

## INTRODUCTION 引言

What is compassion? It is an empathy toward someone who is suffering. Your feeling should motivate you to action. A story was told when a boy planned to buy a puppy from a pet store. The owner told the kid how much it would cost. Finally, the boys saved up enough money. But the man explained: “Well, this dog was born with a crippled leg. Why don’t you pick another one?” The young child insisted on his choice. As the happy kid left the store with his new friend, the owner realized why the boy wanted to buy that dog – he had the same disability in one leg. He could identify with the misery of the puppy. Our passage today is about God’s compassion on us. We completed our studies on the life of king Jehoshaphat of Judah. He helped king Ahab of Israel to fight against Aram. God judged Ahab and he perished in the battle. But God rescued Jehoshaphat from the enemy. Today we will switch our focus to the northern kingdom of Israel. We will skip over to chapter 4 of 2 Kings. Let me highlight a few key events from the first three chapters of the book. Ahab’s son Ahaziah succeeded the throne. However, he was injured in a fall accident. He subsequently died as a result. Since Ahaziah had no son, his brother Joram took over as the king (chapter 1). Meanwhile, God was about to retire prophet Elijah. God called Elisha to be the next major prophet in Israel. Elijah was then taken to heaven in a chariot of fire and horses (chapter 2). He became the only person in the Bible other than Enoch who did not experience death. At this point in time, Jehoshaphat was still the king of Judah. He and Ahab’s family were in good relationship because his son married Ahab’s daughter. Therefore, Jehoshaphat gladly sent his army when Joram asked for help to combat Moab. God helped the ally win the battle (chapter 3). That is a brief summary of chapters 1 to 3. The following few chapters are about the work of prophet Elisha. Despite the spiritual bankruptcy of the whole country, God still raised up prophets to convey His messages. In the two stories we will cover today, God showed compassion to two needy families. Today, we live in a fallen world. Most of our civil leaders do not obey God. But God will continue to care for those who trust Him.

## EXPLANATION 解釋

### 1. Restocking Dried Vessels 補滿乾涸的器皿

In the first story, we see God restocking the dried vessels for a widow. Let us read from **verse 1 to 7**. The incident bears some resemblance to the record in 1 Kings 17 when God helped another widow. In that story, a Gentile lady suffered from financial stress because of a drought. She had no other food except a last batch of oil and flour. Elijah told the widow that God would continue to replenish the oil and flour until rain returned. Things happened just as the prophet said. In comparison, the lady in the current account was the widow of a prophet. She too faced an economic crisis. Her creditor was about to take away her two sons as slaves. Livelihood became a practical issue when there was no man at home. A possible way to settle the debt was to sell her children as slaves according to the Law. The only resource she had was a little oil. Elisha asked the woman to borrow as many empty vessels as she could. God resolved her dire situation by supplying unlimited oil until all the jars were filled. What can we learn from this miracle? Elisha encouraged the widow to trust the Lord of abundant grace. Her late husband was in a

company of prophets. He could be an apprentice of Elisha. Now this lady begged Elisha for help. She told the prophet in **verse 1**: ... “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the Lord.” ... You can interpret that statement in two contrasting ways. She might be dumping her bitterness to Elisha, wondering why God took away such a godly man. Our faith can easily be shaken when calamities come. We cry out to God: “How can you treat me like that when I offer money regularly to the church and when I serve you so diligently?” Since I am an optimistic person, I prefer to understand her remarks in a positive manner. She could mean: “My husband was faithful to God. I know that God will be faithful to provide for our needs too.” That reaction reminds me of the death of Lazarus recorded in **John 11**. Jesus was very close to this family. Martha and Mary sent a messenger to inform the Lord when their younger brother had a severe illness. Their only message in **verse 3** was: “Lord, the one you love is sick.” They did not even have to mention his name, the disease and what they requested Jesus to do. We often do not know how to utter a prayer when we are in a deep distress. A sincere prayer to an all-knowing God does not need to be wordy. Simply say: “Lord, you know I believe in You. Please get me through this challenge.” In this instance, God showed compassion to the widow. He multiplied the meager oil the woman had until she filled all the containers. We may think: “Duh, why didn’t she borrow the biggest water basins from her neighbors? She could have earned her sons’ college tuition and her retirement fund!” Someone said it wisely: God meets our needs, not our greed. He will provide for what we lack in His time and fashion. God had no plan to turn this widow into a wealthy person. His intents were to pay off her debt and provide her a steady income. A pastor once said that life is a matter of perspective. We will fall into the ditch of self-pity and dissatisfaction when we fix our eyes on what we do not have. It can be a bigger paycheck, a huge mansion your relative owns or the look of a movie star. We can only be thankful if we truly believe that all that we enjoy is from God. Whether it is a lot or a little, God can use it to bless others if we commit ourselves to Him. The ice-storm in February caused some tree branches to fall into my backyard. I was thankful to God that it did not damage my neighbor’s properties or mine. There was one particular limb dangling from a tree. I thought the branch was dead because it was barely attached to the trunk. I was so surprised to see it sprout later. The limited connection to the tree kept the branch alive and fruitful. The lesson for us is not to restrict how God can use us. When we are connected to God, we can conduct His blessings like a healthy tree branch or a pipeline transporting oil. God can use the money, time or other resources He gives us for His purposes. We wrapped up the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering collection in early April. Every December there is also the Lottie Moon Offering collection. The Southern Baptist Convention channels those money to mission work. It does not matter whether you give ten or a hundred dollars. It is your heart for God’s work that counts. Last winter we also participated in the Christmas Shoebox campaign. We collected gifts in shoeboxes, then we send the gifts to overseas. The children are excited to receive the packages. It may contain some unused school supply or brand-new T-shirts you store in the closets for years. There is also a gospel track in the box. God can surely lead a child or even a family to Christ in the process. God multiplies what you give to bless someone in other parts of the world. There are always needy people everywhere. We have to keep our eyes open for opportunities to share God’s blessings. We ask people the same question Elisha asked the widow: “How can I help you?”

## 2. Restoring Dead Soul 甦醒已死的靈魂

God restocked oil for a widow. In our second story, God restored the dead soul of a child. Let us read from [verse 8 to 10](#). The financial status of this lady was much better than the widow. Her husband had a farm and some servants. They also had donkeys as a means of transportation. But this couple did not hoard wealth for themselves. When the woman saw Elisha pass by their home, she invited him in for a meal. But she went beyond the social custom of showing hospitality to a stranger. She knew that Elisha was a servant of God. Perhaps he dressed differently, or she learned his background from their conversation. She asked her husband to build a suite for Elisha. From then on, Elisha could get some rest in the couple's home whenever he stopped by. Needless to say, it takes some effort to host a guest. At one time I had the privilege to travel to a small town on a few weekends to help a Chinese Bible study group. I was assigned to stay at a different home every time. I enjoyed the good food and fellowship with those brothers and sisters. Even a dog at one member's home treated me friendly! You do not feel that relaxed when there is a visitor. You cannot wear pajama all day nor leave your hair messy. You endure some inconvenience to make your guest feel welcome. There are many ways to serve others. You can host a missionary visiting our church who needs a room to stay overnight, invite a few gospel friends for a meal or give someone a ride to the airport. Elisha wanted to return a favor to the couple. Please continue to read [verse 14 to 17](#). Similar to the traditional Chinese custom, a Jew who did not have a son meant there would be no one to inherit the family's estate. A barren wife was seen as not getting God's blessing of motherhood too. Gehazi described the husband as senior in his age. The possibility of getting a son was fading away. The woman might not be thinking about pregnancy anymore. Her reaction to Elisha's great news could be a disbelief than surprise. It did not take long for her to confirm God's special gift. This couple was wealthy. But money cannot buy everything. A good friend of my sister-in-law is a successful businessman. He has a good life by the secular world's standard. However, he is single and middle-aged. Once he lamented: "I have nothing except money." You can sense his feeling of loneliness. My sister-in-law then jokingly replied: "I have everything except money!" Actually, she and her husband both had successful careers, and they took early retirement. God created us to be relational beings. Life will be more fulfilling when we have a family and some good friends. Most importantly, God desires to rebuild an eternal relationship with us broken by sin. If you are a child of God, you are blessed beyond measure. You enjoy God's peace and joy in this life and you have a future hope for eternity. Find ways to share this good news with people who do not know Jesus. By now this woman must be very content with a son. But her story comes to a tragic twist. Please continue to read [verse 18 to 23](#). It was possible that the kid suffered from a heat-stroke. Bad turned to worse when he passed away in his mom's embrace. How devastating it would be to see a loved one die in front of you! You feel helpless and there is even no time to call 911. Meanwhile, the dad did not even ask his son's whereabouts. He could be one of those hard-working guys who devoted all his energy to his job, and entrusted the home and family to his wife. For some reason, the woman chose not to tell her husband what had happened. She replied that everything was well even when the man asked why she had to see a prophet. His mentioning of new moon and sabbath meant that it was unusual to visit a prophet when it was not a time for a religious ceremony. The lady waited till she met Elisha before pouring out her grieve. Look at [verses 27 and 28](#). Gehazi thought that it was inappropriate for a married lady to cling onto a man, and for her to disturb Elisha's schedule. But Elisha knew from her body language that she was in great sorrow. We need to be sensitive to people's feelings if we want to be an effective counselor. Those with a heavy heart may be looking for empathy and not advice. Pay more attention to listen, and do not be too anxious to speak. The woman did not

understand why God took away the son He gave her. The sudden loss added doubts to her pain. We can easily be annoyed by unexpected issues. We are excited to buy a new home. Then happiness turns into headache when you notice some animal neighbors living in the attic. Problems in life help us realize that we do not live in this world forever. We long for an eternal home where it will be completely trouble-free. Meanwhile, little hassles humble us and remind us that God has full right to take away what He gives us. God did not want this woman to lose hope yet. Continue to read **verse 31 to 35**. Elisha dispatched Gehazi to go see the dead child immediately. A practical concern was perhaps the father might move the corpse to the grave. Elisha asked Gehazi to put his staff over the child's body. That was likely a symbolism of the prophet's presence. A wooden rod has no supernatural power. Moses could divide the Red Sea and perform other miracles by lifting his staff because God infused His power into it. Today we can pray by kneeling, sitting or standing. We can pray at home, in the church or even when driving. What pleases God is our simple trust of His mighty power. Finally, Elisha arrived at the couple's home. He lay on the boy's body. Again, the posture itself did not make the prayer more effective. Elisha was not a Kung-Fu master transmitting his "qi" to the child. The story comes to a happy ending when the boy came back to life. Today, God gives us the privilege to pray for others. A common way the Bible teaches us to pray is to lay hand. I do so often when praying for a bed-rested patient. The personal touch conveys compassion.

## CONCLUSION 結論

God will continue to care for those who trust Him. The challenging situations of the two families reflected the spiritual bankruptcy of Israel. People had little interest in Jehovah like the meager amount of oil remaining in the widow's home. The Israelites were spiritually fruitless like the infertile wealthy woman. Do you feel like your dream is shattered like the situations of the two women? You have inadequate abilities or opportunities to accomplish anything big in life. Do not blame yourself, the society or even God. Your deficiency may be a turning point for God to manifest His power. Come to Him and admit your struggles. God can make us strong. There was a true story about a Romanian pastor. Due to his faith, he went through some dark periods before the iron curtain fell. He suffered so much in prison that he wanted to give up. Then one day God spoke to him in a personal way and added him strength. He was tortured again in the following week. His interrogator could feel the difference in the pastor. He asked: "Who visited you over the weekend? You look like a different person." Our perspective on life will change when God meets us. He is always available to those who turn to Him. He is ready to show us compassion as we rely on Him.

## INTRODUCTION 引言

什麼是憐憫？憐憫是對一個遭遇困苦的人的同情心。你的同情心應該促使你採取行動。有一個故事，說到一個小男孩打算在寵物店買一隻小狗。店主告訴小孩價錢。終於，那個男孩好不容易存了足夠的錢。但是老闆解釋說：「這隻狗天生有一條腿癱瘓。你為什麼不選別的小狗呢？」小孩堅持他的選擇。當那個小孩很高興地和他的新朋友離開商店時，店主明白為何那個男孩要買那隻狗。原來他的一條腿也有同樣的殘疾。他可以認同那隻小狗的難處。今天我們要看的經文是講到神對我們的憐憫。我們剛學習完關於猶大王約沙法的生平。他幫助以色列王亞哈與亞蘭打仗。神審判亞哈，他在戰事中喪命。但是神從敵人手中救了約沙法。今天，我們會將重點轉移到北國以色列。我們將跳到列王紀下的第4章。讓我簡單地介紹前三章中的一些主要事件。亞哈的兒子亞哈謝繼位。但是，他在一次意外中跌倒受重傷，他甚至隨後死了。由於亞哈謝沒有兒子，他的兄弟約蘭接替王位（第一章）。同時，神即將結束先知以利亞的服事。神呼召以利沙成為以色列的下一位主要先知。然後神用火車和火馬把以利亞接到天上（第二章）。他成為聖經中除了以諾之外唯一沒有經歷死亡的人。在這個時候，約沙法仍然是猶大王。他和亞哈家關係良好，因為他的兒子娶了亞哈的女兒。因此，當約蘭請求幫助對抗摩押時，約沙法願意差派他的軍隊協助。神幫助這兩國的聯軍獲得勝利（第三章）。這是第一章至第三章的內容重點。接下來幾章是關於先知以利沙的工作。儘管整個國家遠離神，但是神仍然透過先知傳達祂的信息。在我們今天要講的兩個故事中，神對兩個有需要的家庭表達憐憫。今天，我們生活在一個墮落的世代中。大多數的政府官員都不聽從神的話。但是神會繼續眷顧那些信靠祂的人。

## EXPLANATION 解釋

### 1. Restocking Dried Vessels 補滿乾涸的器皿

在第一個故事中，我們看到神補滿一個寡婦乾涸的器皿。讓我們讀第1至7節。這事件與列王紀上17章中神幫助另一個寡婦的記錄有些相似。在那個故事中，一位外邦人女子因為旱災而承受著經濟壓力。家裡除了最後一點油和麵粉，沒有其他食物。以利亞對那位寡婦說，神會繼續補充油和麵粉，直到下雨。事情正如先知所說的發生。相比之下，今天故事中的女士是一位先知的太太。她也面臨著經濟危機。她的債主打算帶走她的兩個兒子作為奴隸。當家裡沒有男人時，生計便成為一個實際問題。還債的一種可能方法是根據律法的允許將孩子賣為奴隸。她唯一的資源就是一點油。以利沙要求那位寡婦盡量去借空的瓶子。神會一直供應油直到所有的罐子都

裝滿了，藉此解決她的危機。我們可以從這個神蹟中學到什麼？以利沙鼓勵寡婦以信心仰望賜豐盛恩典的主。她已故的丈夫在一家先知的學校中。他可能是以利沙的徒弟。現在這位女士向以利沙尋求幫助。她在第1節對先知說：...「你僕人我丈夫死了，他敬畏耶和華是你所知道的...。」我們可以用兩種不同的方式來理解這句話。她可能在向以利沙吐苦水，不明白為何神會帶走這麼一個敬虔的人。當災難來臨時，我們的信心很容易被動搖。我們向神埋怨：「祢怎麼能這樣對待我？我常常奉獻給教會，也熱心參與事奉。」我是個樂觀的人，所以我會以正面的方式理解她的話。她的意思可能是：「我的丈夫對神忠心。我相信神也會信實地供應我們的需要。」這樣的反應使我想起約翰福音十一章中記載拉撒路之死。耶穌和這個家庭很親近。當她們的弟弟患重病時，馬大和馬利亞派一個人通知耶穌。她們在第3節中唯一傳達的信息是：...「主啊，你所愛的人病了。」她們甚至不用提出名字、疾病和她們要求耶穌做什麼。當我們處於苦難中時，可能甚至不知道該如何禱告。向全知的神真誠的禱告不需要長篇大論。有時候只需說：「主啊，祢知道我信靠祢。求祢帶領我渡過這個難關。」在今天的故事中，神憐憫那位寡婦。神倍增了她僅有的油，直到她裝滿了所有的容器。我們可能會想：「早知道的話，她應該向鄰居借用最大的水缸。這樣就連兒子們的大學學費和自己的退休金都可以賺到了！」有人明智地說：神滿足我們的需要，而不是我們的欲望。神會按祂的時間和方式供應我們所缺乏的東西。神沒有計劃把這個寡婦變成一個富婆。神的目的是還清她的債務並提供穩定的收入。一位牧師曾經說過，生命是在乎於我們的焦點。如果我們只想著自己沒有的東西時，我們就會陷在自憐與不滿的深淵裡。我們想要的東西可能是更高的薪水、親戚的豪宅、或是電影明星的外表。唯有當我們完全相信一切的祝福都來自於神，我們才會向神感恩。無論我們擁有的是多是少，如果我們將自己委身給神，祂就可以用來祝福別人。在二月份的暴風雪中，有不少的樹枝掉在我的後院。感謝神，一點都沒有損壞我或鄰居的財物。我看到有一根樹枝懸在樹上。我以為樹枝已經死了，因為它只有一點點還連接在樹幹上。我後來看到樹枝上長出新芽，我感到非常驚訝。樹枝和樹的有限連接維持樹枝的生命力。這個例子中的功課是我們不應該限制神如何使用我們。當我們與神連接時，我們就可以像健康的樹枝或輸送原油的管道一樣傳遞神的祝福。神可以使用祂給我們的金錢、時間或其他資源來達到祂的目的。我們在4月初完成了Annie Armstrong的復活節特別奉獻。每年十二月，我們還有Lottie Moon的奉獻。美南浸信會使用這些金錢作宣教工作。不論你奉獻十美元還是一百美元都沒有關係。重點是你對神的心。去年冬天，我們的教會還參加了聖誕節鞋盒運動。我們收集禮物，裝在鞋盒中，然後寄到海外。孩子們收到禮物後都很高興。其中可能包含一些你存放在壁櫥內多年全新的文具用品或是衣服。盒子裡還有福音單張。說不定神透過這樣的方法帶領一個小孩甚至他的家人相信主。神倍增你所擺上的東西祝福另一個國家的人。其實到處都是有需要的人。我們必須常常注意，並尋找機會分享神的祝福。我們可以向別人提出以利沙問寡婦的問題：「我可以為你做什麼呢？」

## 2. Restoring Dead Soul 甦醒已死的靈魂

神為寡婦補滿了油。在第二個故事中，神甦醒一個已死的靈魂。讓我們讀**第8到第10節**。這位女士的經濟狀況比之前的寡婦好得多。她的丈夫有田地和一些僕人。他們也有驢作為交通工具。但是，這對夫婦並沒有只為自己積蓄財富。當那個婦人看到以利沙路過她們的家時，她邀請他進去吃飯。但是她超過了向陌生人表示好客的社會習俗。她知道以利沙是神的僕人。也許他穿著不同，或者她從他們的談話中了解他的背景。她要求丈夫為以利沙建一個房間。從那時起，以利沙每次經過他們的家便可以進去休息一下。毫無疑問，接待客人需要花一些精力。有一次，我有幸在幾個週末到一個小鎮，幫助一個中文查經班。我每次都被分配住在不同的家庭中。我很享受他們的美食和與他們交流。甚至其中一家的狗也對我很友善！當家裡有訪客時，你不會感到那麼自在。你不能整天穿著睡衣，也要把頭髮梳好。你樂意忍受一些不便，為了使你的客人感到賓至如歸。其實我們可以有很多服事他人的方式。例如款待路過的宣教士在家裡過夜，邀請一些福音朋友到家中吃飯或送別人去機場。以利沙想要報答這對夫婦。請繼續閱讀**第14至17節**。與中國傳統習俗類似，沒有兒子的猶太人意味著將沒有人繼承家族的財產。一個無法生育的妻子也被認為是得不到神的祝福。基哈西描述那位丈夫為比較年長。生兒子的可能性已經不大了。這個婦人可能不再考慮懷孕了。她覺得以利沙的好消息令人難以置信。不用等多久她便驗證神給她的特別禮物。這對夫婦很富有，但是金錢不能買到一切。我太太的一個姐姐的好朋友是一個成功的商人。按照世俗的標準，他活得很好。但是，他既單身又中年。他有一次感嘆地說：「除了錢，我什麼都沒有。」你可以感覺到他的孤單。然後我太太的姐姐開玩笑地回答：「除了錢，我什麼都不缺！」實際上，她和她的丈夫都有成功的事業，並且都提早退休了。神創造我們成為需要與人建立關係的個體。當我們有家庭和一些好朋友時，生活會更加充實。最重要的是，神渴望與我們重建因罪而破裂的永恆關係。如果你是神的兒女，你已經得到最大的祝福。你在今生享受神的平安與喜樂，並有永恆的盼望。鼓勵你尋找機會與不認識耶穌的人分享這個好消息。到目前為止，這位女士一定很滿足。但是她的故事轉眼間變成了悲劇。請繼續閱讀**第18至23節**。孩子可能是中暑了。當他在母親的懷抱去世時，這是難以形容的悲痛。看到一個親人在你面前過世是多麼的無助，你甚至來不及打911。但是在這個時候，那位爸爸卻沒有問兒子在那裡。他可能是那種努力工作並將家庭交給妻子管理的男人。由於某種原因，她沒有告訴丈夫發生了什麼事。她回答說一切都很好。丈夫提到月朔和安息日，意思是在沒有宗教聚會時拜訪先知是不尋常的。直等到她遇到以利沙，那位女士才傾吐她的憂傷。請看**第27和28節**。基哈西認為一個有夫之婦抓住另一個男人並打擾以利沙是不合宜的。但是以利沙從她的肢體語言知道她很難過。如果我們想要成為一個有效的輔導員，我們需要敏銳別人的感受。心情沉重的人最需要的可能是同理心，而不是建議。注意多聽，不要太著急說話。這個女士不明白神為何帶走祂所賜的兒子。突然的損失使她的痛苦上增加了疑惑。突發的問題很容易使我們煩惱。我們很高興買了新房子。當你發現一些動

物住在閣樓上時，你的快樂便變成了頭痛。生活中的問題使我們意識到，我們不會永遠住在這個世界上。我們渴望一個永恆的家，是完全沒有痛苦的。但同時，一點點小麻煩使我們謙卑下來，提醒我們神有充分的權利收回祂賜給我們的一切。神不希望這個婦人失去希望。繼續閱讀第31至35節。以利沙派基哈西立刻去看那死去的孩子。一個實際的考慮是，父親可能會將遺體搬到墳墓裡。以利沙要求基哈西將他的拐杖放在孩子的身上。這那可能是象徵先知的同在。一根棒子沒有超自然的力量。摩西舉起拐杖分開紅海，並行其他神蹟，是因為神灌注祂的能力。今天，我們可以跪著、坐著或站著禱告。我們可以在家裡、在教會甚至開車時禱告。神喜悅我們信靠祂的能力。最終，以利沙到達了這對夫婦的家。他躺在男孩的身上。同樣，這個姿勢本身並不能使禱告更見效。以利沙不是武林高手，把他的「氣」傳給孩子。這個故事有一個美好的結局，男孩甦醒了。今天，神賜給我們權柄，可以為別人禱告。聖經教導我們禱告的一種常見方式是按手。當我為臥床的病人禱告時，我經常這樣做。這樣的接觸表達對病人的憐憫。

## CONCLUSION 結論

神會繼續眷顧那些信靠祂的人。這兩個家庭艱難的處境反映出以色列國靈裡的破產。人們對耶和華沒有興趣，就像寡婦家中所剩的油很少。以色列人也像那位不孕的婦人一樣缺乏生產的能力。你是否覺得自己的夢想像兩個女人的情況一樣破碎了？你缺乏才幹或機會來完成你的計劃。不要責怪自己、社會甚至神。你的不足可能是神彰顯祂能力的轉捩點。來到神面前，承認你的掙扎。神可以使我們剛強。有一個關於一位羅馬尼亞牧師的真實故事。由於他的信仰，他在鐵幕的時期吃了不少苦頭。他在監獄中被折磨，甚至他想要放棄。然後有一天，神以很獨特的方式向他說話，並加增他的力量。在接下來的一周他再次遭受酷刑。審問他的人感覺到牧師明顯地變得不一樣。他問：「誰在周末來見過你？你看起來像一個不同的人。」當神遇見我們時，我們對生命的看法將會改變。神一直等待我們轉向祂。當我們依靠祂時，祂樂意施予祂的憐憫。