

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

SONS OF THE PROPHETS' WIDOW LESSON SEVEN

by Sandy Harber

"And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full." II Kings 4:4

Elisha's instructions to the widow continued, "After you have gathered as many vessels as you can borrow, bring them into your house and shut the door. Then pour oil from your little pot into the vessels and put them aside when they are filled."

The widow knew before she went to her neighbors to borrow empty vessels that Elisha's plan was to fill those vessels from the little pot of oil. Did the woman wonder what good it would do to gather lots of empty vessels if there wasn't even enough oil in her little jar to fill one vessel? It was a lot of work to go from house to house carrying breakable jars and keeping track of what pot belonged to which neighbor. And when it was all done would it prove to be a waste of time because her store of oil was so low? If that's what she thought it is amazing that she did in fact gather many vessels as Elisha told her to. She demonstrated faith in the man of God even though she didn't understand how it would solve her problem.

God doesn't need us to understand what He is doing. He just needs us to obey His commands. He does all of the heavy lifting. We just sit back and marvel at His accomplishments. Put your problems in His hands. Let go of your burden. Let God carry it for you.

Perhaps the widow was astute enough to realize that what Elisha was proposing was miraculous. The prophet already had a reputation as a miracle worker. He had parted the waters of the Jordan River (II Kings 2:14) and healed the spring of water in Jericho (II Kings 2:22). He had also cursed a pack of young men who taunted him, disrespecting God's servant. The men were subsequently attacked by two bears (II Kings 3:24). Now he seemed to be describing a situation where a small pot of oil would be sufficient to fill many empty vessels.

If the widow understood this was the expected outcome she still demonstrated faith by carrying out the prophet's instructions and gathering those empty vessels. She put feet to her faith and gathered as many vessels as she could. Elisha was providing the miracle but the widow was showing her trust in him by her obedience.

Salvation is a free gift (Eph. 2:8-9). We do nothing to earn it. But, after we are saved (i.e. born again), God expects us to produce good works (Eph. 2:10). Thereby we lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven (Mt. 6:19). Obedience to God's Word and will is actually for our own benefit, not His. God created man. He knows what will benefit His creation and what will destroy it. His Word is full of do's and don'ts that are designed to help us make the best choices as we navigate this world. The Bible is filled with the stories of individuals who lived before us who made good choices - or bad. From their lives we can learn the benefits of obedience and the perils of disobedience.

Trust and Obey is a wonderful hymn that says it all in the title. Solomon said it like this: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecc. 12:13).

"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Psalm 37:4