

PROPHETS, POTS, AND PROMISES

Presented by

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During Old Testament times, God often used prophets to bring important messages to His people. At times, these prophets could even tell the people about events that were going to happen in the future. One such prophet was a man by the name of Elijah. In 1 Kings 17:8-16, the Bible tells us an interesting story about this great prophet.

A wicked king by the name of Ahab was ruling the land. Ahab was stubborn and rebellious, and refused to obey God. So, God sent Elijah to Ahab to tell him that no rain would fall on the land for several years due to the king's wickedness. Because of the lack of rain, no crops could grow, and food became very hard to find. God, however, took care of Elijah—in a very unusual way.

God told Elijah to go to a city called Zarephath, where he would find a widow who would feed him and care for him. Elijah obeyed God and found the widow. When he asked her for something to eat, she told him she had only two pots, one of which contained flour, and the other of which contained oil. But, the widow told Elijah, she had only enough flour and oil for **one last meal**, and then she and her son would end up starving to death.

Elijah told her to cook the meal anyway and give it to him. Then Elijah made her two promises. First, he said that the widow's pot of flour would **never become empty**. Second, he said that her pot of oil would **never run dry**. The widow obeyed Elijah, and the Bible tells us that "the bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord, which He spoke by Elijah" (1 Kings 17:16).

We can learn several important lessons from this Bible story about prophets, pots, and promises. First, people who are wicked (like King Ahab) often suffer, and because of their wickedness they also can cause others around them to suffer. But regardless of what happens, if we will maintain our faith in God, He will help us endure whatever suffering comes our way. Second, it is **always** right to obey God, even though at first we may not fully understand **why** He asks us to do something. The widow certainly could not have understood why Elijah was willing to eat all of the food she had in her house—leaving her and her son without anything to eat from that point on. But Elijah wanted her to know that **God takes care of those people who obey Him**. In fact, this is exactly what Jesus taught while He was on Earth when He said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). The widow learned the truthfulness of that statement when she obeyed God—and God gave her and her son food to eat from that time on.

Third, God can use those people who obey Him to help others who are in need (just like the widow helped Elijah when he needed a place to stay and food to eat). Helping others is not an **option** for us; it is

a **command from God**. Christ Himself said, “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them” (Matthew 7:12). In James 1:26, James taught us to take care of the widows and orphans because when we do so, that is “pure and undefiled religion before God.” James also said, “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit you?” (James 2:15). It is not enough for us just to “**think about**” people or “**pray for**” people. Instead, we must **act** on their behalf!

In Matthew 25, Jesus described what will happen when the Day of Judgment arrives. He said that some people will be lost because they failed to help those who were thirsty, hungry, or without clothing. He then said, “Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these, **you did it to Me**” (Matthew 25:45). In other words, **when we serve others, we are serving God!** That should tell us how important it is to help those around us. What might have happened to God’s great prophet Elijah if the widow had not shared her food with him? And would the widow have received the blessings she did if she had refused to help Elijah? No, she would not have.

Today, we need to have the **faith** of the prophet Elijah, and the **obedience** of the widow who helped save his life. Faith and obedience are a powerful combination—and they represent something that every Christian should earnestly desire. As James put it, “Someone might say, ‘**You** have faith, and **I** have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, **and I, by my works, will show you my faith**” (James 2:18). Let’s all make up our minds to be people of faith **who work every day to serve others—and end up serving God as we do so!**