

2 Kings 4:1-7

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[0:00] Let's go to 1 Kings, 1 Kings chapter 4, 2 Kings, thank you, 2 Kings, long day, sorry, 2 Kings, you can go to 1 Kings if you want to.

I'll be reading from 2 Kings chapter 4, let's go to 2 Kings chapter 4, and we can make our way through that, so 2 Kings chapter 4, before we get into it too much, I know it's a Sunday night, so we're not videoing or anything of that nature, I know they're recording, but anything on anyone's heart and mind, anything we need to share?

All hearts and minds clear? Okay, I was not aware of that with Ms. Janice, but do be in prayer for Ms. Vivian, as she recovers, I spoke with her today, she's having to make a decision of where she's going to go for rehab, but continue to be in prayer for her and Michael as well, as they move forward in the next few days, I know there are some that are ministering there, but continue to be in prayer for them, and Ms. Janice's mother, okay, continue to be in prayer for her, anything else?

Anything else? Alright, well let's get right into our text, we're in 2 Kings chapter 4, we will not be very long this evening, but it's a very powerful portion of scripture for us there, just in the first 7 verses of that 4th chapter.

Again, we're in the ministry of Elisha, not Elijah, so if you remember the cry of Elisha, or the request of Elisha, immediately before the departure of Elijah, was that he would have a double portion of his spirit.

[1:47] Elisha said, if you see me leave, then the Lord will answer your request, and then of course, you know, he saw the chariots and horse of fire, and he took up the mantle of Elisha, of Elisha.

Elisha demonstrated that power when he got to the Jordan River, and again, he said, where is the God of Elisha? He struck the waters, and they divided, much like when they went across it to the first time, this is in 2 Kings chapter 2.

So we've seen that spirit and that power of Elisha is resting upon the prophet of Elisha, and in a similar vein, we begin to see the repetition of some things that Elisha did, and Elisha walks in the same manner, widows and oil, and those same things seem to be similar, continuing to display for us that the God of Elisha is very much present through the ministry of Elisha.

Now, it's encouraging because this is, at least spiritually speaking, a very down time in the nation of Israel, in particular in the Northern Kingdom. This is not in particular a time of faithfulness, but rather a time of unfaithfulness, and yet we see God still moving among his people, though his people are seeking to worship false gods.

They're seeking to replace the true worship of the Lord God with their own standards, their own measures, their own ways, and even seeking to do this. God is going to be without excuse in his judgment.

[3:12] This is one thing that we notice in Scripture. The judgments of God are true. Sure, they're severe, and when we read them in their context or in their setting, it seems as if they are awful, and the judgment of God is awful.

The Bible tells us in the book of Hebrews, it is a terrible thing or an awful thing to fall into the hands of a living God, right? That the judgment of a living God is a dreadful, awful reality.

We see that in Hebrews chapter 10. But yet we also understand in Scripture that the grace and the mercy extended by God, which precede his judgment, is wondrous.

And therefore, man is without excuse. In particular, the nation of Israel is without excuse for their rebellion, because God continues to show himself faithful, show himself true.

So we'll see that. We'll be in the first seven verses of 2 Kings chapter 4. Let's pray, and then we'll get right into it. No, we've already prayed. Let's just read. Now, a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, Your servant, my husband, is dead, and you know that your servant feared the Lord, and the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves.

[4 : 25] Elisha said to her, What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house? And she said, Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil. Then he said, Go borrow vessels at large for yourself from all your neighbors, even empty vessels.

Do not get a few. And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons and pour out into all these vessels, and you shall set aside what is full. So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons.

They were bringing the vessels to her, and she poured. When the vessels were full, she said to her son, Bring me another vessel. And he said to her, There is not one vessel more.

And the oil stopped. Then she came and told the man of God, and he said, Go sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest. Here again, we see the multiplication of the widow's oil, the oil not running out, much like when Elijah had the same wondrous testimony, not in the same manner, but as he spoke to the widow in the time of famine and asking her to make him some bread, and the jar did not run out.

The bread did not run dry. We see God using here to be a grand testimony. Unlike the time of Elijah, that happened outside of the land of Israel.

[5 : 47] This happens right in the middle of it. So it is just this ongoing testimony. I want you to see here the provisions of God, even among a rebellious people. So the provisions of God in the midst of man's rebellion, and we see that he continues to show himself as the Jehovah-Jireh, or the Lord our Provider.

And we see it. We will see again, we'll meet the Shunammite woman, and her encounter with Elisha, and the raising of the dead, similar vein as we see with Elijah.

Over and over again, we see this repetition that God is the same. The people he uses are different, but the God of the people is the same. And we see here the provisions of God.

The first thing that I want you to notice from our text is that there is a steadfast remnant. We've said it over and over again, and it bears repeating as we look at the division of the nation, and in particular, we begin to look at the rebellion of the northern kingdom.

Because as we look at its rebellion, we tend to get a little discouraged. It seems as if there is none righteous, no, not one, which is a true statement. Scripture tells us that. It tells us that the heart of every man is desperately wicked.

[6 : 59] When we look at the northern kingdom, it seems that the wickedness of man has run rampant, that there are not any. We tend to be, in reading our text, at least I do, much like Elijah, and say there is only one left.

There's not many. Elijah would cry out, I'm the only one left. There are none like me. God reminded Elijah at that time of his low point that there were others around him. And here he was reminding us that even in the midst of this great season and great time of rebellion, when the kings are doing what is wicked, when no man, it seems, is trying to seek after the Lord, that there is this ongoing steadfast remnant.

It tells us, now a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets. Now, this should call our attention to go back to the second chapter, when Elijah is preparing to depart, and Elisha is going with him, and we meet these sons of the prophets as Elijah is traveling.

And when we meet them in 2 Kings chapter 2, they are at Bethel. Now, that's important, because they're at Bethel, which is one of the seats of idolatrous worship for the northern kingdom.

It was at Bethel that the golden calf, one of the golden calves was set up. That is the southernmost part of the northern kingdom where they could worship the golden calf.

[8 : 21] The other one was up in the region of Dan, that is the northern part of that land. It was Bethel that was on its way to Jerusalem, but yet King Jehoram says, it is too far to go to Jerusalem.

Let us put something in your way or in your path. Bethel was one of the places that idolatry was introduced to this rebellion of the northern kingdom. Bethel seems to stand for that idolatrous worship, but yet we also see that in the middle of that city, there were the sons of the prophets. There were those who were seeking the Lord. There were those who were trying to walk faithfully with him. We see this steadfast remnant in that they were connected to Elijah. They're connected to Elisha, and we see the reality.

This certain woman, we're not told her name. We don't know who it is that she was married to, but when she came to this point of desperation, she did not reach out to the golden calf.

She did not reach out to the prophets of Baal, but she went to Elisha. And she went to Elisha because she knew this was a man of God, and she knew that the spirit of the Lord God was upon him.

[9 : 28] We are encouraged by this reality that even though so many around her and around these people were living in rebellion, still in the midst of that, she's walking faithfully.

God is honoring her here to be her defender and provider. He is going to minister to this one. Even during these days, there would have been grand and great reasons for her to go everywhere else, but she does not.

Why? Because even in this season, there are the steadfast remnant who remain. When we get to the southern kingdom and our focus begins to look there, we see that the remnant is larger.

There are those who are walking. Why? Because those in leadership are walking faithful, and they're walking in a greater faithfulness. But here, this lady was a part of a region that even the leadership of the region was walking unfaithfulness and wickedness.

And yet, in spite of all that, she's staying steadfast. We have to understand it in its context. This would not have been very easy. Yet, she goes to Elisha and she says, I have a problem.

[10 : 35] Your servant, my husband, is dead. And you know that your servant feared the Lord. Pay attention to that. She is speaking of one whose husband feared the Lord rather than fearing, and it is the covenant name of God.

He had stayed faithful, even in the midst of an unfaithful nation. And the creditors, it says, have come to take the two children away to be their slaves. Now, when we read scripture, we understand that the creditors could come and take your children to be the debt payers or to be indentured servants, but not necessarily slaves.

But they could pay off your debt until your time was due. So this is something that could happen.

And there is this great need. And this one who had walked faithfully during his life, fearing the Lord, now his wife is still living in that, or his widow is living in that season, comes to Elisha and showing us that there are still some who are looking to the Lord to be their provider and sustainer.

And we are reminded of this steadfast remnant. Now, this steadfast remnant here is challenged because there's a great need. And we see in order for God to meet that need, there must be surrendered possessions.

Because the question is asked, what shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in your house? Elisha asked a simple question. He understands his own limitations.

[11 : 50] He understands his own inability. Elisha is a man that is filled with the spirit of the Lord. Sure, but he also knows that he cannot meet a need, but he knows there is one who can. And he asked her the question, what do you have in your house?

Now, that's a loaded question. He's asking her, tell me everything you possess. What is it that you can give unto the Lord for his usefulness? God is a provider, sure. But God, as Warren Wiersbe said, God often in scripture uses what man has.

Moses had a staff in his hand. God used that, right? Peter had a fisherman's net in his hand. God uses that. A boy brought a sack lunch when there was a crowd of over 10,000 people, 5,000 men plus women and children.

God uses that, right? God uses what we have. But in order for God to use what we have, we have to give it up. We have to surrender it.

We have to be able to hand it over to him. God is a God of multiplication, for sure. But the lunch could have never been multiplied and divided had it not been given. It could have never been used to be a glorifying thing to the Lord as the Lord provided for everybody that was present.

[12 : 57] And the Lord Jesus demonstrated his own powerful ability had it not been first given unto them. And we see this reality that there has to be a surrendered possession for the God to take use of that.

And this is where we sing that hymn, I surrender all. The reality that what we have in our house or what we have in our possession is that which we give unto the Lord and say, Here, Lord, this is all I have.

Do with it what you can. It does not neglect the need. It does not neglect the reality that this lady was falling woefully short. But in order for God to meet her need, she had to give unto the Lord all she had.

That is a very astounding thing. Here is one with great and grand need. And all she possessed was, if you read it, a little flask of oil. And in order for God to meet that, she had to give even that up. She had to surrender it and say, I'm going to give it all unto the Lord. Why? Because God honors the full surrender of his people. He really does.

[13:59] And it is a penetrating question. When Elisha asked, what is it that you have in your house? We're reminded in the early stages of the book of Acts, the early church there is sharing with one another.

And Barnabas, the son of encouragement, is giving all that he has. Not everybody is encouraged to do that. But one thing that is held very severe is for those who claim to have given all but hold back some.

Right? You remember that. No, we gave everything when the reality is they hadn't. God doesn't honor that. God honors those who give willfully, who give joyfully, and those who give with a surrendered heart.

It's a very short account, but we see the beauty of it. And he says, then go and borrow vessels at large for yourself. So now here's a lady that's already in debt, but she's trusting the Lord that there's action that must be taken.

Right? She's going to give this oil to the Lord. But in order to see it multiplied, she has to take a step further and go and borrow at large. She is indebting herself even more.

[15:00] Friend, listen to me. Until we surrender, God cannot multiply what we have.

When we hold it closed-fistedly, then it is ours. But when we hold it open palms with a willing surrender, then God can take it and multiply it.

There are surrendered possessions. And we see this steadfast remnant with surrendered possessions has supplied needs. There is the supply of their needs.

She borrows, as Elisha said, not a few, but get many. So she borrows many vessels at large, and she goes home. We don't have to retell the account. It's so beautiful in its simplicity.

As she's pouring oil out, the jars keep filling up, jars keep filling up, jars keep filling up. But God is multiplying what she has given unto him. God is the one who is giving the increase.

[15:59] And then she comes back, and it does not stop until the last vessel is full. And she came and told the man of God, and he said, go and sell the oil and pay your debt. So now the need, when she originally came to him, was, I owe these debtors.

My husband has died. The creditors have come. I need to pay these so they don't take my children. So now there's the need, right? This need is met by the multiplication of the oil and all the vessels being filled.

Elisha says to go and sell all of this oil, to give it to pay the debt. But we notice the provisions of God go far beyond what we need.

Look at what it says. Sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest. So the request and the need was for the debt to be paid.

The provision of God was not just to meet the need of the debt, but to supply for the ongoing welfare of the widow and her children.

[16:58] It is to go above and beyond. We are reminded that God is a God who provides. That God is a God who meets the need. It is the Lord God himself who sent his son to be the propitiation or the provision for our debt of sin.

And when he paid our debt of sin on the cross of Calvary, he did so much more than just pay off our debt. Because we had a debt that we could not pay. We owed something that we had no ability.

The Bible tells us that a man cannot pay for the ransom of his own soul, let alone the ransom of his brother. We owe a debt that we cannot pay so great that one day the creditor will come and collect upon that debt.

We are much like this widow who comes with a grand need. That we surrender everything we have, and we find that when we surrender and we fall down before him, the Lord meets that need.

But in the meeting of that need and being the provider of it, God does so much more than just simply pay off our debt. He pays the debt in full, but he provides the resources to live out the remainder of our days as well.

[18:07] He gives us joy and peace and love and kindness and all these wonderful things. He not only meets the need of the moment, but he gives us joy inexpressible. He gives us confidence and comfort moving forward.

He gives us the faith to walk forward in faithfulness. He gives us the encouragement to walk hand in hand. He does not stop at freedom. We say that he sets us free, and then he begins to sanctify us. Salvation is an instantaneous moment. Sanctification is a progression for the rest of our life. So God pays the price of our penalty of sin. Sure, he pays off our debt, but he also gives us the necessary means that we may live on for the rest of our lives.

What God provides is so much more than what we just need at the moment. We see this widow who came with a primary need. My husband is dead, and the creditors have come.

By the time she comes and she surrenders everything she has, God has paid off the creditors and provided for her for the rest of her life. How does that happen? Because he took what she gave him, and he multiplied it for his glory and his honor.

[19 : 16] See, the God of Elijah is still working through the man Elisha, and he's doing it as a testimony to a watching world. And he's doing it in the midst of a perverse and perverted generation of people who are living in rebellion.

That same God of the Old Testament is the God of today. Not necessarily multiplying oil, but he multiplies peace. He multiplies joy. He multiplies faithfulness and gentleness and goodness and self-control and all those realities.

He meets the need of our moment spiritually, and he continues to meet that need to sustain us for the rest of our life for his glory. The reality is we just must come to him with what we have, and we surrender it to him.

We give him all that we have, and we watch him supply our needs. We do not possess enough to pay off the debt we owe. We do not possess enough to give ourselves peace, to give ourselves comfort in the midst of such troubling days.

But if we will take what we have and we surrender it before him, then he not only multiplies it to meet the immediate need, but he continues to increase it to meet our every need. He is a God of provisions, and we're seeing him do it here in faithfulness, intentionality, and as a testimony to his goodness.

[20 : 26] I told you we'd be very quick because I want us to take time to pray. We see the provisions of God found for us in 2 Kings 4, verses 1 through 7. Now, with that in mind, I'm going to ask if you'll join me in praying because I want us to pray in particular.

There are great needs. I'm not always, I don't always have the liberty or the freedom to share those needs with you, and that's okay. There are needs that I know about as a pastor. There are needs that you know about as individuals, but there are great needs that exist among us.

There are needs that exist in our families. There are financial needs. There are physical needs, and there are spiritual needs. We want to be those people who cry out to the Lord God and surrender all that we have.

I covet your prayers as your pastors. I try to walk with people in various circumstances of life. I try to walk with them in different aspects. Again, it's not that I want anybody to take that burden away from me, but I do come acknowledging the reality that I need the encouragement of the church to pray for me because those are matters which people cannot carry on their own.

It is a joy to walk beside people in the great times. It is a joy to walk beside people in the not-so-good times, right? But we want to be those who minister as a church.

[21 : 41] And just as I prayed this morning that we ought to be those who seek to have those needs met within the body of believers called the church, and I believe that with all of my heart. But the more I preach that, the more I get called to account on that, and that is people calling me and asking me those questions.

It is a wonderful thing, but with those wonders also comes the need that we ought to be undergirded in prayer because as more and more people turn to the church and ask of those prayers and ask of those needs, then we understand that the enemy is at attack.

The enemy is seeking to harm our families. He's seeking to harm our walks of faith and our obedience. But we want to be those people who trust that the Lord can take what we give him, and he can use it for his glory as he multiplies it and he ministers to people's needs.

So I just ask that you join with me as we pray for that. We'll be through here in just a little bit, but we're going to take that as a matter of prayer. Before we pray, are there any other? I know we need to pray for Miss Janice's mother.

We need to pray for Miss Vivian and Michael. Any other needs that we need to be in prayer for? Okay. Miss Rebecca.

[22 : 58] Mark Webb. Mark Webb, yes. Anything else? Okay. Anything else?

Any other matters? All right. Let's join our hearts together in prayer. Father, we come before you realizing your word reminds us over and over again that you are a God who meets our needs. Lord, around this congregation, even with a few of us gathered here, we know of a lot of needs. We know of great financial needs.

We know of great physical needs. We know of those who are awaiting test results, those who are in the midst of recovery.

God, these are burdens which we want to bear before you in saying, oh, God, move. Those names that have been called out tonight, Father, we ask that you would do a wondrous work, that the greatest work will be the testimony of your presence, even in the midst of uncertain times.

[24 : 22] We pray for healing where healing is your will. Lord, we pray for your presence and reality of your peace in the midst of troubling circumstances, in the midst of difficult seasons.

We know, oh, Lord, that you've promised us a peace that passes understanding. So, Father, we ask that through the power and presence of Christ in the life of your people, there would be that peace.

We pray for those who are going through these circumstances who do not know you as Lord and Savior. We ask that the peace would be displayed on the face and the touch and the hands of your people to them.

Oh, Spirit, we ask that you would use us as a living example. We pray, oh, Father, for the families of our church. We pray, oh, God, from the ones who have been married the longest to the ones who have been married the least.

Father, we know that marriage is such an important aspect, not only in our society, but in the economy of God.

[25 : 36] What a gift it is. So we pray for our marriages. We pray for husbands and wives, that they would love one another intentionally and sacrificially.

We pray for the homes that have been blessed with children. We pray that they would raise up these children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. We pray for the blessing of grandchildren and ask that you would empower grandparents to move forward with intentionality.

We thank you for those who have shared this week, even the opportunity they've had to minister in the life of their grandchildren. We pray, God, for lost loved ones who may have wandered away, that you would draw them back to what they see and hear in our lives.

I pray for those marriages that may be hurting. God, you are a God of restoration. So, Lord, would you soften hearts and minds?

Would you give brokenness where brokenness is due? Would there be repentance where repentance is needed? And, Lord, we pray that the restoration that takes place in these marriages would be a testimony to your goodness and your greatness.

[26 : 48] We pray for those who may be walking through financial hardship, much like this account we see in the book of 2 Kings.

May they take all they have and lay it before you, trusting in you and you alone. We're laboring where they have the opportunity, but walking faithfully in your word.

And we pray that you would multiply that for your glory. We ask that you be with us as a church. We want to be a living example in our community.

We want to be a light to those around us. Father, I thank you for this body of believers. I thank you for their growth and their maturity in the word. And, Lord, we realize as we move forward, we grow deeper.

We grow together. Father, Lord, you bless us with children. You bless us with members. Lord, there also comes a grand responsibility as we move forward biblically.

[27 : 48] May we never separate ourselves from biblical faithfulness. May our focus be to walk faithfully with you. Father, we ask that you would draw each one of us closer.

We ask that our hearts and minds would be guarded. Lord, we realize in scripture, the first admonition to walk faithfully seems to be over and over to guard the minds. So, Father, guard our minds from the fear or the doubt or the temptations that may enter in.

Lord, help us to walk focused on you. Lord, as we focus on you, we pray that we would love you in a greater way. We pray for this church, oh, Father, that you would use it.

We pray for churches with which we partner with, for Art City. Continue to lead them. Pray for the Shull family.

God, as they have needs around them, pray that you meet those needs. We pray for the churches in our own association, our state convention, our national convention. We pray, oh, God, that you give us wisdom as we understand our interactions with them.

[28 : 54] Lord, help us to understand our place and the calling that you've called upon us. We want to walk faithfully, oh, Father. We know that our ultimate reality is who we are before you.

So, Father, we say here we are. May we live according to your word and may it be for your glory. Lord, as we prepare to leave here tonight, Lord, I know our time together has been a little shorter. But, Lord, we pray that we would take the truth of Scripture and it would have direct application in our lives. May we draw closer to you. May we be that remnant that remains faithful no matter what society does.

May we turn to you in our greatest moments of need that you may get the greatest glory. Father, we love you, we thank you, and we praise you for this day you've given us. And we ask it all in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

[30 : 20]