

ELISHA

The Great Things That

sometimes have about why God does what He does. Let's study the story carefully and get some answers.

One of the great prophets and miracle-workers of the Bible was Elisha. His ministry after the translation of his master Elijah covered over fifty years, and was marked by mighty evidences of the power of faith in God. Let us let our faith grow as we study what Elisha did.

Lesson #5:
The Miracle of the Great Woman's Son

Scripture:
II Kings 4:8-37

Key Verse:
II Kings 4:33
"He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord."

Hath Done

One day, as the prophet Elisha came to the town of Shunem (near Jezreel in the North), he met "*a great woman*" who invited him to eat with her and her husband. By "*great*" woman, the Bible may mean that she was rich (as in II Kings 10:6), or that she was large (as the word "*great*" is used in II Kings 4:38), or that she was a notably superb human being (as in II Kings 5:1). The Hebrew word translated "*great*" here can mean any of these three things. Anyway, she was *great* to Elisha for her generosity because she gave him a good meal every time he came to town. Finally, "*she said unto her husband, Behold now I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither*" (vs. 9-10). After enjoying their hospitality many times, Elisha wanted to see this couple, and especially this great woman, rewarded. He talked with "*his servant*" Gehazi about it, and decided to pray for her to conceive a son (vs. 11-16). Note that this Gehazi had the same relationship to Elisha as Elisha once had to Elijah. Had Gehazi not been a carnal man, he might have become the next great prophet to Israel. In time, the woman both conceived and bore a son, her only child. Elisha's prophecy and her long barrenness convinced her that God had worked supernaturally in her behalf for her son to be born. Then, years later, the boy was suddenly stricken and died (vs. 17-20). The woman then found Elisha and asked a burning question about why God would do such a thing (vs. 21-28)—give her a child and then take him away. Finally, the prophet came to the boy and prayed. In one of the greatest miracles associated with Elisha, the great woman's son was raised from the dead (vs 29-37). This miracle reminds us of the raising of the widow's son through Elijah's prayers as it is recorded in I Kings 17. It also makes us think of the times Jesus raised people from the dead, such as the widow's son in Luke 7:11-15 and the twelve-year-old girl in Luke 8:49-55. This story brings to mind very powerfully the questions people

(II Kings 8:4)

I. What the Woman Did.

The Shunammite wife was "*vexed*" in her soul (vs. 27-38) over the death of her son. She couldn't make sense of it. She found it difficult to reconcile her belief in the goodness of God with what had happened to her. Good Christians do sometimes face trials of their faith (I Peter 1:3-7). Sometimes they struggle with hard questions and even with serious doubts (See Matthew 11:2-3). The important thing in situations like this is what the struggling believer *does*. The terrible feelings he experienced and the awful trial he underwent will not be as important as what he does about the matter. See what the great woman did.

A. She committed the matter to God (vs. 18-21)

See her taking her boy, now "*grown*" enough to work with his father in the fields but still small enough to sit in his mother's lap, up to the prophet's room and laying him on "*the bed of the man of God.*" She was going back to the beginning. It was Elisha's prayer that had given her the boy. Now she goes back to the God Who answered the prayer for answers about why He let the boy die. Go to God with your questions, your doubts, your struggles. Whether you go to God or from Him at a time of spiritual trial will determine what will ultimately happen to you. She had questions, painful questions, but she did not turn away from God. See what Peter said at a time of trial in his life—John 6:60-68. Look at how Job reacted to his trial of faith—Job 1:13-22.

B. She said, "*It is well*" (vs. 22-26). She didn't even tell her husband that their son had died. She simply asked permission to go to Elisha who was at that time at Mt. Carmel. When she arrived at Mt. Carmel, Gehazi met her with questions. To both his and her husband's questions she answered. "*It is well*" (vs. 23-26). You will notice as you read this section that her answer was really in one word; the other words are in italics in the King James Version, indicating that they were not in the original. That one word, translated

“well,” was the Hebrew word “shalom,” which has the basic meaning of “peace.” Although her soul was

Notes:

“vexed within her” (v. 27), her answer was always “peace.” You probably know or at least have heard the song, “It Is Well With My Soul.”

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.”

Was the Shunammite woman “in denial”? No. She was walking and talking *by faith*. Hebrews 11:33-35 speaks of her when it says that by faith she received her dead “*raised to life again*.” When you go through a trial of faith, continue to exercise what faith you have. She didn’t know what was going to happen and she didn’t really understand why what had already happened had to happen, but she said, “*It shall be well*” (vs. 23). She trusted God enough to say that things were going to be all right.

- C. She persisted (vs. 27-30). She said, “*As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee*” (v. 30). Do you remember what Elisha said on the day when Elijah was going to be taken up to Heaven? Three times when the older prophet urged him to let him go, Elisha said, “*As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee*” (II Kings 2:2, 4, 6). It was Elisha’s persistence that got him a double portion of Elijah’s spiritual power. It was going to be the Shunammite’s persistence that would get her either a miracle or some kind of comfort. She did not want to see Gehazi; she wanted to see Elisha (vs. 25-27). She didn’t want Elisha’s staff; she wanted Elisha himself to come (vs. 28-30). She was persistent. In II Corinthians 12, we read of the Apostle Paul’s trial of faith concerning the “*thorn in the flesh*” God had let Satan put into his life (Read vs. 7-9).

“*For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*”
(II Corinthians 12:8)

Three seasons of prayer to call on God for deliverance got him no miracle. Verse 9, however, says they got him comfort in the form of an adequate answer from the Lord. It wasn’t a complete answer perhaps to all of Paul’s “why” questions, but it was enough to quiet his soul and help him go on. The thorn must stay for God’s power to remain in his life. So now Paul rejoices in the very thing he wanted taken away. Believers going through a trial of faith must persist in prayer and Bible study if

they are ever to find the comfort they need. God will not fail you, but you must persevere.

II. What Elisha Did.

- A. He sent (vs. 25-29).
The prophet’s first response to the woman’s need was inadequate. He sent Gehazi with his staff, but no good was accomplished (See v. 31). Sometimes our first response to a problem is wrong. Sometimes sending somebody or doing something convenient to our schedule will not get the job done. Elisha needed to handle this problem personally, and with total dedication of his time and attention.
- B. He went (vs. 30-33).
Finally, he did go back with the great woman, and entered his chamber where the boy’s body lay. Notice that he “*shut the door*.” This is what the mother had done after she had placed the boy on the prophet’s bed (v. 21). It also, incidentally, is what the widow was told to do when she cooperated with God for the miracle of the oil (See II Kings 4:3-5). Certainly the shutting of the door is a symbol of closet prayer. Jesus said (in Matthew 6:6),

“*When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*”

In order to meet a big need, the man of God must give himself to earnest prayer, behind closed doors. He (and we) must pray until something happens, or until the Spirit within indicates that something will happen or at least that we need not continue.

- C. He returned (vs. 34-37).
Notice that the miracle happened gradually. This answer to prayer required the prophet’s full commitment: eyes, hands, and mouth, not just his staff. Many miracles do not happen because people are not willing to commit themselves fully. We want to pray and labor at our convenience. Elisha “*returned*” until the miracle was done. Again, persistence brought the answer. Don’t ever give up on God. He is there even when you cannot feel Him. Go to Him in the hour of trial. Don’t run away from Him. Keep going until your need is met.