

## THE SHUNAMMITE

2 Kings 4:8-37

--- 8 And it came to pass one day that Elisha was passing by **Shunem, where there was a woman of distinction, and she persuaded him to eat. And so it was that whenever he passed by, he went in there to eat.**

--- The Shunammite woman's kindness to Elisha. Things are bad enough in Israel, but not so bad that God's prophet finds friends wherever he goes.

--- *There lived a great woman (a woman of distinction, wealth), who had a good house, and was very hospitable, for her husband had a good estate, and his heart trusted in her, and in her discreet administration, Prov. 31:11. A man as famous as Elisha could not pass and pass again without being seen.*

This pious woman, having once perceived that he was there, pressed him with great importunity, and insisted that he dine with her. She **knew he would be a blessing to her family.**

--- Very happy to associate with this man of God. It was a completely healthy and fruitful relationship for both of them.

**A woman invites a man to dine with her? Add a room to your home for this man knowing that many times her husband would be away at work. A lot of love, a lot of trust.**

--- 9 And she said to her husband, Behold, now I understand that this man who is always passing by our house is a holy man of God. **She had money but consulted her husband. It indicates a very good marital relationship.**

<sup>10</sup>Please make a small upper room with walls, and put a bed, a table, a chair, and a candlestick for him, and when he comes to us, he will be able to retire there. <sup>11</sup> And it came to pass one day that he came that way, withdrew into the upper room, and lay down there.

--- So Elisha, whenever he went down that road in his circuit, he would constantly stay there. So pleased was she with her guest, and so eager for his company, that she would not only welcome him to her table but provide him with a guest room in her house.

--- However, she wouldn't do it without consulting her husband, she wouldn't use her money or invite strangers into her home without his consent, but he agreed, he had full confidence in his wife.

--- Requested and obtained, v. 9, 10. She suggests, "That the stranger that she was going to invite was a *holy man of God, that he would* therefore do good to

his family, and that God would reward the kindness that had been done to him; perhaps he had heard how well the widow of Zarephath was paid for entertaining Elijah.

--- That the kindness she intended for him would not be a great burden to them; she would build him only a small room. **And this prophet would be a blessing to them.**

--- The furniture, a bed, a table, and a candlestick, all that was necessary for his comfort, not only for his repose, but for his study, his reading, and his writing. Elisha seemed very pleased with these accommodations, for he stopped and rested there.

--- Elisha's gratitude for this kindness. Well satisfied with the tranquillity of his chamber and the kindness he was receiving; he began to consider the reward he ought to bestow upon her. **Those who receive courtesies should study to repay them; it is not expedient for men of God to be ungrateful, or to take advantage of those who are generous.**

\_\_\_13 And he said to Gehazi, "Say to her now, 'Behold, you have taken care of us with all this care; What can I do for you? Do you want me to speak for you to the king or the commander of the army?'" And she answered, "I live in the midst of my people." 14Then he said, "What then can be done for her?" And Gehazi answered, "Truly she has no son, and her husband is old."

15 And he said, "Call her." When he called out to her, she stopped at the entrance. 16**Then he said to her, "About this time, next year, you will embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord, man of God, do not deceive your maidservant."**

--- He offered to use his interest in her at the king's court (v. 13): *With all this care you have taken care of us.* Grateful people conceive grateful things. *"Do you want to be spoken to the king, or to the captain of the army, for a service for your husband, civil or military? Do you have a complaint to make, a petition to file, a lawsuit that depends, that needs the support of the higher powers? How can I be of service to you?"*

--- But she does not need good offices of this kind: *I dwell* (she says) *among my own people*, that is, "we are well as we are, and we do not aspire to preference." It is a happiness *to dwell among our own people, who* love and respect us, and

to whom we are able to do good; and a greater happiness is to be content to do it, to be at ease, and to know when we are well.

--- He used his interest in her in the court of heaven, which was much better. Elisha consulted with his servant what kindness he ought to do for her, to such liberty did this great prophet admit even his servant. Gehazi reminded her that she had no children, that she had a large estate, but that she had no son to leave it to, and that she no longer had any hope of having one, since her husband was old. If Elisha could obtain this favor from God for her, it would be the removal of what at that time was her only grievance. He sent for her immediately. She very humbly and respectfully *stood at the door* (v. 10). 15), in accordance with her customary modesty, and then he assured her that within a year she would give birth to a son, v. 16.

--- 16Then he said to her, "About this time, next year, you will embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord, man of God, do not deceive your maidservant." 17But the woman conceived and bore a son the next year at the time Elisha had told her.

--- "*No, my lord, you are a man of God, and therefore I expect you to be serious, and not to joke with me, nor lie to your servant.*" The event, within the limited time, confirmed the truth of the promise: *She gave birth to a son* in the season of which Elisha spoke, v. God built her house, in reward for her kindness by building a chamber for the prophet. We can well imagine the joy this brought to the family. *Sing, O barren one, you who have not given birth.*

--- The sudden death of the child. He had passed so far through the dangers of childhood that he was able to go into the country to see his father, who was no doubt pleased with his captivating talk, and his joy for his son was greater than the joy of his harvest; but the cold or heat of the open country overcame the boy, who was brought up tenderly, and complained to his father that his head ached.

--- "*My head, my head; my heart, my heart.*" The father sent him into his mother's arms, into his mother's lap, without suspecting any danger in his indisposition, but hoping that he would fall asleep in his mother's arms and wake up well; but the disease proved fatal; he slept the sleep of death (v. 20), he was well in the morning and dead at noon: all the care and tenderness of his mother could not keep him alive. A child of promise, a child of prayer, and given in love, but taken away.

--- The bereaved mother's solicitude to the prophet on this sad occasion, for it

happened very opportunely that he was now in the cottage on Mount Carmel, not far off.

-- 18 And when the boy grew up, the day came when he went out into the field where his father was with the reapers, 19 and said to his father, "Oh, my head, my head! And the father said to a servant, "Take him to his mother." 20 And he took him and took him to his mother, and sat on her knees until noon, when he died. 21 Then she went up and put him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door behind him, and went out. 22 Then she called her husband and said to him, "Please send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, so that I can run to the man of God and come back." 23 And he said, "Why are you going to him today?" It is not a new moon or a Sabbath. And she said, "It is well." 24 Then she saddled the donkey and said to her servant, "Drive and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you."

--- She asked her husband's permission to go to the prophet, but she did not inform him of her mission, v. 22. He objected, "*It is neither a new moon nor the Sabbath*" (v. 23), implying that on those feasts of the Lord she used to go to the assembly where he presided, with other good people, to hear the word, and join him in prayers and praises.

--- The husband said, "Why do you want to go today?" "No harm," she said, "*all will be well.*" See how this husband and wife competed with each other in showing respect for each other; She was so obedient to him that she did not want to go until she had informed him of her journey, and he was so kind to her that he did not object to it, though she did not think it proper to explain to him the purpose of his business.

---- 21 Then she went up and put him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door behind him, and went out. 22 Then she called her husband and said to him, "Please send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, so that I can run to the man of God and come back."

23 And he said, "Why are you going to him today?" It is not a new moon or a Sabbath. And she said, "It is well." 24 Then she saddled the donkey and said to her servant, Drive and walk, and don't stop me on the way, except when I tell you to. 25 So she departed and came to the man of God on Mount Carmel. And when the man of God saw her from afar, he said to his servant Gehazi, "Behold the Shunammite." 26 Please run to meet her and say to her, 'Is it good for you?' Is it going well for your husband and your son? And she said, "Good. 27 When she came to the man of God on the mountain, she took hold of his feet. And Gehazi came to push her away; but the man of God said unto him, leave her, for her soul is in bitterness, and the Lord hath concealed the motive from me, and hath not revealed it unto me. 28 And she said, "Did I ask my lord for a son?" Didn't I say do not deceive me?

28And she said, Did I ask my lord for a son? Didn't I say not to make fun of me?

Guide and walk; and do not make me stop on the way, except when I tell you.

25So she departed, and she came to the man of God, to Mount Carmel. And when the man of God saw her afar off, he said to her servant Gehazi, Behold the Shunammite.

26I beseech you, run now to meet her, and say to her, Is it well with you? Is your husband and son doing well? And she said: Good.

27When she came to the man of God on the mountain, she took hold of his feet. And Gehazi approached to take her away from her; But the man of God said to him, Let her go, for his soul is in bitterness, and the LORD has hidden the reason from me, and he has not revealed it to me.

28And she said, Did I ask my lord for a son? Didn't I say not to make fun of me? --- 29 Then he said to Gehazi, "Gird up your loins and take my staff in your hand and go. If you meet anyone, do not greet him, and if anyone greets you, do not answer him, but put my staff on the child's face."

30 And the mother of the child said, As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not depart from you. Then he got up and followed her.

31 And Gehazi went ahead of them and put the staff on the child's face, but there was no voice or reaction. So she went back to find him, and said to him, "The child has not awakened."

---She hastened as fast as she could to the prophet (v. 24), and he, seeing her from afar, sent his servant to ask if anything was wrong, v. 25, 26. The questions were particular: *Is it well with you? Is your husband doing well? Is the child well?* Notice that it is proper for men of God, with tenderness and concern, to inquire about the welfare of their friends and families. The answer was general: "It is well". Gehazi was not the man to whom she came to complain, and therefore discouraged her with this (Psalm 39:1, 2), but what she said was very patient: "It is all right with me, with my husband, with the child," and yet the child died in the house. Notice that when God calls our dearest relatives through death, it behooves us to say in a low voice, "It is all right for us as well as for them;" it is all right, because it is all right for God to do it; all is well with those who are gone, if they have gone to heaven, and all is

well with us who are left behind, if by affliction we are driven on our way thither.

--- When she came to the prophet, she humbly reasoned with him about her present affliction. She threw herself at his feet, as one who is troubled and afflicted, which she never showed until she came to him who, as she believed, could help her. God revealed things to His prophets as He saw fit, not always as they desired; God did not show it to the prophet, because He could know it from the good woman herself. What he said was very pathetic.

.. She appealed to the prophet, concerning his indifference to this mercy that was now taken from her: "*Did I desire a son of my lord?*" No, you know I didn't; it was your own proposal, not mine;

--- Regarding your total dependence on the word of the prophet: *Did I not say, "Do not deceive me?"* Yes, she said so (v. 16), and this reflection on her can be considered as fighting with the prophet for having deceived her. She was ready to think that she was mocked with mercy when he was taken from her so soon, and that it would have been better never to have had this child than to have been deprived of him when she began to have comfort in him.

--- Gehazi and Elisha's staff. He failed to resurrect it. This shows that death is sleep.

--- The woman resolved not to return without the prophet himself (v. 30): "*I will not leave you.*" --- The prophet, through fervent prayer, obtained from God the restoration of this dead child to life. He found the child dead in his own bed (v. 32), *and closed the door on the two of them*, v. 33.

--- 32 When Elisha entered the house, behold, the child was lying dead on his bed. 33 And he went in, and shut the door behind them and prayed to the LORD. 34 Then he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, and his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands, and stretched himself out on him, and the child's flesh became warm.

35 Then Elisha went back and walked up and down the house, and went up and lay on him, and the boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

36 Elisha called Gehazi and said to him, "Call the Shunammite." And he called her. And when she came to Elisha, he said, "Take your son."

37 Then she went in, fell at his feet, and fell to the ground, and took her son and went out.

--- He prayed *to the Lord* (v. 33), probably as Elijah had done: That *the soul of this child may come back into him*. Christ raised the dead to life as one who has authority: *Maiden, arise, young man, I say to you, Arise, Lazarus, come* (for he was mighty and faithful as the Son, the Lord of life), but Elijah and Elisha did it at the request, as servants.

--- He *lay down on the child* (v. 34), as if he wanted to communicate to him something of his vital warmth or spirit. Thus, he expressed the sincerity of his desire, and gave a sign of that divine power upon which he depended for the accomplishment of this great work. First he brought his mouth close to the child's mouth, *as if, in the name of God, he was going to give him the breath of life*; then his eyes to the child's eyes, to open them again to the light of life; then *his hands to the child's hands*, to put strength into them. Then he *returned, and entered the house*, as one full of care and concern, and completely focused on what he was doing. Then he went up the stairs again, and the second time, *he lay down on the child*, v. 35.

--- How quickly the operation was performed. In the first application, *the child's flesh was warmed* (v. 34), which encouraged the prophet to continue in instant prayer. After a while, the *boy sneezed seven times*, which was an indication, not only of life, but of liveliness of the child.

--- How joyfully the child was returned alive to his mother (v. 36, 37), and all parties involved *were not a little comforted*, Acts 20:12. See the power of God that brings you back to life. See the power of prayer; See the power of faith.

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Wayne Partain, February 2024