

## A Portrait of God's Miraculous Grace

Toward the end of his career, the famed man of God, John Wesley was fond of saying that of all the definitions of Christianity he had encountered, the best was that of a Scotsman who lived in the seventeenth century: "Christianity is the life of God in the soul of a man." This is amazing grace, that God should set up residency in the life of a man, woman, boy or girl! I want to take a great story from II Kings 4 and illustrate God's grace. Let us observe:

### 1. A woman deprived of human resource.

"Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen" (II Kings 4:1).

The prophet's widow was at the end of her rope. Her husband was dead and her sons were about to be taken due to financial depletion. There was no human resource for her to fall back on. God will sometimes allow us to get to the point where we are so undone, that He must be petitioned as the one and only hope we have. It has been said, "Man's importunity is God's opportunity."

"And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5). Peter had fished all night and caught nothing. Peter wanted fish and God also wanted fish for him. Jesus said in Luke 5:4, "...Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." This was a test. Simon had tried all night to catch fish. The problem was himself. He was his only resource. Now Jesus comes along and says, in essence, if you will now be through with you, I'll show you what I can do. Perhaps even with a bit of a stubborn spirit, Peter said, "Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net." The result was phenomenal: "And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake" (Luke 5:6).

Let us take courage, when we come to the end of ourselves is when the Lord takes over.

### 2. A woman with a miracle in the making.

"And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil" (II Kings 4:2). Little did the woman know that in her own cupboards, the last remaining pot of oil was the miracle in the making. What miracle in the making is lingering within the perimeters of our abode or person? Exodus 4:2 says, "And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod." In John 6:9 the disciples inquired: "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" (John 6:9). In I Samuel 17:50 it says, "So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David" (I Samuel 17:50). Moses' rod is only a stick until God runs His power through it; then it can become a serpent eating snake or an instrument to signal the parting of the Red Sea. The lad has only a lunch until God decides to feed a multitude with it. David's slingshot becomes more powerful than a missile launcher when God ordains it.

This is the way of God; He takes a pot of oil, a rod, a humble lunch, or a slingshot to do great things. When we are willing to accept God as our source, be prepared to invest what little you have into his hands. The pertinent question is as relevant today as it was when Elisha asked it in the Old Testament, "What shall I do for thee?" Why not personalize it and allow this to be the question the Lord

is asking you? What do you need the Lord to do for you? Be prepared to open up your closet and offer anything and everything you have in exchange for anything and everything the Lord has for us. In the exchange of God He always gives us more than we could offer Him.

### **3. The woman obeyed God when asked to perform the impossible.**

II Kings 4: 3-5 says, "Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. 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. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out." Let's back up and examine what Elisha has just asked. He has requested that this humble woman go to all her neighbor's and get as many empty vessels as she can. Imagine her line when asked, "Why do you need them?" What would she say? Sometimes God asks us to do things that are inexplicable. Then she was told before she had an extra vessel in her house to be prepared to fill them up with oil and set the full ones aside. Talk about an act of faith! Get empty vessels and fill them up with something you don't have!

Contemplate what our Lord said to the man with the withered hand, "Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other" (Matthew 12:13). Hitherto, stretching forth the hand was impossible until the Lord gave the word. Simon Peter asked the Lord to bid him come to Him on the water, "And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus" (Matthew 14:29). Gravity is defied; miracles are wrought when we respond to God's command to do the impossible. Is God asking you to do the impossible today? "And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27). In Luke 7:7, the centurion said, "Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." Our Lord was impressed that a man would trust Him to do a miracle from a distance! He was even more moved that this man would take Him at His word. Herein is the embryonic state of a miracle - believing God and acting upon this belief!

### **4. The woman found out there was enough oil for every empty vessel.**

II Kings 4:6 says, "And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed." God is not looking for someone to trade him even. He delights in taking the empty vessel and filling it. It has been said, "God helps those who help themselves." Truthfully, He helps those who cannot help themselves. God likens us to vessels. He said through Paul, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (II Corinthians 4:7). He wants to fill us, too. But we must be emptied of sin, self and stuff. Then we must be wholly surrendered to him. God fills the empty vessel! And best of all, He fills us with Himself. It is indeed the definition of the old Scotsman: "Christianity is the life of God in the soul of a man."

### **5. The woman and her sons lived happily ever after.**

II Kings 4: 7 says, "Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest." Do you like stories with good endings? This one certainly qualifies. The boys were not sold and the widow had enough after the debts were paid to live on. God treats us better than we can imagine, even in a fairy tale, for He has taught us to say with the apostle, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

This story gives us a portrait of God's miraculous grace, but don't just admire this widow's masterpiece; allow God to make one of and for you!

-Pastor Pope-

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