

Wednesday Night **BIBLE STUDY**

Wednesday June 29, 2022 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN RECEIVES HER SON BACK *2 Kings 4:18-37 / Hebrews 11:35*

We have been in our study on the life of Elisha for a while now, but with our last few week away I at least think that we should have a bit of a review just catch us up a bit. Let me give you several highlight of where we have been in our study of the Elisha...

Highlights from Elisha: A Persevering Faith:

- 1. Our study began with an introduction to Elisha and his call to the ministry... remember he was know at the “miracle” prophet.**
- 2. We have focused some of our study on the passing of the “mantle” of prophetic ministry to the northern kingdom of Israel from Elijah, the very powerful prophet, to Elisha... remember that dramatic scene as God carried Elijah (who never tasted death) in that whirlwind to heaven and literally Elijah’s mantel fell to Elisha, he picked up the mantle and carried on Elijah’s ministry in Elisha’s way.**
- 3. We have followed Elisha now as he has begun to retrace Elijah’s steps of prophetic ministry to the rebellions and wayward people of God, Israel, who had rejected their God and begun to worship the pagan God, Baal.**
- 4. We have tracked with Elisha to Jericho where we’ve seen God protect Him through two female bears, we have seen him heal the water at Jericho... we have seen God defeat the King of Moab and provide water in the desert for the dying troops of Israel and her unlikely allies through Elisha, we’ve seen Elijah minister to the poor widowed whom (the widowed wife of a another prophet) and her son who were about to die in poverty... there he multiplied the widow’s oil. And Elisha was just getting started...**
- 5. As the “miracle” prophet Elisha performed more than 20 miracle... more than anyone in scripture with the exception of Moses.**

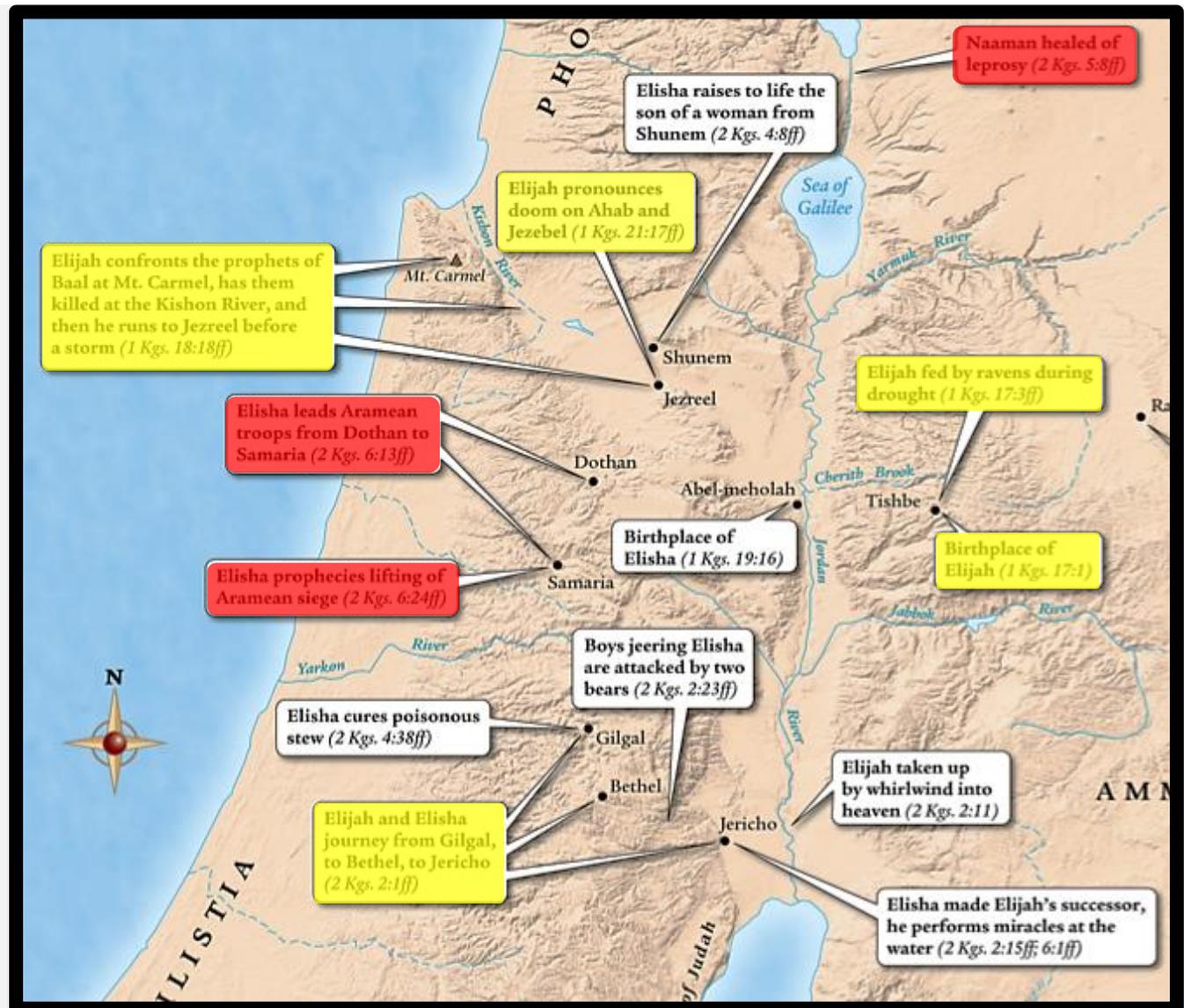
Here are some of the important background facts that may help to firmly establish in our minds who Elisha was and where he came from.

Here are some quick facts about Elisha (these are just some of the background reminders I have been giving you throughout our study so far...

5 Important Background Facts About Elisha to Remember:

1. The name Elisha means “**God is Salvation**” and gives us an idea of the **purpose** of His **ministry** (v.19) –
2. Elisha was the son of a farmer named **Shaphat**, and was himself a **farmer** when God called him (v.19) –
3. Elisha was from the town of **Abel-Meholah** in **Israel** which means “**Meadow of Dancing**” which may reflect something of Elisha’s **personality** (*which was one of compassion, mercy and joy*) (v.19) – That is where Elijah found Elisha plowing the fields. Verse 16 tell us the was from Abel-Meholah, “...**And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.**” Remember that where as Elijah had been more firey and stern as a prophet, Elisha was characterized as being somewhat kinder, more joyful, full of compassion and mercy, which we shall see in our study of his life.
4. Elisha’s call to ministry was from **God** not **man**, and was issued through the Prophet **Elijah** (v.19) – An important note here is that Elijah didn’t call Elisha, God did. Elijah, throughout his ministry was simple the messenger of God, and no less here was Elijah the messenger to Elisha of God’s call on his life. Look up at **verse 16** in 1 Kings 19, “**Also you (Elijah) shall appoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.**” God calls! If you are not called of God, but rather called by man your ministry will fail.
5. **When God called Elisha he surrendered his life fully to God’s call, no turning back** (v.20-21) – Listen to it again in our passage in **verses 20-21**, “²⁰**And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?”**²¹**So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen’s equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.”**

One more important fact about Elisha’s life that might be of interest to you and that set’s him apart from other prophets in the Old Testament... Elisha was incredibly blessed by God. He did more miracles in the Old Testament than anyone except Moses.



We began, last time, looking at the story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman. Last week we were in the verses 8-17. As with all the events and miracles in the life and ministry of Elisha, 2 Kings 4:8-37 in Elisha's Shunammite excursions illustrates and teaches a number of very practical truths:

4 Practical Truths from Elisha's Shunammite Narrative (2 Kings 4:8-37):

1. **God provides care for all His people** – This passage strongly illustrates the loving and providential care of God for all His saints: young and old, rich or poor, weak or powerful.
2. **God is involved in the lives of men (mankind) in all walks of life** - This passage of scripture in 2 Kings 4:8-37 demonstrates God's involvement in the lives of men in all walks of life if they will but respond to His loving grace.
3. **Faith is necessary for everyone regardless of who they are** – Our passage also demonstrates the necessity of faith for everyone regardless of their social standing or financial position in life. It illustrates, "the just shall live by faith," that "without faith it

is impossible to please God,” and “that which is not of faith is sin” (Rom 1:17; Hab. 2:4; Heb 11:6; Rom 14:23).

- 4. Faith comes by hearing and receiving the Word of God** - Another thing this passage demonstrates about faith is that “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17). The faith of this woman and that of her husband was developed because they had not neglected gathering together at the proper times for fellowship with believers and for instruction in the Scriptures (2 Kings 4:22-23). These verses suggest (see verse 23) they gathered together with others to hear the prophets on certain holy days to get biblical teaching. This is why the woman’s husband was surprised when she wanted to go to the prophet other than on one of these special days. Their normal routine was to gather together with others for that purpose on those special days. This was the key to this lady’s faith in these terrible days of apostasy. *How does this possible apply to us? What about the importance of the Word of God for us in our day? Are we too living in days of great apostasy? Cite example(s)! Why is being saturated and grounded in the Word of God so important (even more important) in times like these?*

The passage breaks down or centers around 2 key events:

2 Key Events in 2 Kings 4:8-37:

- (1) **The Shunammite woman receives a son (2 Kings 4:8-17)** – This will be our focus in this study
- (2) **The Shunammite woman received her son back from death (2 Kings 4:18-37)** – We’ll look at this one next week

Now, if will look your Bible with me... we are going to pick the story of Elisha up in 2 Kings 4:18-37 this evening... we are focusing on verses 18-37, but I want to back up to verse 14 and just get a reminder of what is taking place here in Shunem: (READ: 2 Kings 4:14-37)

¹⁴ So he said, “What then is to be done for her?” And Gehazi answered, “Actually, she has no son, and her husband is old.” ¹⁵ So he said, “Call her.” When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. ¹⁶ Then he said, “About this time next year you shall embrace a son.” And she said, “No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!” ¹⁷ But the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her. ¹⁸ And the child grew. Now it happened one day that he went out to his father, to the reapers. ¹⁹ And he said to his father, “My head, my head!” So he said to a servant, “Carry him to his mother.” ²⁰ When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. ²¹ And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him, and went out. ²² 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.” ²³ So he said, “Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath.” And she said, ^[e]“It is well.” ²⁴ Then she saddled a donkey, and said to her

servant, "Drive, and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you." ²⁵ And so she departed, and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel. So it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, "Look, the Shunammite woman!" ²⁶ Please run now to meet her, and say to her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?' " And she answered, "It is well." 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." ²⁸ So she said, "Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me'?" ²⁹ Then he said to Gehazi, "Get^[f] 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." ³⁰ 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. ³¹ Now Gehazi went on ahead of them, and laid the staff on the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing. Therefore he went back to meet him, and told him, saying, "The child has not awakened." ³² When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his bed. ³³ He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD. ³⁴ And 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. ³⁵ He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. ³⁶ And he called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite woman." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Pick up your son." ³⁷ So she went in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; then she picked up her son and went out. -2 Kings 4:14-37 (NKJV)

INTRODUCTION

This account of the Shunammite's son is one which teaches us about faith. It shows us something about what faith is and how faith works. The passage really tells us very little about this woman and her background and how she became a believer or where she came from, etc. In fact, it does not even directly speak of her faith, but the events in the passage demonstrate it, and after all, it is more important to demonstrate our faith than to talk about it. As James put it in James 2:14, "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?"

Why is it more important to demonstrate faith than to talk about it?

(1) Because talk is cheap – Matthew 7:21-23, "²¹ 'Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

(2) ***Because faith can be counterfeited*** – Paul speak to those who had a “counterfeit” faith as he wrote his letter to the churches in the region of Galatia. In Galatians 1:6-9, “*6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert^u the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be ^uaccursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*” Paul is warning of those who with “counterfeit” faith were deceiving true believes and Christians and enticing them away from God and His truth.

(3) ***Because even the devil has faith*** – Some one has said, “For everything God has the devil offers a counterfeit.” I think that is true, and let us not forget that even the devil himself has faith. He knows God is real and Jesus is real, and that Jesus saves. That’s why he works so hard to keep people lost and away from a God who loves them. James 2:18-20, “*18 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?* There is a lot there... James mentions counterfeit faith that is a dead faith because there is nothing to authenticate it, and then mentions that even Satan and his demons have faith.

However, the New Testament does tell us that this woman was a believer who lived by faith. In Hebrews 11 the author speaks of the testimonies of Old Testament saints who lived by faith. Among these in Hebrews 11:35 he speaks of “*Women received their dead raise to life again*” showing us that all the events of this chapter in 2 Kings 4 were the result of this woman’s faith in the Lord.

As seen in the previous study, verse 8 explains that the Shunammite was a prominent women, literally, “*a great woman.*” This word “*great,*” if you recall, was used of wealth, influence, and character.

- This lady was prominent in her community not only because she and her husband were well-to-do, but because of her spiritual character as well.
- We saw she was a great lady for a number of reasons.
- All of these were attitudes and actions that demonstrated her faith.

But you know what? Our faith needs to grow! God wants us to grow in our trust and relationship with Him. He wants to teach us how to turn our entire lives over to Him--all our fears, hopes, dreams, or problems, whatever they might be.

★ But we are often happy and comfortable with the status quo, with our religious routines and the comfort of our lives. The Lord, however, wants to stretch our faith and He often tests us in some area where we not only need it, but where we are the most sensitive and

vulnerable--a physical weakness, personality trait, our spouse or children, our job, our pocketbook--God knows us and works accordingly.

James 1:2-4, *"² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."*

What does it mean when we ask "Does God test our faith?"

1. **When we ask why God tests us or allows us to be tested, we are admitting that testing does indeed come from Him** – Some can't conceive of the idea that God tests us. Let me say biblically, God doesn't "tempt" us. James 1:13 says, *"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone."* God doesn't tempt us, but he does "test" us. He test our faith! Look up at verses 2-3 of James 1, *"² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience."* As Dr. Adrian Rogers said it, *"A faith that hasn't been tested can't be trusted."*
2. **When God tests His children, He does a valuable thing - Why? What does this mean?**
We need to see this...
 - David sought God's testing, asking Him to examine his heart and mind and see that they were true to Him (Psalm 26:2; 139:23) – David prayed in Psalm 26:2, *"Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart."* And in Psalm 139:23, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties."*
 - When Abram was tested by God in the matter of sacrificing Isaac, Abram obeyed (Hebrews 11:17–19) and showed to all the world that he is the father of faith (Romans 4:16) – Hebrews 11:17-19, *"¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called,' ¹⁹ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense."* Romans 4:16 says, *"¹⁶ Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all."*
3. **When God test our faith it is to prove our that our faith is real** - In both the Old and New Testaments, the words translated "test" mean "to prove by trial." Therefore, when God tests His children, His purpose is to prove that our faith is real. Not that God needs to prove it to Himself since He knows all things, but He is proving to us that our faith is real, that we are truly His children, and that no trial will overcome our faith.

And so it was with this Shunammite woman. She had a special need in her life, and this need was in an area of great vulnerability for her.

- In ancient times, being without a child was a great burden for a couple, but especially for the woman.

- Children are blessings from God. They are the result of the direct blessing of God for it is the Lord who opens or closes the womb. Deuteronomy 7:13, 14; 28:4, 18 and Psalm 127:3-5 draw our attention to this fact.
- In God's covenant with Israel as spelled out in Deuteronomy, children were a blessing of God for obedience and the absence of children was a curse for disobedience.
- Yet, sometimes God closed the womb for other reasons.
- Sometimes it was to develop faith and to magnify His name, as was the case not only with this Shunammite woman, but can you name so others like here who experienced something similar in Scripture... Sarah (Abraham's wife) in Genesis, Rachel (Jacob/Israel's other wife *remember Leah was fertile and Rachel was barren for a long time) Hannah in 1 Samuel, Elizabeth (John the Baptist's mother) in the New Testament.

So here, in the Shunammite woman, was a godly woman who for years had undoubtedly longed for a child yet she had been barren. And may I suggest she had become vulnerable in this area because of the many years she had gone without a child.

We also saw in the previous study this wonderful son was a reward for her faithful service and ministry to Elisha. Her husband was old, so this meant a regenerating miracle of God as with Abraham and Sarah. Remember, that at the announcement of this promise she said, "No my lord, O man of God, do not lie to your maid servant" (vs. 16). This expressed her anxiety about setting her hopes on a son and then have them dashed to pieces if the promise was not fulfilled.

- It is so easy for people to get wrapped up in their children that they actually seek their own happiness and sense of worth in their children's accomplishments rather than in the Lord.
- They become wrapped up in their children's lives--their growth, changes, talents, accomplishments, problems, pursuits, and successes.
- Naturally, this is normal to a point, and a legitimate means of joy, but nothing is to take God's place in our lives as the source of our security, significance, satisfaction, and the means of stability, nothing not even our children.

This woman had accepted her lot in life and was involved in serving the Lord, her husband and her community. Now suddenly, after many years, she is faced with the promise of a child with all the joy, responsibility and change that would bring.

Scripture does not describe her response, but I think we can begin to grasp what immediately went through her mind; the joy and hope as well as the fear of disappointment.

- The issue of children had been settled long ago... so she thought
- She had accepted it or resigned herself to life without a child
- But once again it becomes an issue and a hope, but also a fear, a vulnerability

Why might this have been a vulnerability for her?

With the prospects of this there was a short lapse in her faith--probably in two areas--both of which were a test of her faith which the Lord wanted to develop.

2 Areas Where This Was a Test of the Shunammite Woman's Faith:

- (1) **A test of faith for the miraculous** - First, this would require a sexual regenerating miracle in her husband. He was old. How could he father a child. This would truly be a faith step for her to believe that God could and would do this. But then she probably remembered Abraham and Sarah and was able to rest this in God's hands.
- (2) **A test of faith for allegiance and trust** - But there was another test here. We must learn by faith to overcome and handle all of our fears as we trust in the good hand of God. We all tend to become settled and comfortable in our lives as they are. Any real change means becoming more vulnerable and susceptible to pain, pressure, and the things which can bring sorrow and suffering. Or it can even mean a test of our allegiance to our Lord because as He gives us our desires, it is so easy for us to cling to them rather than to the Lord. God gives us all things to enjoy, but we need to have a light grip on these things. Listen to Paul's admonition in 1 Timothy 6:17-19, *"¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."*

A strong faith and one that is growing is one that learns to trust God with the whole of our lives. This means we must...

- Learn to step out in faith
- To be vulnerable
- To leave the future in the Lord's hands
- Trusting Him daily and enjoying each day as the Lord gives it while obeying His Word

For instance, some people are afraid to get close to people or establish close relationships because they don't want to become vulnerable; they do not want to risk being hurt. As a result, they miss the joy of meaningful relationships as well as the opportunity of ministry to others and being ministered to by others.

The Hebrew words used in this passage may suggest this. The Hebrew word in **verse 16** for **"lie"** is (*kazab*), which means **"to lie or deceive by lies."** But it goes beyond that to mean **"to disappoint,"** to get one's hopes up because of what is promised and then to become disappointed. Believing God for this promise not only included faith that He would do this, but faith beyond, faith that God would be sufficient for whatever might come later.

She was, perhaps, afraid of getting her hopes up and then being disappointed – Do we every live this way? What is the danger of this?

But later in this chapter, when her child died, she reminded Elisha of her words, only there, she changed the verb to *shala*. This word means “to be quiet, at ease,” and then, “be prosperous, secure,” but in the hiphil stem as it used here, it means “to be deceived, misled.”

In Psalm 30:6 the noun form, *shalu*, “prosperity,” is used. But there the context suggests the idea of being misled by the delusion that prosperity guarantees stability or security. Perhaps we can see in this choice of words the element of her fear of vulnerability. She was afraid that in this blessing and prosperity of having a child she might be deceived and find instead pain and sorrow; she had become comfortable and secure in her present life and she was afraid of her vulnerability.

But God is in the business of developing our faith, of stretching our lives, of broadening our vision or our horizons of His grace, love, and His ability to meet our needs no matter what life may bring.

Let me suggest a few verses that remind us of God’s plan and the way He works in the every day affairs and occurrences of our lives in order to develop our faith and build spiritual and biblical character into our lives...

In Psalm. 4:1 David wrote, “You have relieved me in my distress.” But literally, the text may be translated, “by or in my distress, you have enlarged me.” The verb here is *rahab*, “be or grow wide, large.” It could be used here of a figure of physical deliverance, but may I suggest the idea here in David’s mind is that of the spiritual growth, of the enlargement of his heart and faith which the testing had produced. In faith, then, David counted on the Lord’s strength and provision (cf. Ps 119:32, 67, 71, 75; Jam. 2f; 1 Pet 1:6f).

¹⁷ But the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her. ¹⁸ And the child grew. Now it happened one day that he went out to his father, to the reapers. ¹⁹ And he said to his father, “My head, my head!” So he said to a servant, “Carry him to his mother.” ²⁰ When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. ²¹ And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him, and went out. ²² 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.” ²³ So he said, “Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath.” And she said, “It is well.” ²⁴ Then she saddled a donkey, and said to her servant, “Drive, and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you.” ²⁵ And so she departed, and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel. So it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, “Look, the Shunammite woman! ²⁶ Please run now to meet her, and say to her, ‘Is it well

with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?’ ” And she answered, “It is well.” 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.” ²⁸ So she said, “Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, ‘Do not deceive me’?” ²⁹ 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.” ³⁰ 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. ³¹ Now Gehazi went on ahead of them, and laid the staff on the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing. Therefore he went back to meet him, and told him, saying, “The child has not awakened.” ³² When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his bed. ³³ He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD. ³⁴ And 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. ³⁵ He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. ³⁶ And he called Gehazi and said, “Call this Shunammite woman.” So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, “Pick up your son.” ³⁷ So she went in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; then she picked up her son and went out. -2 Kings 4:17-37 (NKJV)

CONCLUSION

As we conclude this study there are some clear lessons to glean. May I suggest that we can see here at least five key lessons in the life of faith from 2 Kings 4:8-37 to make note of

5 Key Lessons for Faith from 2 Kings 4:8-37:

1. **Learn to live by faith** - *The Shunammite woman was a well-to-do lady, but since financial prosperity can never insulate us from sin and the trials and stresses of life, she still had to learn to live by faith because “without faith it is impossible to please God.”* - In fact it is often more difficult to live by faith with plenty because of man’s tendency to trust in money and the things it can buy than it is to live by faith when people have very little and are forced to turn to the Lord. She illustrates the principle of 1 Timothy 6:17-19, *“¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”*

How the Shunammite illustrated the principles of 1 Timothy 6:17-19?

- (1) She did not trust in the **uncertainty of riches** (verse 17)
- (2) She was not **proud and arrogant** over her wealth (verse 17)

(3) She used her wealth for others in need, laying up treasures in heaven (verses 18-19)

2. **Faith must have the right object - *She believed in the value of God's Word and thereby supported the ministry of the prophet* - This was a *testimony* to her faith and values as products of her faith. It was also a *means* of her faith, for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). **The principle here is that our faith must have the right object and for that we need the inspired revelation of God.****
3. **Faith is confirmed by both our attitudes and works - *She demonstrated her faith was growing and active by her attitudes and her works* - This is the concept of James 2:14-18. Faith needs to grow; it cannot stand still. Either it grows or it will regress. We must progress in our life of faith and grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 4:19-20). The Shunammite's faith grew: her faith was demonstrated by her desire to know the Word, by her hospitality, by her contentment (see verse 13), by being willing to take a risk, and finally, by her calm dependence in the midst of great sorrow as she sought God's solution and answer to the loss of her son.**
4. **Living by faith means trusting God even through our fears** - To truly live by faith means we must learn to be vulnerable and to trust God with all our fears and anxieties and unknowns if we are going to experience the maximum out of life and see the power of God (Heb. 11:8).
5. **Living by faith means learning to go to God in all life circumstances** - To live by faith also means learning to immediately go to the Lord in all of life, not only in its trials, pressures, or calamities, but in everything because we believe that He is the God of all wisdom and comfort and He alone is able to direct our lives. (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 16:1; 2 Cor. 1:3-5). We may not see an immediate solution or deliverance from our calamity as did the Shunammite in receiving her son back to life, but believing in the Lord's compassion, love and eternal purposes we can find comfort and hope and know that God will answer our need and our prayers in a better time and in a better way (cf. Heb 11:38-40; 12:25-29).

Even though we may lose our homes, our business, a job for taking a stand for Christ, or our bodies may come down with a terrible disease, in Christ we have that which cannot be destroyed, shaken or taken away from us--we have an eternal home, "an inheritance *which is* imperishable (untouched by death) and undefiled (unstained by evil) and will not fade away (unimpaired by time), reserved in heaven" (1 Pet. 1:4). Clinging to these truths by faith becomes the glorious light at the end of the tunnel and the means of letting go and resting in the Lord and risking. It was this hope that gave the Apostle Paul the capacity to risk, to be vulnerable and move out for others in ministry regardless of what it might cost him (see 2 Cor. 4:7-18).

An illustration of the importance of letting go and resting and risking: Top Gun, a hit a movie of 1986, is the story of Lt. Pete Mitchell ("Maverick"), played by Tom Cruise, as he

attended the Navy school for select pilots. Maverick was reckless, daring, and willing to take risks. His abandonment of life made him fearless in the face of the enemy. His main competition to graduate top in the class was “Iceman,” played by Val Kilmer, who was cool, calm, and calculating.

Maverick seemed unbeatable until his back-seater “Goose” was killed while trying to eject after they got caught in jet wash and found themselves in a flat spin. Thereafter Maverick just wasn’t the same. According to his commander Maverick had “lost his edge and would not engage the enemy.” He lost his confidence. He lost his willingness to take risks. He was holding on to Goose.

The story ends well. Maverick faces his fear, engages the enemy, and saves Iceman in a dogfight over the Mediterranean. In a final scene Maverick hurls Goose’s dog tags into the sea, finally letting go of him.

The story of Maverick has a lot of parallels to our spiritual journey.

- Jesus has called us to engage the enemy.
- To be effective in that battle we need to abandon life.
- Otherwise fear can overtake us in our mission as well.
- Sometimes we are holding on to something that keeps us back.
- Maybe the lure of the world, the fear of financial insecurity, or the fear that the congregation won’t like you, keeps you from fully engaging the enemy and being totally free in your ministry.
- Without that freedom, your confidence is drained and you shrink back in fear. Are you holding on to something?

41 *NIV Bible Commentary*, Kenneth Barker and John Kohlenberger III, consulting editors, Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, electronic media, version 2.5.

42 Taken from the *Dallas Connection*, Autumn, 1995, “The Director's Corner.”