty. ⁹

⁹ Thomas L. Constable, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 709.

MORE THOUGHTS

1 Timothy 5:3-16

3 Take care of any widow who has no one else to care for her. ⁴ **But if she has children or grandchildren, their first responsibility is to show godliness at home and repay their parents by taking care of them.** This is something that pleases God.

⁵ **Now a true widow, a woman who is truly alone in this world, has placed her hope in God.** She prays night and day, asking God for his help. ⁶ But the widow who lives only for pleasure is spiritually dead even while she lives. ⁷ Give these instructions to the church so that no one will be open to criticism.

⁸ But those who won't care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith. Such people are worse than unbelievers.

⁹ **A widow who is put on the list for support must be a woman who is at least sixty years old and was faithful to her husband.**

¹⁰ **She must be well respected by everyone because of the good she has done.** Has she brought up her children well? Has she been kind to strangers and served other believers humbly? Has she helped those who are in trouble? Has she always been ready to do good?

¹¹ **The younger widows should not be on the list, because their physical desires will overpower their devotion to Christ and they will want to remarry.** ¹² Then they would be guilty of breaking their previous pledge. ¹³ And if they are on the list, they will learn to be lazy and will spend their time gossiping from house to house, meddling in other people's business and talking about things they shouldn't. ¹⁴ So I advise these younger widows to marry again, have children, and take care of their own homes. Then the enemy will not be able to say anything against them. ¹⁵ For I am afraid that some of them have already gone astray and now follow Satan.

¹⁶ **If a woman who is a believer has relatives who are widows, she must take care of them and not put the responsibility on the church. Then the church can care for the widows who are truly alone.** ¹⁰

Legend has it that the olive tree was a gift from the goddess Athena to humanity. Homer referred to olive oil as liquid gold, and Thomas Jefferson proclaimed it the richest gift of heaven. For centuries, a gift of olive oil was a welcome treasure. Food-lovers have never entirely forgotten the delightful golden fluid, but in recent years, a new awareness of the benefits of olive oil has been born. Science has turned its investigative eye upon it in recent years, and numerous studies have only reinforced the notion that olive oil is an amazing substance with numerous benefits. 11

Now in this case notice first of all *what was required*. In this miracle all that was required was empty vessels. This is precisely all that Jesus Christ requires of us, that we be to himself and his divine fulness as empty vessels. The grace is with him, not with us; just as the oil was in the woman's one pot, and not in the empty vessels. Suppose that one of her neighbours had said to herself, when the boy came to borrow the vessels, "Poor woman, she modestly asks for an empty oil jar, but I will send her in a full one to help her." The lad joyfully accepts the offer, and takes home a jar full of oil. When his mother is pouring out the oil, the boy brings the vessel. She looks at it, and it is full. "My child," says she, "this is of no use to me; it is full, and we cannot fill again what is full already." It might have been a great loss to her, for the oil might have been of poor quality, and you may be sure that what the Lord made was the best oil that ever was known. So, if there be one person in

¹⁰ Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013), 1 Ti 5:3-16.

¹¹ <http://www.robbinsfamilyfarm.com/101-olive-oil-benefits/?v=7516fd43adaa>

this world who is by nature full of merit; if there be a man in the world that does not want mercy, that has enough natural goodness to save him, why Christ cannot do anything for him, and he cannot be of any use as a receiver of grace. **As long as the man is full of himself, there is no room for Jesus Christ.** It is well said by our hymn,

“None are excluded hence
But those who do themselves exclude.”

Our own supposed fullness shuts us out from receiving Christ’s fullness. It must be so.

You will remember the story of the ploughman and Mr. Hervey:

The ploughman asked Mr. Hervey what he thought was the greatest hindrance to men’s salvation. Mr. Hervey replied, “Sinful self.” “No,” said the ploughman, “I think righteous self is a greater hindrance to men’s salvation than sinful self. They that are sinful will come to Christ for pardon, but they that think they are righteous never will.” The full oil jar can hold no more. A deserving sinner (if such a person could exist) would be of no use to the Savior, and the Savior could be of no use to him. ¹²

¹² C. H. Spurgeon, “The Filling of Empty Vessels,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 35 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 17.