

Articles and Sermons :: Clear Your Debt to the Whole World and to the Church by Zac Poonen

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In 2 Kings 4:1 to 7, we read of a preacher's widow who was in debt. It's a sad thing when husbands die and leave their wives with a debt. That's something all of us should avoid at any cost. And preachers especially should avoid getting into debt because that is a bad testimony. Now the creditor had come to take away her two children as slaves to repay the debt. Elisha asked her what she had in her home. She replied, "Nothing, except a jar of oil." She called the jar of oil "nothing", and yet the solution to all her problems lay right there. The Lord asked Moses something similar in the desert, "What do you have in your hand?" He only had a shepherd's staff. That was enough. With that staff, he split the Red Sea, brought water out of the rock and led Israel right up to the borders of the promised land. The widow in Zarephath (whom Elijah visited) had only a small bowl of flour and a little jar of oil. But those contained the solution to all her family's problems and saved her and her son from death. We too may have some ability that we don't value and say, "I can't do anything with that." But that may be the very thing the Lord wants to use.

This jar of oil here is a picture of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes those who serve the Lord say, "I don't have much money or knowledge. I am not gifted or clever. I don't have any supporters to give me money. The needs are so great for the Lord's work. What shall I do?" So you ask them, "Have you received the Holy Spirit?" "Yes." "Then what else do you need?"

This woman did not realize that the solution to all her problems lay in that jar of oil. Elisha told her, "Go and borrow many large vessels from all your neighbours. Then go into your room, shut the door, and keep pouring from your jar into these vessels. They will all get filled up. Don't let other people see this miracle. Do it in secret" (2 Kings 4:3, 4). This was just like Jesus said, "Go shut the door and pray and fast and give your gifts. Don't let anybody see you do these things" (Mt.6:1-18).

A man of God must have a secret walk with God where he has dealings with God before he can stand up in public. Shut the door and you can experience the Holy Spirit ministering to all your needs. Then open the door and share that with others. Thus you can clear your debt.

We have a debt to the whole world – to give them the gospel. Paul said, "I am a debtor to Jews and non-Jews, to the cultured and to the barbarians - to everybody - to give them the gospel of God" (Rom.1:14).

We also have a debt to the whole church – to every believer – to show them love. The Bible says, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another" (Rom.13:8).

How are we to clear this two-fold debt – to share the gospel with the world and to love every child of God? Is it money we need or human abilities primarily? No. We need the power of the Holy Spirit. That was what Jesus told His disciples to wait for (Acts 1:8). That is what Paul told Timothy to kindle afresh within him (2 Tim.1:6).

Shut the door and seek God in secret. Pursue after love and seek earnestly for the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, and especially for the gift of prophecy (1 Cor.14:1). You can then go forth and clear your debt. That is the message of this passage of Scripture.

That widow filled every vessel she could find. She not only cleared her debt with that oil but blessed and enriched her neighbours too – for she must have sent those vessels back to them full of oil. That is our calling too – to bless our neighbours and everyone we meet. This is why we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.