

Glen Park Gospel Church  
**Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes**

Rev Chris Trinham

Elisha

No 3

### Truly Trusting in a Time of Trouble

Reading: Second Kings 4:1-7

This is the story of a godly woman in desperate trouble. It is an object lesson for all of God's children who are at the end of their earthly resources. Her situation was not one of her own making. It had come upon her relentlessly. She had seen her savings ebb away just as did the hopeless failing of her husband's life. She had, had to borrow to survive. Now that too, had gone. The day of reckoning had come. Under Hebrew law the creditor had the right to take her sons into unpaid servitude<sup>1</sup> to requite her debt. They would not be free until the year of the Jubilee when all debts nationwide were cancelled. This to her, was unthinkable. But what else could she do?

**She was without means, but not without resources.** Think about what she had: two sons, a home, identity in a community, her husband's reputation and service record, Elisha the group leader, a small vial of anointing oil, her wits and the boldness to use them.

When you come to your wits end:

Count your many blessings, name them one by one;  
Count your many blessings, see what God has done!  
Count your blessing, name them one by one  
Count your many blessings, see what God has done

One blessing of counting blessings is to realise just how much is really left, and so think positively in a negative situation. Another blessing is to take stock of your assets and think of God's faithfulness past. If He has blessed you to date, there is no reason to believe that he will fail you now. A third blessing flows from these. God's answer to your problem may well already be in your hand<sup>2</sup>. This was the case here. She did not see the oil as an answer, but she could petition Elisha as leader.

**Her husband 'feared' or respected the Lord.** Her appeal was on the basis of his (and thus her) position as a servant of the Lord. God does not call people to a place or task where His grace is insufficient, whether in much or in little.<sup>3</sup> God says He is pleased to provide for His servants. This is not a licence to be a spend thrift. All Christians are called to live by faith, and God delight's when His people trust Him. Those who do will

not find Him wanting on His part. Here then is another resource she had in her hand. She could testify with David:

I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, or his descendants begging bread. Psalm 37:25.

She was confident that her Lord would not let her down, no matter what happened, or how hard the way.

To offset this theme we must remember that the widow and her family were in deep distress of debt. They had apparently sold all their furniture and effects for they had to borrow pots for the oil. For her it was:

Behold, I have refined you but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. Isaiah 48:10.

It was when she came to the end of her tangible assets that the Lord's supply arrived. God is working in our hearts in lean times as much as in times of plenty.

Take note!

Why does God do this? Isaiah's next verse tells us:

For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; I  
For how can *My name* be profaned And My glory  
I will not give to another. Isaiah 40:11.

**Elisha's creative act** v2. is as if Elisha when addressing the woman's plea was muttering to himself, as he did not wait for her answer. The word 'do' (or, make) is from the Hebrew word *asah*<sup>4</sup>, having a range of meanings but excludes 'creating', as when God created, the heavens and the earth from nothing. Elisha made something more from something less.

**Except a pot of oil** v2. The word 'pot' tells us something. It was a small anointing flask<sup>5</sup> It was oil as healing medication or a cosmetic used to make the face shine. God has a way of making much out of our little. Those who gathered little had no lack and those who gather much have none left over, whether it be a handful of meal, a packed lunch or a pot of oil. What is small to us is much with God. What is important to us is as nothing in His sight:

Behold, the nations *are* like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales: behold, he lifts up the islands like fine dust. Isaiah 40:15.

**The oil was multiplied in the pouring,** as another's meal was in the spending<sup>6</sup>. Gods gifts are to be invested or used, like the talents, and then they will increase.

**The oil flowed while there was an empty vessel,** "then the oil stopped." v6. The word 'stopped' reads well, but 'stood still' is a better rendering. It not only stopped flowing, neither did it ebb away like a full tide. God's blessings do not fade away. God's healing is real and stands pathological testing even though

the condition may continue. The gifts and callings of God are irrevocable<sup>6</sup>. The oil produced was good fresh stuff and found a rich and ready market, sufficient to redeem the pledge and provide a little for the family. The five thousand were fed, but there were twelve baskets-full left over. Jesus told the disciples to set the nets and they were full to breaking, but He had more fish laid on the fire for breakfast on the beach. 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare<sup>7</sup>.'

Another principle of faith is that God works through means. Water flows through channels. God can create *bara*<sup>4</sup> out of nothing, but He more often makes *asah*<sup>4</sup> something out of something else. Therefore when you call on God in a moment of need, don't sit by the door waiting for Him to come in (although He may), Go out and 'borrow pots' God's supply will only be limited by your ability to receive it, the means you give Him.

God made her face to shine, not with cosmetic oil, but the happiness of a heart that had been truly blessed. 'I want what she's got.'

ENDNOTES: This study uses the New American Standard translation of the Bible, except as noted. Numbers after words are Strong system numbers to aid your further study. 'Sons of the prophets.' That the deceased husband was the father of two work ready sons indicates that the 'sons' in this context does not mean young people. 1. Leviticus 25:39; 2. Exodus 4:2; 3. Exodus 16:18, Philipians 4:12. 4. The word 'do' is from *asah* 6213. It has a range of meanings, quite often in the sense of bringing some thing into being but not in the absolute sense of the word *bara* 1254, as it is in Genesis 1:1. *Bara* always has God as it's subject (Vine) and is used particularly of God creating out of nothing, especially the heavens and the earth. In Genesis 1&2 *Bara* is translated 'create', *Asah* is translated: 'made, make, bearing, had done, and had made' and is found in Genesis Ch. 1:7, 11, 12, 16, 25, 26, 31, & 2:2, 3, 4, 18. Recommendation: Study the Creation record of Genesis 1&2 with this distinction in mind. How does this bear on your theory of creation? 5. See Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew Lexicon p.692. 6. Elijah, First Kings 17:10-16. 7. Romans 11:29. 7. Luke 15:17AV.

*Welcome* Glen Park Gospel Church  
Lower Road, Eltham North  
Sundays 10.30 am

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