

Turning Tragedy into Opportunity  
When Things Go Wrong, Part Three  
2 Kings 4: 1 – 7  
June 6, 2010

The widow of a minister serving with a company of prophets – not the most lucrative calling – is facing a desperate situation: the agony and grief associated with her husband's death; an overwhelming debt load; and the possibility of losing her boys to the creditors, which was common in that time. She came to the prophet Elisha for advice, and found how to turn her tragedy into a miracle. Let us see five lessons to transform tragedy into an opportunity for victory.

Let's read our text (read).

**V. 1: Tragedy happens to everyone – Be prepared!**

A. Precious time is often lost when tragedy strikes by playing the blame game:

1. We blame God.
2. We blame ourselves.
3. We blame anything or anyone.

B. Sometimes closure cannot come until we have been able to fix accountability. But when we immediately start looking for whom to blame for our situation, we lose ground emotionally and spiritually.

C. the most important step we can take in life is to make preparations for the big hits life will deliver.

1. Keep your relationship with God fresh and current.
2. Keep your eyes on the long view. God's plans for you far out weigh the shallow, short-sighted philosophy the world is promoting.

**V. 2: God can use small things to start great things – Use them!**

A. by all the standards of the day, this widow lady had insignificant assets. Women rarely owned their own property; they had almost no legal standing outside her husband's decisions; even her creditors saw her only as a deadbeat debtor, although it was likely her husband who had entered into those debts without her knowledge or consent.

B. But God can – and often does – use the little things of this world to confound the pride of the world.

1. God can use small ability.
2. God can use little opportunity.
3. God can use little or limited property or possessions.

C. All God asks of us is to recognize His sovereignty, confess all we possess belongs to Him, and to make our resources available to Him.

**V. 3: It requires empty vessels before blessings can flow – Drain them!**

A. This must have seemed like a strange, even silly request of this lady. At the present, all the oil she had in the house couldn't fill one small jar; but the prophet was telling her to borrow vessels (large storage pots) from her neighbors.

1. Then point of this exercise was she needed empty vessels to receive the blessing God had in store for her.

B. What do you need to empty out of your heart and life?

1. Empty yourself of pride.

2. Empty yourself of bitterness and anger.
3. Empty yourself of sin.

**Vs. 4 – 5: The way to be filled is to fill the need of someone else – Pour it out!**

A. The secret ingredient in this widow's miracle was the act of pouring out from one vessel into another empty vessel. As long as she continued emptying out her filled vessel into an empty one, she kept receiving more oil.

B. I challenge you to likewise pour out the spiritual oil in your personal vessel to meet the needs of people around you. Now allow me to give you an important clue as to the core message of this passage of Scripture: *In the Bible, oil is often seen as representative of the Holy Spirit.* So when we say, "I will pour out the oil in my vessel," we should understand it means we are intending to pour out the Holy Spirit, who is present in every Christian's life, and Who bestows spiritual gifts to be used for the glory of God and the benefit of others.

C. What can you and I pour out of our personal vessel to fill the need of someone else?

1. Pour out your heart of compassion.
2. Pour out your hands of service.
3. Pour out tears of prayer.

**V. 6: The source of anointing will cease if we stop finding empty vessels – Share it!**

A. Only when the woman ran out of empty vessels did the oil stop flowing out of the original jar.

1. Beloved, we must make it a first priority to search out folks in our community who are in need, and to pour out the oil of the Holy Spirit into their lives. It is in our spiritual DNA; we are to do as Jesus did – find people in need, and minister to that need!

B. Keep the anointing going:

1. By worship (Keep a hungry heart for God);
2. By fellowship (Keep a loving heart toward the brethren);
3. By discipleship (Keep a thirsty soul for the Word);
4. By ministry (Keep our hands available for service);
5. By evangelism (Keep reaching for lost souls).

When tragedy strikes God's people, it is to prove the ground we stand on is solid. That solid ground is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why turn anywhere else?

Let's pray!