

## From Rags to Riches

**Text:** 2 Kings 4:1-7, especially v.7

**Introduction:** Have you ever felt like throwing in the towel and quitting? Have you ever come to your wit's end? Are you there now, ready to give up? When the curtain lifts in 2 Kings chapter 4, a scene of misery, impoverishment, and despair is brought before us. As the story progresses, however, this widow finds the way from rags to riches.

1. **The Trouble Was Brought to Elisha** (v.1) – By turning to God's prophet, Elisha, this woman was turning to God in her trouble; Elisha was God's representative (Heb. 1:1).
  - She brought her problems to Elisha **fervently**, she “cried out” indicating her desperation.
  - She also stated her problems **frankly**, honestly relating the facts.
  - She conveyed her problems **fully**, telling her whole story to Elisha.

Do you bring your problems to the Lord this way? Let's take a look at her problems:

- a. There was **death** in the family (v.1).
    - a. Her human **provider**
    - b. Her human **protector**
    - c. Her human **partner** was gone and she felt it! The Hebrew language contains at least 30 words that describe various kinds of trouble. What kind of trouble are you in? Have you brought that trouble and laid it at the Savior's feet?
  - b. There was **debt** in the family (v.1). This woman had seen all her belongings sold to meet the demands of her creditor, and now she faced the dreadful possibility of having to part with her two sons. All that was left in her home was a pot of oil! Is your problem financial? Worried about your job or your business? This family faced death, debt and possibly...
  - c. There was **doubt** in the family (v.1). The language of verse 1 hints that this woman was perplexed, perhaps even questioning God's wisdom in allowing such affliction to fall upon her home. Are your circumstances causing you to question His Wisdom and doubt His Love?
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2. **The Truth Was Taught By Elisha** (vv.2-4) – Here was a preacher with a genuine concern for this widow (Ps. 68:5; 146:9; Deut. 10:18). Do you have a heart of compassion and a hand of practical helpfulness for orphans and widows (1 Tim. 5:3; James 1:27)? Elisha gave this widow his full attention. At this stage, however, the situation does not look promising, for she has but a little flask containing a little oil! This proved to be the key to the situation! God, through Elisha, was trying to teach her principles we should also learn:
    - a. She had to **do as she was told** (vv.5-6) – Notice the widow obeyed
      - a. **Immediately** after the instructions were given
      - b. **Implicitly** despite the unusual instructions
      - c. **Inclusively**, following his orders step-by step. Do you take God at His Word this way?
    - b. She had to **use what she had** (vv. 5-6). – It seemed silly, pouring out her few fluid ounces of oil from one vessel to another, but she used what she had. She stepped out with little, which God turned in to much (Luke 17:6). Do you feel too small to accomplish anything? How many empty souls are there here? God wants to use your emptiness! Close your eyes and think of a beautiful tree in an orchard loaded with fruit. It is a pear tree. From top to bottom it is covered with fruit. Some of the branches are ready to break with the luscious burden. Listen to the creaking boughs...can you hear the tree speak? It is saying “baskets, baskets, baskets, bring baskets.” Now then, open your eyes. Who has a basket? You may say, “I have one, but it is of no use, for there is nothing in it.” Bring it here! It is exactly the kind of

basket this tree needs! Another person may say “I have a great basket. It is full to the brim with great stuff!” That person may keep their basket. It is of no use to our loaded tree...What the Lord Jesus wants is an empty soul prepared to receive out of the fullness God has treasured up for us.

- c. She had to **prepare in abundance** (vv.3-6). – Elisha told her to prepare for abundance. Today we think that a church of 250 people is a big church. We often think small; we believe small and our expectations are trivial. Our expectancy may be the only limitation on what God is prepared to do for us!

3. **The Triumph Was Wrought for Elisha** (v.7) She returned to Elisha with her story of victory. Imagine the headlines in the local Times Record! “Company Widow Discovers Oil!” This was a woman who:

- a. Proved the **adequacy of God**. – This woman went from house to house with her small vessels, until one day, there were no more vessels to fill!
- b. Proved the **ability of God** (v.7) – She found that God was able to meet
  - a. Her **critical** need to pay her debt
  - b. Her **constant** need to pay daily living expenses
  - c. Her **collective** need to provide for her family

**Conclusion:** Whether you are facing the death of a loved one, debt, or even doubt, remember that God is able

- d. to **provide** (Phil. 4:19),
- e. to **deliver** (Ps. 50:15),
- f. to **strengthen** (2 Cor. 12:9),
- g. to **save** (Heb. 7:25),
- h. and to **do more than we could ever ask or imagine** (Eph. 3:20).

2 Kings 4:1-7 <sup>1</sup>One day the widow of one of Elisha’s fellow prophets came to Elisha and cried out to him, “My husband who served you is dead, and you know how he feared the LORD. But now a creditor has come, threatening to take my two sons as slaves.” <sup>2</sup>“What can I do to help you?” Elisha asked. “Tell me, what do you have in the house?” “Nothing at all, except a flask of olive oil,” she replied. <sup>3</sup>And Elisha said, “Borrow as many empty jars as you can from your friends and neighbors. <sup>4</sup>Then go into your house with your sons and shut the door behind you. Pour olive oil from your flask into the jars, setting the jars aside as they are filled.” <sup>5</sup>So she did as she was told. Her sons brought many jars to her, and she filled one after another. <sup>6</sup>Soon every container was full to the brim! “Bring me another jar,” she said to one of her sons. “There aren’t any more!” he told her. And then the olive oil stopped flowing. <sup>7</sup>When she told the man of God what had happened, he said to her, “Now sell the olive oil and pay your debts, and there will be enough money left over to support you and your sons.”

**Hebrews 1:1** <sup>1</sup>Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets.

**Psalms 68:5** <sup>5</sup>Father to the fatherless, defender of widows— this is God, whose dwelling is holy.  
Psalm 146:9 The LORD protects the foreigners among us. He cares for the orphans and widows, but he frustrates the plans of the wicked.

**Deuteronomy 10:18** He gives justice to orphans and widows. He shows love to the foreigners living among you and gives them food and clothing.

**1 Timothy 5:3** The church should care for any widow who has no one else to care for her.

**James 1:27** Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us.

**Philippians 4:19** And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

**Psalms 50:15** Trust me in your times of trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory.”

**2 Corinthians 12:9** Each time he said, “My gracious favor is all you need. My power works best in your weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may work through me.

**Hebrews 7:25** Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save everyone who comes to God through him. He lives forever to plead with God on their behalf.

**Ephesians 3:20** Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope.