**"AND THE OIL STAYED"**

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In the fourth chapter of II Kings is related an incident the meaning of which is revealed by spiritual understanding gained through the study of Christian Science. This is the story of the widow who, when faced with the creditor's threat to take into bondage her two sons, appealed for aid to the prophet Elisha.

A student of Christian Science, who was preparing to take an important forward step, was faced with the necessity of seeing sufficiency as ever present, in order to complete her demonstration. Divinely guided to this Bible story, she studied it in the light of Christian Science and found therein the needed spiritual inspiration and direction.

First, there is the prophet's significant question, after he had listened to the widow's story of want and woe, "What hast thou in the house?" Human thought may read in these words merely a desire on Elisha's part to arouse the woman to take inventory of her material possessions, but they may contain for us a deeper meaning. In this connection we can consider our Leader's rendition of the last phrase in the twenty-third Psalm, "I will dwell in the house [the consciousness] of [love] for ever," as given on [page 578](https://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=I+will+dwell+in+the+house+%5Bthe+consciousness%5D+of+%5Blove%5D+for+ever%2C&book=tfccs.main.sh) of her textbook, "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures."

Did not the prophet's question uncover in the consciousness of the widow thoughts unlike God, infinite good? Was she not harboring a lack of faith in divine Love—the belief that although her husband, as she reminded Elisha, had feared the Lord, this same God would allow her sons to be taken into bondage in payment of a debt for which they doubtless were not responsible? Then, too, what a limited sense of supply was revealed by her reply to the prophet's significant question, "Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil."

Here is the second point in the story for us to apply to ourselves. Doubtless many of us have at some time poured into the ears of a patient Christian Science practitioner a similar tale of woe. And have we been gently rebuked, even as was the widow, though not in the same words? Perhaps we have been asked, Have you nothing for which to be grateful to your heavenly Father now? Has He ever withheld that which would fill a human need? And, forgetting for the moment Love's countless bestowals, have we too answered, I have so little?

In those days, as now, oil was a useful commodity. On one occasion the prophet Elijah had demonstrated the truth of supply for another widow, who had but a handful of meal and a little oil, and of this proved sufficiency her household "did eat many days." Today, a careful study of Mrs. Eddy's definition of "oil" enables us to exchange an impoverished belief for a sense of spiritual wealth. She interprets it as "consecration; charity; gentleness; prayer; heavenly inspiration" (*ibid.,* p. 592). Are not these spiritual qualities of thought far more potent to meet every need than would be an accumulation of material possessions? But these spiritual qualities need first to be recognized and then utilized aright.

Was the widow who sought help from Elisha consecrating thought to the Giver of all good when she believed divine aid impotent in the face of the creditor's threat? Was she herself expressing enough charity to those around her in her hour of oppression? What of the right desire, which is prayer, prayer for more faith and understanding of God's boundless good, and the heavenly inspiration gained by receiving the truth into her consciousness? It remained for Elisha to reveal to her what was really required to meet her present need.

How often in an hour of need we fail to see that before our feet "Life's pearl is cast," and "seek far off" for that which we believe will better serve our purpose at the moment! But when false trusts fail us and props are knocked from beneath us, as it were, we turn to that imperishable substance which is Spirit.

Elisha next demanded of the widow that she borrow empty vessels of her neighbors. "Borrow not a few." Perhaps she thought this a strange request, in view of the seemingly meager supply from which to fill any vessels. But whatever may have been the widow's thought, she was obedient to this request and sent her sons to fetch the vessels.

Alone with her sons, and the door of her consciousness open to good, the widow received of the truth of unlimited supply, until there was "not a vessel more."

"And the oil stayed"! Why do we wonder at the subsequent result? How could it have been otherwise? Guided by intuition, the widow had appealed to one who, she knew, was spiritually-minded enough to advise her. As a result of her obedience, fear was replaced by confidence, a belief of lack changed to a realization of abundant good, and limitation gave way to abundance, as many were found to purchase the oil.

Are we always as promptly obedient to the spiritual guidance we seek, though spiritual understanding may lead us to take what may seem a drastic step? Or do we shrink from sharing with others, fearful that we ourselves will be left impoverished? Let us remember that the sealed pot, like the closed hand, is powerless to receive.

How simple was the solution of the widow's problem! Yet we, too, so often overlook the supply already at hand and close our eyes to what is really a blessed privilege—an opportunity to share with others; and in so doing we, in turn, receive more understanding from that exhaustless store of infinite good.