

**2nd Kings 4: 18-37; “Is it Well with the Child?”, Message # 6 in the series –
“Elisha and the Prophets”, A Bible Study conducted by Pastor Paul
Rendall on June 27th, 2018, for those gathered at his home.**

In our last time together, we looked at how Elisha was so wonderfully thought of, and provided for, by the notable woman of Shunem. Because she loved the Lord, she loved His holy minister as well. She saw him passing by, on his way to minister to the prophets and people of that area, and she wanted to help him. So she constrained him to stop and have a bite to eat with her and her husband. This turned into a regular time of fellowship between them. As often as he passed by, he would then turn in there to eat with them. Then we read, that she spoke to her husband about taking a further step to help Elisha out. She asked her husband if they could make a small upper room on the wall of their property, and put table and a chair and a lampstand in it, so that he would have a place to stay while he was in that area ministering. What wonderful acts of hospitality were shown to Elisha in this good way. So one day, when he and his servant Gehazi had turned in there, Elisha got thinking about how this lady had helped them out so much, and so he had Gehazi decided to go and talk to her and say to her – You have done so much for us; what can we do for you?

Well, she didn't need to have Elisha speak on her behalf to the king or the commander of the army for some help or protection; she was dwelling among her own people. So, what was to be done for her, Elisha said to Gehazi. Gehazi was a very perceptive man when it came to sizing up what people had, and what they might need, and so he said to Elisha – “Actually she has no son, and her husband is old.” Elisha, realizing that God would surely do this great thing for her, said to Gehazi, “Call her.” She came and stood in the doorway, and he said to her – “About this time next year you shall embrace a son.” And she could not believe it; perhaps because her husband was old, and perhaps because it just seemed so unbelievable. But the next words we read in verse 17 were – “And the woman conceived and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha told her.”

Now, in this study, we find that the son which God had given to this dear woman, died. And it was her reaction to his death, and more particularly how she exercised faith in God, during the whole time of this particular situation, that we want to look more closely at. There are 4 things that we as believers must do if we would glorify God in the times when we lose a loved one. 1st of all – By faith we must prepare for the possibility of sudden loss. (verses 18-21) 2nd – By faith we must calmly and decidedly say, “All is well” in such times. (verses 22-28) 3rd – By faith a minister must pray and use the right means in his ministering to those who are dead and distressed. (verses 29-35) And 4th – By faith we must glory in Christ's great power to raise the dead. (verses 36-38) Let us together meditate upon the glory of the great things which God can do in the midst of difficult and seemingly impossible situations.

1st of all – By faith we must prepare for the possibility of sudden loss. (verses 18-21)

Now, it seems apparent from verse 18 that this little one who had been born to this notable woman of Shunem, had grown up to the age of 6-8 years old or so. It appears that he was just old enough that his mother felt confident that she could send him out into the field so that he could watch his father and the servants work at reaping the harvest. By the way, it is a good thing for young boys to be able to go out and witness their father and others working, and watch and learn from them the importance of diligence in work and learning skills in relation to work. It is not a good thing if young boys and young men are tied to their mother's apron strings, so much so, that they never learn manly pursuits. Every mother and father ought to be aware of this and take steps to see to it that their young men are not always at home with their mom, but sometimes able to get out and be with Dad, doing work-related projects and learning how it is good to work hard.

But we find that a very difficult providential ordering of God took place that day, and it came out of the blue; it came suddenly, and it came unexpectedly. When this young man had been out there in the field for a while, he suddenly experienced a great pain in his head. Now, whether this was a

sunstroke, or some other kind of stroke, it overtook him very quickly, and he said to his father, “My head, my head!” And his father said to a servant – “Carry him to his mother.” And when he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then he died. I think that all Christians need to learn from this that they are not exempt from these kinds of things happening in their lives. They may indeed suddenly and unexpectedly experience the loss of a beloved child or other relative; at a moment’s notice. It happened to Martha and Mary with their brother Lazarus in John chapter 11. I want to show you the parallel between these passages, and so turn with me over to John 11, verses 1-4.

“Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.” “Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, ‘Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.’” “When Jesus heard that, He said, ‘This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.’” Well, when we read this, we might be tempted to say – But Lord, this sickness was indeed unto death, for Lazarus did die. And Jesus did not go to him right away, in order that he would indeed die. This was disconcerting to Christ’s disciples as well as to Martha and Mary. Look at verses 11-14. “These things He said, and after that He said to them, ‘our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.’” “Then His disciples said, ‘Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.’” “However Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.” “Then Jesus said to them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead.’” “And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe.” “Nevertheless let us go to him.”

Jesus’ statement that this sickness is not unto death is significant, for it allows us to see how He, our Lord, thinks of death in terms of believers. It is a sleep. Physical death for believers is a sleep from which they will awake on the day of the resurrection from the dead. But Jesus is not limited in power, or in the wisdom related to God’s purposes. He knew that it was according to the Father’s will that He raise Lazarus from the dead, at that time when he and the other disciples would come to the tomb. The reason that Jesus let Lazarus die, it says here, was in order they might believe when they saw him raised from the dead by Jesus, and that they might have their faith built and strengthened when He did raise Lazarus. Now, in the text that we are studying tonight, it was a similar thing. This sickness, this stroke, or whatever it was that happened to this young man, was not really unto his death, but it came to test and strengthen the faith of this woman, and be a confirmation of her lively faith in God, and in His servant, Elisha’s word to her. She wasn’t going to fail the test.

It was her strong faith that enabled her to be calm, and to react the way that she did, when this, her son, died. We do not see crying and tears. She no doubt was distressed, as we shall talk about in a minute. But in verse 21 it says, “She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him, and went out.” Now why did she do this? Why was she acting this way? How could she be so calm? The answer to all of these questions is that she was doing these things because she believed that since she had been given this child as a promise and reward for her having done so much to help the prophet Elisha, she believed that she would receive him back again from the dead. This sickness was not unto death, but in order to glorify God. And she wanted more than anything else to glorify God.

I want you to turn over with me to Hebrews chapter 11, verses 32-35. “And what more shall I say?” “For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” “Women receive their dead raised to life again.” There it is brethren; the declaration of this woman’s faith, that because she believed in the God who had given her son as a promise to her, because of her faithfulness, she believed that she would not so easily lose the one who had been given. I wonder if we think this way ourselves? Surely it is true that many mothers lose children, never to get them back again in this life. But I wonder if you and I see that what God is interested in, in our

lives as Christian people, is our learning to trust in His wisdom in the ordering of all things. Obviously, the Lord had permitted this young man to die at this point in accordance with His will. But I am saying, and this woman's reaction to his death demands that God was looking to build and strengthen her faith in Him, in what He was able to do, in a much greater way yet. And this is what He does with us, as well; in all of the adverse providences that He brings into our lives.

2nd – By faith we must calmly and decidedly say, “All is well” in such times.

(verses 22-26)

In verse 22 it says – “Then she called to her husband, and said, ‘Please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and come back.’” And her husband says – “Why are you going to him today?” It's neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath.” It wasn't a day where they gathered for worship. “And she said, ‘It is well.’” In other words, she didn't tell her husband what had happened to the lad. Even though this seems like a wrong thing for her to have done, I believe that this too was an act of faith. She knew that her husband could do nothing about the lad's dead condition. But she knew that Elisha would know what God's will would be in this whole matter. And even more, she said, “All is well”, because she knew by faith, that God could raise her dead son. Her husband would be able to tell her why the gift that had been given had been taken away. But God would, through His prophet. Therefore, she did not stay to explain, or to commiserate her loss, even with her husband. She believed that there was not a moment to lose. Verse 24 says, “She saddled a donkey, and said to her servant, ‘Drive, and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you.’” “And so she departed, and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel.” You and I, when we come into situations of loss need to be able, by faith, to do the same; to say – “All is well”.

Remember Horatio Spafford, the man who wrote – “When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul.” That man wrote that song after he had lost 3 of his daughters in a terrible ship collision at sea. His wife survived the collision and wrote back to him – “Saved alone”. And so when some days later he was traveling across the water and they came to the very place where the ship had gone down, Horatio Spafford penned this famous hymn; It is well with My soul. This is the right attitude of the one who trusting in Christ. May we have this kind of grace to think well of God when we go through the loss of loved ones.

3rd – By faith a minister must pray and use the right means in his ministering to those who are dead and distressed. (verses 27-34)

Verse 27 – “Now when she came to the man of God at the hill, she caught him by the feet, but Gehazi came near to push her away.” “But the man of God said, ‘Let her alone; for her soul is in deep distress, and the Lord has hidden it from me, and has not told me.’” “So she said, ‘Did I ask a son of my Lord?’” “Did I not say, ‘Do not deceive me?’” “Then he said to Gehazi, ‘Get yourself ready, and take my staff in your hand, and be on your way.’” “If you meet anyone, do not greet him; and if anyone greets you, do not answer him; but lay my staff on the face of the child.” “And the mother of the child said, ‘As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.’” “So he arose and followed her.” “Now Gehazi went on ahead of them, and laid the staff on the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing.” Now, we need to see here that this means of raising the dead could have raised this boy from the dead, but it did not work for some reason. Charles Spurgeon says – “She did not believe in Gehazi, nor yet in the staff, and herein she was a wise woman.” “God would not bless the prophet's staff to the child's restoration, lest relic worship should spring up amongst the Israelites, or lest they should begin to attach some value to outward signs.” I personally think that it was because God wanted Elisha to be much more personally involved in the raising of this young man from the dead than he at first thought.

When Elisha finally comes to the little room that this woman had made for him, and saw the child lying on dead on his bed, he knew what he had to do. He went in, he shut the door behind the two of them, and he prayed to the Lord. And he did something else. He went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands, and he stretched

himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm. Why was this necessary? The Lord Jesus when he raised people from the dead, did so by a word of command. “Lazarus come forth.” “Little girl, I say to you arise.” But here, something much more personal was needed. What the Lord would have us to understand is that what is easy for Christ because He is the Son of God, is truly impossible for us apart from its being His will that it be done, and unless He makes the means that we use effectual. Elisha was given a double portion of the spirit of Elijah. And both of them raised a person from the dead. Both of them used this same means.

What is the meaning? It means that even the greatest of ministers has to, with his words and actions, attempt to do everything that he possibly can, to show sinners how necessary, how essential is the working of the Spirit of God to a person’s receiving life and eternal life. These actions of Elisha’s are a type of what all ministers and people go through, in trying to communicate God’s life to needy sinners, and needy relatives who do not know the Lord, especially. Sinners are dead in their trespasses and sins. They cannot bring themselves to Christ, or make themselves alive. They need to have the life of Christ conveyed to them by example, and explained to them in terms which will reach them in an intimate spiritual way. Only God can raise people from their spiritual death in sin. But God uses the means of ministers and other concerned Christians, coming close to them with the truth; to cause them to realize their need of God’s life in their life. They must get as close as they can to them, spiritually speaking, to show them how to see, how to walk, how to speak, how to be loving, how to really care for what is essential and important in terms of being saved and living the Christian life. In other words if you would be a Christian, Christ’s life must come into your life.

Christ’s life must come into the life of the sinner if they are to be saved, and the means that God uses to show and convince dead sinners of the truth of this, is Christians who will come close to them. Are you willing to do this with sinners who are dead in their trespasses and sins; to draw close to them to convey the life of Christ to them? The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 4: 19 – “My little children for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.” And he also says in 1st Thessalonians 2: 8 and 9 – “So affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.” “For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.” This is the kind of means that God honors and uses to bring others to Christ in accordance with His will for them in electing love.

And 4th – By faith we must glory in Christ’s great power to raise the dead.

(verses 35-38)

Verse 35 – “Elisha returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed several times, and the child opened his eyes.” Elisha, you see here, had to stretch himself out on this lad more than one time. The efforts of men in prayer and labors for the salvation of sinners have oft to be repeated, but if it is God’s will to save them, these efforts shall be answered with success. Spurgeon says again – “See the power of prayer; the very gates of death are made to open when Elisha, a man of like passions with ourselves, bows before the Lord in prayer.” “Learn a lesson also from Elisha’s attitude toward the dead child; for, often, God is pleased to give spiritual life through the power of human sympathy.” When we put ourselves into the condition of the sinner, hope for him, pray for him, agonize for him in broken-hearted sympathy on his account, putting ourselves as far as we can into his place, God often makes us the instruments by which his Spirit quickens the dead in sin.” In all of these actions of Elisha we see that he was a forerunner of what Christ would be like when He ministered to people and when He raised the dead. We must glory in the power of Christ when we look at what Elisha did here by the Spirit of God. Because without Christ, Elisha could have done nothing. It is just like this in our case as well. Let us labor for the Master realizing that Christ’s life is in us, and that by faith and prayer, we can convey something of His life, to the lives of people around us, who are dead in their trespasses and sins.

