

The Purified Pot

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Date: 13 October 2021

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[0 : 00] May we turn again in the word of God to the book of 2 Kings, 2 Kings chapter 4. Book of 2 Kings chapter 4.

And we'll read the short account there, beginning at verse 38, of where Elijah purifies the deadly stew. We'll read verse 38 down to verse 42.

We'll read God's word. And Elisha came to Gilgal when there was a famine in the land. And as the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, he said to his servant, set on the large pot and boil stew for the sons of the prophets.

One of them went out into the fields to gather the herbs and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild goats and came and cut them up into the pot of stew, not knowing what they were.

And they poured out some for the men to eat. But while they were eating the stew, they cried out, O man of God, there is death in the pot.

[1 : 26] And they could not eat it. And he said, then bring flour. And he threw it into the pot and said, pour some out for the men that they may eat.

And there was no harm in the pot. Amen. May the reading of God's word be blessed to us. We consider her thoughts on these two passages we have read together.

As a kind of the deadly stew, it may not be too familiar to us. But once again, we have Elisha here. And he's providing for the needs of the men who are with him, the sons of the prophets.

And the scene is what is pictured here, as we can read in verse 38. And Elisha came again to Gilgal, where there was a famine in the land.

They walked right into this famine. And firstly, imagine yourself if you were one of the men amongst this company. And you might well at this point turn and say to each other, why on earth are we here?

[2 : 40] Why on earth have we been led into this place that seems so dire and there's no goodness in it for us? And if we remain in this land, it's going to strip us of everything that we even have with us.

And maybe even we would be guilty of doubting Elisha himself, the man who would lead us. And maybe doubt that, well, he was a true prophet.

And we would reason what good is it for us to be here.

And it's not what we do. Especially when we are in trying situations. We always want to reason it out one way or another.

We always want to find out why we are here and why is this happening to us. But it is wise for us to remember that while doubts may arise out of our experiences, and what we are taken to and what we are taken through, we can doubt our Christianity, we can doubt our faith, we can doubt ourselves.

[4 : 00] And while we may question, we are not to doubt God, who is reliable, who is guidance, who is provision and providence in our lives, and hold fast with faith, as logic is defied.

And that's hard to experience. That's hard to go through. And it's certainly easier for me to say it.

And the phrase kind of rings familiar with what we're sure we're all familiar with, of God's providence is our inheritance. Whatever situations we are in, can we say that?

God's workings in our lives are ultimately for our good, for our inheritance. And even today, as we ask of the strange time that we have come through as a nation, is it for our good?

Is it for his glory? Can I say God's providence is our inheritance? And looking at the passage again, it does not say what the company of the men thought about this situation.

[5 : 28] And maybe I'm making an unfavorable assumption about what these men were thinking. Maybe they weren't like the children of Israel who moaned in the desert when they had no food that they wanted.

When they moaned that they wanted to go back to Egypt. Maybe they didn't moan for lack of food. If ever that would happen. Because it's just what we do ourselves.

And certainly over the whole period of time, we haven't grown out of it. And you never know, maybe these men had learned to trust in this man.

This man who was guiding them. And saw that he was a trustworthy guide. And how is it for us today? Do we have all our trust and faith in our trustworthy guide?

And wait in patience upon the Lord, even when it seems we may be in a land of famine. Our land may be in famine, not physically, of physical nourishment, but of spiritual nourishment.

[6 : 39] There are two points that we can take from the passage. That is the size of the pot and the contents of the pot.

So we look at the size of the pot first. Laterally, in verse 38, you can see that he said to his servant, set on the large pot and boil stew for the sons of the prophets.

And this is quite a funny statement that has been made here, especially in light of the context that is said before us of there being a famine. And this is quite a few years ago, but it is said on the large pot and you can always imagine yourself to think, well, what am I going to put in it?

Why are we using the large pot? Will the smaller pot not do? Will that not suffice? If the statement is made to get the large pot, we can assume that every other pot was smaller.

I suppose in your own kitchen, you know, the large bowl or the large cup, significantly because of its size.

[7 : 54] And you can picture the large bowl. But our servant here doesn't seem to flinch in such a way. Commendably, he obeys the word that is given to him.

And he was obedient enough to do, as his master told him, regardless of his understanding of what he would fill it with. And his actions show a dutifulness and unquestionable reliance upon the word that was declared.

And maybe there is a challenge here for us too. How do we respond to Christ? When he says of what we read of in John 15, verse 7, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

That's not the language of bringing the small pot. That's not a, this will be enough to scrape by on language.

But no, to continue to be faithful in asking and believing of what Christ can do.

[9 : 09] By employing that large pot. And to be expectant of receiving great blessings. And not questioning how God can do it.

Or indeed, can he do it? For surely we know that he can. Spurgeon writes, If our faith can shoot many arrows by asking great things of God, expecting great things from God, and attempting great things for God, we shall see mighty marvels.

But want of faith stints the blessing. But want of faith stints the blessing. Wretched are the men who rob themselves and stop the flow of blessing.

Yet such a kosh is common with us. I'll read that again. If our faith can shoot many arrows by asking great things of God, expecting great things from God, and attempting great things for God, we shall see mighty marvels.

But want of faith stints the blessing. Wretched are the men who rob themselves and stop the flow of blessing. Yet such a kosh is common with us.

[10 : 34] If we bring the small pot, that's all that we will be filled. Even though he fills it to overflowing.

I feel I myself tend to take the small pot to God in prayer. The little pot far too often. And rob myself.

And maybe you know that. You rob ourselves. Of his gracious abundance that he freely offers. And seeing the works that he does.

In our lives. And in our people. And maybe we can be so, maybe more so guilty of bringing this small pot when we are feeling like we are in the land of fun.

Almost thinking that our pots become smaller and smaller because we can't reason how God will fill it. Are we praying great prayers?

[11 : 41] Asking great things of God. Asking that he will reveal himself to us. To the men of our town. To the men of our nation. And drawing them by his spirit and his power.

To come in these doors. And to worship the name of God. Will he draw men to labor for his cause?

For his glory? Many times Christ has proved to be overflowing in your life. I'm sure you can agree. But will we be left saying, I should have brought a bigger pot?

Especially when we enter glory. And we see that glory with our own eyes. We see the wonder of his power. His authority over all things.

We see his love more clearly than we have ever seen it before. And we may, we'll be asking, why did I ever doubt? Why did I ever doubt God in anything?

[12 : 53] I should have brought a bigger pot. I should have brought a bigger pot. So let us pray expectantly.

On what the Lord can do by his power. In accordance with his will. And that we may see great things. As we ask great things.

from God. So we've looked at the size of the pot and I want to briefly look at the contents of the pot as well. The servant we read of has been asked to boil stew for the company.

And so he undertakes to gather any suitable herbs or plants he can. And he finds this wild vine that we read of in verse 38. One of them went out into the field to gather herbs and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap of wild gourds.

This vine and gourds are obviously unknown to the man. When there was nothing else in the land to take, maybe the sight of this wild vine delighted him.

[14 : 10] And maybe his smell was pleasant and maybe it looked good for consumption. And it's a tale that seems so familiar to us in our own lives when we are lured in by something unknown.

It takes us back to the fruit of Eden's garden. And it takes us right into our own hearts when we see our own fields. And the devil will tempt us with this new unknowns in our lives.

Things we have not seen before to attract our attention and inspire our attention. And while so often we are guilty that we are lured just closer and closer and we pick it up with our hands, we hold it in our chests and we consume whatever it is into our bodies and into our hearts.

But that wild vine we know proved itself to be dangerous. And there we see as the knowledge was lacking, it teaches us as Christians that we must continue in learning.

So we can identify what has no good. We can see and realize what is no good for us. Maybe to others this wild vine was known as bad.

[15 : 37] And that's why it was all that was remaining. Yet on a personal level, we need to exercise diligence in the knowledge of God's word so we can identify and then exercise a self-control in our lives towards these things that are dangerous and unprofitable for us.

And for sure, we cannot know everything or will be able to identify everything. For the power of the devil is far greater than we are. But we must rely on the word to teach us.

And we seek and know Christ in this Bible that he has left for us with a better understanding. You see, if the man had a better understanding of what was set before him, he would have made a more pleasant stew for the man.

So we must understand and understand Christ. His character, his nature, his wisdom and maybe more importantly to know his voice as it speaks through the word to us.

And we can identify that voice. As the lambs hear the guidance of the good shepherd, the good shepherd that takes them to green pastures and yet keeps them from every danger.

[17 : 04] We need reminding daily to be ourselves aware and on guard. Putting on the armor that is given for us against all these temptations that are set before us.

And often we admit ourselves in failing in our persistence to seek out the beauty and fragrance of the true vine.

And instead we satisfy ourselves with the maybe what is more easily attainable as the wild vine which causes us danger.

And as we proceed in the passage in a sense it's a picture of the Christian's efforts that are in the pot.

We may have faith to bring the big pot and yet as we look at the request that we make it may seem so vast that you know we want to fill it ourselves or we might try and outwork that request ourselves.

[18 : 16] And are we trusting in the true vine? Are we seeking out the true vine that will be enough for us in our lives of what we are of what we do?

Do we have that diligence in the word of God to seek this vine that bears good fruit for us?

He is worth it you know that yourselves. And we know that nothing else is needed but this true vine. He is enough abundantly and enough completely for us.

And but to our shame we are naturally inclined to want just a bit of the wild vine in our port.

We like we almost desire that bit of sin in our port to our shame these impurities of sins that we often fail to refute or repent of.

[19 : 33] And these things spoil the taste of our character of who we are of all our efforts. And it is just as it's read in the Song of Solomon the little foxes that come into our lives that spoil the fruitful vine.

These sins that are in us they spoil the taste that we leave. and maybe we need to check the contents of what is within us.

The recipe of the pot. Assess the ingredients and refine and renew its contents and employ that knowledge that is left for us through the world to make the taste of our hearts more pleasant.

And given that understanding to identify the wild vine in us the badness in us the death in our pot.

And that may take some humbling on our part to call out the sins that we cling to and we don't want to part with. But they leave a vile taste in our mouths.

[20 : 59] A taste that we as Christians would fear to leave with anyone else. What taste do we leave with others?

The good vine always produces good fruit. Good fruit produces a good taste. What taste do we leave with others as we go about our daily lives?

And all the while as we do we have to admit that in all our efforts and every good effort because we are sinful beings there will be some sin tainting it.

we can refine ourselves as much as we want to as much as we desire and we can you see it yourself new improved recipe on things and you taste it and don't know it's a difference.

It's exactly the same as it was. And we can try and renew ourselves and cleanse ourselves and make ourselves better ourselves but we're no better.

[22 : 12] that sin is still in us the bad taste is still in us the death is still in us. God would not bear that bad taste within us.

God is not fooled when we think that when we say we are a better person now. I've said my prayer today, I've read my Bible today, how is our heart in regards to sin?

And while we wish that we would long for good fruit in our pot and in our lives, there is always something to cause the death in our pot.

Our lives compiled into this pot of what we add ourselves is always in need of purifying. But we must speak of the flower of what we read in our passage.

This flower that was infused into the bad pot makes all the difference. And by this cleansing action reminds us of the man of God, the son of God who comes and purifies our pot of bad tastes.

[23 : 43] He only is capable in ways unknown to us. As the flower was not deemed suitable or sufficient in itself to cleanse the pot, the one of his hand it falls from ours.

And we as servants and Christians, we may bring the flower and present the offering of the gospel message to others.

And yet we know that in every effort of what we do, it's insufficient to cleanse the pot at all if it does not go with the application of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By his hand and by his spirit, blessing it to men. We may handle this message with the ability to purify, but we must pass it all to Christ.

We deliver it, but bring it to Christ in prayer as we do. As a servant pastor to his master, that Jesus Christ would apply it for his glory to men, that they may see the good taste that he brings to us.

[25 : 14] And by our obedience, we do not know what effect we may have, or what Jesus may use us by our obedience to men.

John 15 again, verse 4 says, a branch cannot bear fruit by itself, but he has appointed you that you may go and bear fruit.

The branch of itself cannot bear any fruit if it is not from the wild, the true vine, or founded in the true vine, that bears good fruit.

And if men would taste anything from our lives, would you not wish they sampled the love of Christ, the purifying power of Christ, that he has worked in us, not our sinful nature, but I feel myself so prone to hide away the sweet taste that he leaves in my life, and otherwise share in the blandness of what the world offers.

love. But essentially what happens in this pot and closing is that he takes what is bad and he makes it good. He converts his soul in sin, and that's the picture of the soul in sin, and cleanses it from it.

[26 : 54] The pot is converted from bad to good, from death to life. The strength of the wild vine, of a taste, the potency of it does not matter.

Sins can be great or small in our lives, overpowering in our lives, but the taste of the wild stew may be mild almighty.

But yet, as we bring it to Christ, as we bring it to our guide, our shepherd, he can cleanse it.

So long as we take it to Christ, we must shout out there is death in our pot before Christ, and that he would purify it.

John 15 verse 3 of what we read says, you are already clean. You are already clean. There is no pot beyond the power of Christ, no man so evil to resist his purifying power.

[28 : 09] The pot and stew may have received the same appearance, but the new Christian, while retaining the same person of who they are, leaves a new taste with men.

a sweet and beautiful taste and nothing like what was known before in their lives. And it's an echo of a reminder of a day that is promised to the Christian.

When the soul shall be finally perfectly purified in mind, body, and soul, and there will be no more death in living.

Christ will have purified me. He has removed any trace of the wild vine that leads to death in my pot, and he has taken my sin upon himself.

And because of the father who would have spat us out of our mouth, because we, blighted by our sin, are unpalatable by God the father.

[29 : 18] But the one who drank the cup of God's wrath, by that work, enables us to come before the father.

As the one who purified me, the one who purified you, the purifying work of Christ, and that alone, the flower that is sprinkled over our lives and cleanses us, just come so graciously and willingly to us.

And it is all out of love for you and for me. An unfathomable sense of love that we know and experience and maybe can't explain, love that we are yet to see, that he loves you and he loves me just as the father loves him, the son.

We cannot comprehend just what that means, but one day we will know that love of how the father loves son.

And we will know it fully on day for ourselves, a measure of that love. I'll just say a short prayer and then we'll conclude with a praise. father and we thank you that you come with us this night and we would know you and that you would reveal yourself to us so willing and that we would from the depths of our hearts cry out that yes we have many sins that black us and stay in our lives and leave bad tastes within our hearts but Lord purify us, cleanse us, prepare us to go out amongst the men and women of this world, use us and equip us.

[31 : 21] Most importantly we pray that as we're servants of your name and believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we would leave the taste of that love that we know ourselves, leave the taste and love of the Lord Jesus Christ with them that they may taste and see themselves and know that God is good and loving in every way towards them.

Bless us in our time as we sing your praise and part. Forgive us our sins in Jesus' name. Amen. Conclude and praise.