

Giving Of Our Vessels

- II Kings 4:1-7

- Throughout the Bible, we find many stories of encouragement given to us in order to strengthen our own faith. Many times these heroic acts of faith are centered around great tragedy or difficult circumstances, yet God has always been faithful to His people.
- One such story we find in II Kings 4 where we find a lady who had lost her husband to death. The husband of course is the one who would work & generate any type of income he could for his family. And with his passing & 2 kids to support, this poor lady quickly fell upon some pretty significant financial hardships.
- There was some debt that had been incurred in past years that now this lady did not have the money to pay back.
 - She had sold what little possessions she had & had scraped together what she could to try & provide for her family, but there was this tremendous burden of debt hanging over her head & now the collectors had come seeking payment.
- It was customary in Old Testament times for poor people or people under a tremendous amount of debt, in order to relieve themselves from the debt, they would give of themselves or their children as slaves until the debt could be fulfilled or until the year of jubilee.
 - Every seven years two things would happen:
 - The land owners allowed their land to rest & they would nourish themselves from what the land had yielded previously during this year & allow the poor to eat freely from their fields.
 - All of the local servants who had been claimed through outstanding debt would be released of their debt either completely or at least for that year.
 - Though this may seem cruel to some of us today, it was basically a way of “working off” the debt that had been rightfully incurred.
- God clearly instructed the rich & the creditors to not take advantage of these people during these difficult times. (Deuteronomy 15:1-11)
- However, in this story, this woman’s creditor was not acting within God’s law. Instead of responding with compassion over her circumstances, he demanded that she pay what she owed.
 - One of the added principles I think we could stress through this story is the importance of compassion in our daily lives.
 - “You reap what you sow.”
 - There are people who are going through extremely difficult circumstances all around us & we, as the Body of Christ, should be attentive to their needs.
- This lady apparently did not ask for her debt to be wiped out, she just needed some time to take care of this debt.
- Through this story I think we will see how God & His servant Elisha responded & provided for this lady during her time of need; but perhaps just as importantly we see the magnitude of her faith & the bounty of God’s blessings.

I. There Was An Urgent Sense Of Need (vv.1-2)

a. She Was Limited By What She Had

- i. Immediately when Elisha encountered this lady, he asked her what possession she might have in the house to which she replied “only a pot of oil”.
 1. Now I know that this doesn’t seem like a lot when she is facing such a huge debt, but this was all that she had.
 2. And she was willing to give her last possession if it meant saving her family.
- ii. Now I often wondered what type of oil this was & why she would consider it a possession. But in studying this passage you will find that her late husband was

probably in some type of ministry and it was customary in that day as it is today for preachers to anoint people with oil.

- iii. Now I'm not sure if her husband had left some oil behind that he used in the ministry, or maybe this was just some general purpose oil that she had; nonetheless, she considered it a possession.
 1. Now there is a great lesson here for each of us that I don't want you to miss.
 2. This vessel of oil was a significant object in this story b/c it represents the power of God.
 3. Somehow or another, she had overlooked that the anointing of God was there at her disposal the whole time, yet she didn't realize it until the prophet came.
- iv. Many times we are the exact same way in our Christian lives. We don't know what we have in Christ until a time of need arises or God is our only choice. And then it is through His power that we began to realize what we saw as small plays such a vital role in each of our lives.
 1. I think some of us may go day after day after day complaining about our inability or our spiritual weakness or even how we are "suffering" for Jesus at times, and we don't understand what we have through Christ.
 2. The Holy Spirit has been given to each & every one of you who are redeemed, and He was given to us to comfort & encourage & strengthen our faith as we walk with the Lord.
 - a. There are times where we feel discouraged,
 - b. There are times where we feel all alone,
 - c. But Child of God, b/c of Christ we live in the presence of God.
 - i. This lady's was about to see a miracle of God in her life ... but this was just a onetime incident.
 - ii. Because Christ dwells within the heart or the inner being of the believer, we can experience the Holy Spirit every moment of our lives.
 3. I think this is a great illustration to us today that:
 - a. Though all she thought she had was a little oil, what she really had was the blessings of God about to be poured out on her life.

b. She Had Faith That God Would Meet Her Need

- i. God is going to perform a miracle, but He doesn't do it without this woman's cooperation. This was one of those moments where God's blessings was conditional & required the obedience of the recipient.
- ii. Many of God's promises throughout the Bible are conditional:
 1. When Jesus wanted to raise Lazarus from the dead, He told the people to roll away the stone. Anybody who can raise a man from the dead can certainly roll away the stone, but God said, "You do that." It required action on their part in order to receive the miracle of God.
 2. When Jesus wanted to turn water into wine, He told the servants, "Fill the water pots with water." Jesus could have done it Himself, but it was their job.
 3. When God wanted to save Noah & his family from the flood, He said, "Noah, you build the ark." God could have certainly spoke the ark into existence, but He was testing Noah's obedience.
 4. Romans 10:13 – "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
 5. Many times when you look at a miracle, there is man's part and then there's God's part.
- iii. This lady apparently wasted no time in preparing her vessels to be used.

1. This was a GIANT step of faith for her b/c she knew what little she had, yet she believed that God would do something great through the prophet.
- iv. It could be that we limit God in doing things in our life simply b/c we don't have faith enough or we are not willing to bring our vessels to Him.
- v. What are some of the vessels that we can bring to Christ today?
 1. Our lives
 2. Our talents
 3. Our desires
 4. Our finances
 5. Our marriages
 6. Our children

II. There Was The Use Of What Was Available (v.3)

a. Gathering the vessels.

- i. The prophet reminded her not to come back with just a few, but to go and gather her vessels, her neighbors & borrow other vessels as well if she wanted God to do something great.
- ii. If I were to tell you this morning (and I won't) that I would keep giving you \$20 bills as long as you had something to put them in, would you just bring me a your wallet?
 1. I can tell you right now, if I made that statement to some of you, you would empty out your pockets, your pocketbooks, you would pull your car around to the side of the church & say "Fill 'er up Preacher", right?
- iii. So if this lady desired to have her need met, it would require her to get out of her comfort zone & go to whatever expense needed to offer all that she had unto God.
- iv. Now listen, if we want God's best in our lives, don't you think it's only fare that we give Him our very best?

b. The importance of empty (clean) vessels.

- i. Now listen to me. What if this lady had collected all these vessels & when she brought them into the house,
 1. They were dirty & broken vessels.
 2. They were already filled up with other possessions.
 3. Would it have done any good to bring those vessels before God?
- ii. Though some of these vessels were not her own, if she was expecting a blessing from God it was important to bring **clean, empty** vessels for Him to fill.
 1. As a church, may we understand the importance of not only presenting ourselves before God to be used for His work, but as we present ourselves may our lives be holy & acceptable unto Him.
 - a. God will certainly take a broken vessel & make it new again; but He had much rather we come before the pain of brokenness affects our lives & our ministry.
 - b. Listen, there is no doubt that God can clean up a person's life; but how much better to offer Him a clean vessel to be used completely for His purpose & to show Him honor through our lives.
 2. The other lesson to be learned from this illustration is the necessity to give God our all, not just some small part of our life.
 - a. It would have been terrible if she had brought in pots that were already halfway full.
 - b. There are a lot of church folks who think giving God Sunday morning is gracious enough; but it's not just Sunday morning and it's not even just church ... God requires every day.
 - c. Some will offer God their free time when they can work Him in; but God desires our total commitment to Him.

3. You see, I am afraid we come to God sometimes with our vessels already full & we can't give that much to Him yet we expect so much from Him. He requires empty vessels to be presented.

III. The Measure Of Faith And Acceptance Became The Measure Of Blessing (vv.4-7)

a. The vessels were filled according to her obedience.

- i. The prophet gave her the instructions & she had enough faith to follow every step and when she put her faith into action and believed that God could meet her need, God blessed her obedience.
- ii. Do we have enough faith to present our vessels to God?
- iii. One of the reasons that God withholds His blessings from His people is b/c they fail to obey Him.
 1. Children of Israel
- iv. Though God was willing to do something miraculous in her life, it demanded her obedience.
- v. I believe that God desires His best for us. But I can tell you this, we will never receive God's best as long as we are disobeying Him & refusing to live for Him.

b. The vessels were filled according to her faith.

- i. She took that little bit of oil she had & she began filling the first pot. Lo and behold, she fills it to the top. Elisha says, "take it away & bring another."
- ii. She fills the second one, and another and another ... As long as there were vessels to fill, the oil continued to flow.
- iii. I believe this miracles shows us 2 different things:
 1. God blesses according to our faith.
 - a. She was the one who determined the size of her blessing.
 - i. Question: Had she gotten more vessels, would she have had more oil? Obviously. As soon as the last vessel was filled, then the oil stopped.
 - ii. What does that mean? Small faith—small blessing. Big faith—big blessing. Jesus said, "Be it unto you according to your faith."
 - iii. Let me remind you of a passage of scripture found in Hebrews 11:6 – "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."
 - b. Now I am not talking about some phony faith healing message that is being preached today.
 - i. You need to "plant a seed"
 - ii. Or send in your \$141 to receive 141 miracles in your life.
 - c. What I am talking about is genuine faith. This church was built on men & women who had genuine faith that God could do something great in their lives & through this church if we would offer Him our vessels.
 2. But it also shows the power of our God.
 - a. His blessings are limitless.
 - b. His mercy is unending.
 - c. His grace is sufficient.
 - d. His forgiveness is eternal.