

# Kings Series #12 - "The Flow Of The Spirit" 2

## Kings 4:1-7

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Bob Feller*

1. The greatest achievements in life are usually accomplished by people who have a singular desire that becomes the ruling passion of all they do.
2. For example, when Bob Feller was a child, he loved to throw a ball.
3. By the age of 5 he spent hours every day pitching through a hole in the barn wall.
4. At 10 his father bought him all the necessary equipment and provided him with a playing field on the family farm.
5. At 13 he pitched for a local team and averaged 20 strikeouts a game.
6. At 17 he began playing for the Cleveland Indians.
7. As a major leaguer he had 6 seasons as a 20 game winner,
  - a. 3 no-hit games,
  - b. 11 1-hitters,
  - c. 266 wins,
  - d. and he set a record of 348 strikeouts in 1 season.
8. He is a member of the Baseball Hall of Fame.
9. Bob Feller had one desire--baseball!
10. And because he lived consistent with that desire, he excelled

#### B. *Desire*

1. Desire is an emotion every one of us is very well acquainted with
2. Already today, each of us has known the pull of desire
  - a. the desire to sleep in
  - b. the desire for a ham & cheese omelet, Egg McMuffin, or maybe just for a cup of coffee and a donut
3. Whether it's been the gentle tug of a mild *want* or the fierce pull of *lust*, we've all known desire today
4. We experienced it yesterday, and we'll know it again tomorrow

#### C. *Today*

1. We're going to be looking at desire today as we continue our study through Kings
2. And as we do, we'll come to understand the best desire of all

### II. TEXT

#### A. *Vs. 1-2*

- {1} **A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD. And the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves."**

**{2} So 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 but a jar of oil."**

1. The story of Elisha's life is one long recounting of miraculous acts of compassion
2. Elisha, who was Elijah's protégé and constant companion, had received the prophetic mantle of Elijah; both literally and figuratively
3. But there was a definite contrast between Elijah's and Elisha's ministry
  - a. Elijah was a loner whose prophecies and miracles revealed the judgment of God on an apostate nation
  - b. Elisha liked being around people and had a ministry that was more aimed at showing compassion to individuals and small groups
4. Here is one of them . . .
  - a. Elisha comes to a village in which there lived a widow whose husband had been a member of the local school of the prophets
  - b. these schools were local enclaves of faithfulness in the midst of a nation that had for the most part gone into complete apostasy
  - c. Elisha was recognized as the chief of the prophets, just as his mentor had been before him
5. When he arrived, this widow came to him with an urgent request
  - a. since her husband had died, their source of support had failed
  - b. a man to whom she owed money had threatened to take her two sons as bondmen until they debt could be paid off
  - c. the problem was that with her two sons gone, there was no way she could anything but to fall *further* into debt
6. Elisha asked the woman if she had a plan; what specifically did she want him to do?
7. But she was so frantic, that she could give no reply; no doubt her mind was blinded by the fear of losing her family and home
8. It was clear to Elisha that this woman was in a desperate situation
  - a. certainly, before she would ever let her children go into bondage, she would have pawned everything of value in her home
  - b. so he asked her, "Is there anything at all left?"
9. Her reply was a despondent and discouraging, "Nothing; well, there's one jar of oil left."
10. Her life had been reduced to this;
  - a. her two boys and a jar of oil
  - b. and now it seemed she was about to lose the boys
11. There was one other thing she had; her faith
12. That's why she went to Elisha; her faith drove her to the man of God, to see if maybe God wouldn't hear her cry for help

#### **B. Vs. 3-7**

**{3} Then he said, "Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors; empty vessels; do not gather just a few.**

**{4} "And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones."**

**{5} So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought *the vessels* to her; and she poured *it* out.**

**{6} Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "*There is not another vessel.*" So the oil ceased.**

**{7} 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 live on the rest."**

1. Elisha told her to take the one thing she had left, the jar of oil, and pour it into as many vessels as she could possible get together
2. In faith, she and her sons searched high and low for all the jars and bowls and vessels they could find
  - a. they went to her neighbors
  - b. they looked in the alleyways and went to the local hillside where people cast out old pots
  - c. they filled their little house with vessels
  - d. and when they could find no more, they closed the door behind them
  - e. took the jar of oil, and tipped it toward the first empty pot
3. Out came the oil;
  - a. but that was to be expected
  - b. after all, there was oil in the jar to begin with
  - d. but when the first pot was full, there was no sign that the original jar was going empty
  - e. it was just as full as when they had begun pouring
4. Pot, after, bowl, after jar was filled from the ever flowing oil supply
5. This went on for a long time
  - a. soon there were more full vessels than empty
  - b. and shortly after that, the boys had to search to find the remaining empty vessels
  - c. then, the word came, all of them had been filled
  - d. and at that moment - the miraculous supply ended
  - e. the flow of oil stopped
6. The widow went to Elisha and told him of what had happened
7. He told her to take the oil, sell it, and use the profit to pay off her debts

### **C. A Clue**

1. While many of the miracles Elisha performed seem to be nothing more than simple acts of kindness and compassion that have little spiritual significance beyond their immediate context,
2. This one stands out as pregnant with significance for the people of God
3. The main clue to this significance is the part that oil plays in the story
4. For you see, oil is a consistent symbol of the Holy spirit in the both the Old and New Testaments
5. In fact, the whole idea of *anointing* which figures so centrally in much of Scripture is a picture of oil being poured out on someone, as a symbol of their being covered and empowered by the Spirit of God
  - a. when kings were officially set on their throne, oil was poured on their heads

- b. when priests were appointed to their office, their heads were covered with fragrant oil
  - c. when prophets were ordained, they were often anointed with oil
  - d. and most importantly, the word *meshiach* or *messiah* means "the anointed one"
  - e. kings and priests and prophets were all meant to be but pictures of Meshiach; forerunners who would prepare the way of the Consummate KING, PRIEST, and PROPHET = The Messiah
  - f. their anointing only *foreshadowed* and *pointed* to His Supreme Anointing
6. So when we read of oil in this passage, the astute and alert bible student immediately realizes there is more here than merely another interesting story from the life of Elisha
  7. There is a vital lesson here for us
  8. So let's consider it . . .

#### **D. The Lesson**

1. God performed a notable miracle for this poor widow
2. But notice what had happened to her before it occurred
  - a. she had lost her husband
  - b. she had lost her earthly possessions
  - c. and she was about to lose her children
3. She was reduced to a jar of oil; that's all she had left
4. But God used that one thing, and made it the source of tremendous blessing
5. What happened to her may happen to us
6. Sometimes we have to be reduced to nothing before God can bless us
  - a. sometimes our lives are so filled with things that distract us, God has to remove them before we can see clearly enough to see Him
  - b. sometimes our hands are so full of material goodies they are not free to embrace eternal things
7. Not a few Christians have said that they had to get to the bottom before they could look up
  - a. in fact, this is the testimony of many of you
    - 1) you were very comfortable
    - 2) surrounded by plenty, life was so sweet you thought you were happy
  - b. but God in His infinite love saw your desperate condition and began to remove the blinders from your eyes by taking away the things that eclipsed your vision of Him
8. I have learned in my short life with Christ, that God only uses the means necessary to accomplish His purposes to bless us
  - a. He never uses a forklift when a fork will do
  - b. but if it takes a forklift, then that's what He'll use
9. God's ultimate purpose for every one of us is to reveal Himself to us and bring us into the eternal blessing of knowing and enjoying Him
10. He will do whatever it takes to make that happen
  - a. not one bit less

b. and not one bit more

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11. This women had only a jar of oil left; and when the prophet asked what she had, at first she forgot even it
  12. But that seemingly insignificant jar of oil became the means of God's tremendous blessing in her life
  13. Listen friend, God wants to bless you
    - a. if there is anything you take away from today, let it be this
    - b. God wants to bless you! God is able to bless you
    - c. so bring what little you have, though it may seem inconsequential or insignificant, and offer it to Him
    - d. God delights to take the little we bring, and make it much
    - e. this is such an important lesson, it gets taught again and again in the scriptures
    - f. twice in the NT Jesus took a meager supply of food and fed thousands with it
      - 1) as God, He could have created food out of mid air
      - 2) even more, He could have simply made every belly full
      - 3) but he didn't
      - 4) He took the little that was offered
      - 5) and by the application of His divine power and grace, He used it to bless others
    - g. here in 2 Kings 4, God multiplied what she had, and in doing so, an important lesson is left for us
  14. God has chosen to use us in the outworking of His purposes
  15. He could work on His own, bypassing us; but He doesn't
  16. No, He gives us the privilege of being used to accomplish His ends
  17. he takes the little that we have, and by the application of His power and grace, multiplies it to bless others
  18. And though it is His power and His grace and His blessing, He rewards us for what we offer
  19. As you look at the immensity of the task of the Church, you may think yourself small and disqualified to make a significant contribution
  20. Actually, this feeling of personal smallness is the first requirement to be used of God
  21. Like the widow, the first step to being used of God is to see that you have nothing to offer
  22. Then the Holy Spirit will show you something you can offer
  23. Bring that, whatever it is, and offer it to God
  24. He will take it, multiply it, and give it back to you to both bless you and others
  25. Remember, God never asks about our ability, only our availability
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26. Another lesson this passage teaches us is drawn from the flow of oil
  27. As I mentioned earlier, oil is a consistent symbol of the Holy Spirit in Scripture
  28. And that symbol fits here
  29. The jar of oil is a fitting symbol of the Christian

30. As the ladies saw at their recent retreat, Paul likens believers to vessels into whom God delights to dwell by the Holy Spirit
31. We are the vessels of the Lord, filled with His Spirit and glory
32. And just as the widow poured the oil out and it continued to flow, so God wants us to not only be the vessels that hold the Spirit;
33. He wants us to be poured out so that our fullness in the Spirit can minister to and touch others
34. Notice that the widow's jar continued to pour until all the vessels she and her sons had gathered were full
35. The implication is that if they had brought more vessels, more oil would have flowed
36. This is a fitting picture of desire, specifically, of our desire for God
37. As long as the sons brought another empty pot, the oil flowed
38. But when they stopped bringing, the flow stopped
39. Christian, it is ever God's desire to fill us with Himself
40. As long as we bring Him the empty vessels of our lives, He is pleased to fill us
41. But when we stop coming, He will not force Himself on us
42. His greatest delight and our greatest blessing is the communion of the Holy Spirit
43. But He will not force the door of our hearts
44. Remember what Jesus said to the church at Laodicea
  - a. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."
  - b. while this verse is often quoted as an appeal to non-Christians
  - c. Jesus actually said it to a cold and self-sufficient church
  - d. He issued the call to individuals in that church to open up to Him
45. The point is this, we have as much of God as we *really* want
46. You see, God's chief desire for us is that we simply might know Him and enjoy His love
47. Since He is both able and willing to make His presence real, if we fail to enjoy it, the problem lies with us, not Him
48. Very simply, the vessel of desire is full with something other than God
49. As long as we keep coming to Him with true desire, He will fill us

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. Seeking God**

1. The tale is told of a young man who was seeking God.
2. He went to a well known, wise old sage for help. "How can I find God?" he asked.
3. The old man took him to a nearby river. Out they waded into the deep water.
4. Soon the water was up just under their chins.
5. Suddenly the old man seized the young man by the neck and pushed him

- under the water.
- a. He held the young man down until the young man was flailing the water in desperation.
  - b. Another minute and he may well have drowned.
  - c. Up out of the water the two of them came.
6. The young man coughed water from his lungs and gasped for air.
  7. Reaching the bank he asked the man indignantly, "What did that have to do with my finding God?"
  8. The old man asked him quietly, "While you were under the water, what did you want more than anything else?"
  9. The young man thought for a minute and then answered, "I wanted air. I wanted air more than anything else."
  10. The old man replied, "When you want God as much as you wanted air, you will find him."

### **B. Our Desire**

1. In this day of easy believism, when Christianity is thought of by so many as being like a membership to a fitness center
2. It needs to be clearly said that this sage's advice to that young man is right on
3. Being a Christian isn't merely a religious choice
4. Not is it philosophical posture
5. Or Political position
6. The man or woman who understands that living means Christ, understands what it means to be a Christian
7. When the desire for God is as real to them as the desire for air, or food, or water, then they will know what it means to follow Christ
8. And it isn't until this desire begins to mark us that we will begin to know the real meaning of life

### **C. What To Do**

1. It may be this morning that as you sit here, the Holy Spirit is speaking to you that a desire for God doesn't really mark your thoughts or heart
2. And you may be a bit perplexed why a greater desire for Him doesn't characterize you
3. Well stop and consider - we only have so much desire
4. The question isn't--why don't you have more desire for God
5. The question is—what do you desire?
6. As you consider this, you will quickly realize that the reason your desire for God is cool is because it is hot for so many other things
7. Step one is to ask God to change your affections
8. As Paul says in Phil 2:13

**It is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.**

9. Bring Him your desires and offer them up to Him
10. Like the widow's jar, He can take that simple offer and fill it with Himself