

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

SONS OF THE PROPHETS' WIDOW LESSON TWO

by Sandy Harber

"Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord." II Kings 4:1b

The widow had been married to a man who was training to be a prophet. He belonged to a group known as the Sons of the Prophets. These young men were like the Bible College students of today who are learning to be pastors and missionaries. The Sons of the Prophets felt called of God to serve Him by proclaiming His message to the people. Seasoned prophets such as Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha tutored these young men, providing guidance and instruction. Prophetic schools were variously located around Israel. Samuel led one such school in his home town of Ramah (I Sam. 19:20-23). Both Elijah and Elisha were associated with schools located in Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho (II Kings 2:1-5). The Sons of the Prophets met together to study the scriptures, prophesy, and encourage one another.

The Bible does not give us the name of the widow's husband. We know nothing about his background, not even his age. Since he was still in training he was probably in his twenties when he died. The Mosaic Law specified that priests could not begin serving in the Temple until they were 30 years old. Jesus was 30 when He began His ministry.

We are not told the cause of death for this young man. He could have been the victim of an accident. Perhaps he had contracted an illness. The widow only conveys the fact of her husband's death to Elisha without providing any details. The way that he died was not what concerned her. It was the straits that his passing left her in that caused her to reach out to her husband's mentor.

While the age of the widow is not given we can surmise that she was in her early twenties or late teens. Her two sons were probably elementary school age. As we shall see, they were old enough to work off their father's debt to his creditor and old enough to help their mother gather vessels for oil. But, they were not old enough to be gainfully employed and help out their widowed mother financially. It does not seem that either the widow or her husband had any family that she could turn to for assistance. Perhaps she had friends and neighbors to support her emotionally in her grief. But she could not ask any of them for money to pay off her husband's creditor. It was not their debt. Her neighbors had their own families to provide for.

Our widow did not give in to despair. She had two young boys dependant on her. We are not told that she prayed about her problem. She did not go directly to God for guidance but she did the next best thing: she went to His earthly representative. Elisha was a well-known prophet, a servant of God. In addition he was her husband's teacher. He knew her husband, what sort of man he was. Surely, he would help.

The widow approached Elisha on the basis of her husband's standing. He was a prophet-in-training. A good man. He feared, or respected, God. The widow reminded Elisha that he knew all of this. He was worthy of special consideration from God's servants. As his widow she asked that Elisha's favor would fall on her.

People don't live in a vacuum. We are dependent on each other. No one can go it alone. Like the widow, there will be times when we need to ask for help. Sometimes pride gets in the way. We don't want to admit we need assistance. We may be embarrassed to ask for help, or reluctant to "bother" someone with our problems. What we may not realize is that by not asking for help we are actually depriving that person of a blessing or a heavenly reward. Jesus said that He would reward those who gave a cup of water to the thirsty or food to the hungry (Mt. 25:35-36).

What would you do if a friend came to you for help? I would hope that you would be happy to give assistance. And you would feel good about it afterward. God works through His people. He used Elisha to help the widow and her family. He can use the pastor or a Christian friend or even a stranger to provide the help you need. And, if you are willing He can use you to help someone in need.

*"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another."
Romans 12:10*