

THE RICH SHUNAMMITE'S SON MIRACULOUSLY RESTORED TO LIFE: GOD'S POWER TO GIVE LIFE AND TO RAISE THE DEAD 2 KINGS 04:08–37

Introduction

Circumstances sometimes arise that create a sense of desperation. Take death, for example. We have no control over death. Consequently, when a loved one is snatched from our presence — whether child, parent, or some other close friend — a sense of helplessness grips us. A deep, agonizing void fills the human heart, an emptiness that is sometimes almost unbearable.

When a person loses everything he or she has financially or materially, becoming destitute and perhaps unemployed, the same sense of desperation grips the human heart. An intense stress afflicts the mind and heart, provoking the person to question: “What am I to do? How can I live with no money and no job to earn a living?”

Almost any human activity can create moments of desperation for us: eating can cause choking; swimming can end in drowning; and the home or workplace or even the playground may be the site of a serious injury. A serious crisis can occur in almost any place at any time, creating an urgent need in the life of any one of us.

This is the practical message of the present Scripture, the message that answers the gnawing question: Where is the power to meet the desperate needs of human life? This is: *The Poor Widow, a Wealthy Shunammite Woman, and a School of Prophets Miraculously Delivered: God's Power to Meet the Desperate Needs of His People, 2 Kings 4:1-44.*

- I. The poor widow's oil miraculously multiplied: God's power to meet the needs of poor widows (vv. 1-7).
- II. The rich Shunammite's son miraculously restored to life: God's power to give life and to raise the dead (vv. 8-37).
- III. The prophets miraculously fed: God's power to meet the basic needs of His people, (vv. 38-44).

2 Kings 04:08–37 The Rich Shunammite's Son Miraculously Restored to Life: God's Power to Give Life and to Raise the Dead

There was the Shunammite's son who was miraculously restored to life. This is a clear demonstration of God's power to give life and to raise the dead. Exactly what happened is dramatically pictured by Scripture:

1. Note the Shunammite woman's hospitality to Elisha on one of his trips to her city (vv. 8-10). While ministering there, she invited the prophet to join her and her family for a meal. He accepted her kindness, and a close bond of friendship was developed between him and her family. As a result, she left an open invitation for him to stop by anytime he was passing through their city, and this was quite often. For Elisha frequently passed through Shunem as he travelled to Jezreel and other cities in the surrounding area of Israel. His visits became so frequent that the Shunammite woman encouraged her husband to add a room to their house where Elisha could stay when he needed overnight accommodations.
2. Note the Shunammite woman's wonderful reward for her kindness and hospitality shown to Elisha (vv. 11-17). Because of her generosity, Elisha wanted to do something very special for her. Sending his servant to summon her, he asked if he could request a special political or legal favour from the king for her? Or, knowing that her husband was quite aged, could he perhaps request a special military guard from the army commander to protect her?

Graciously the woman declined, informing Elisha that she had no special needs, for she lived among her relatives and both they and her neighbours were caring. With the issue settled in the woman's mind, she left Elisha and returned to her household duties.

But soon after leaving, Elisha turned to his servant and asked for a gift suggestion from him (v. 14). The servant replied that the woman was childless and her husband was very elderly, so she probably would never have children. Immediately Elisha summoned the childless woman and promised that God would give her a child within one year (vv. 15-17). Standing in the doorway, the woman was utterly shocked, but no doubt flooded with a sense of excitement. Nevertheless, she objected to Elisha's promise because she feared disappointment, a broken heart. She objected, asking for Elisha not to mislead her, not to break her heart with such a promise. But she soon became pregnant and bore a son just as Elisha had promised.

3. However, some years later the woman's heart was to be broken with an overwhelming sorrow (vv. 18-24). The child suffered a violent headache while he was out playing in the fields where his father was working. Immediately the father put the child in the arms of a servant and instructed him to carry the child home to his mother. All morning the mother tenderly held the child in her lap, but he died at noon (v. 20). In faith, trusting God with all her heart, she kept the child's death a secret. Taking him upstairs to Elisha's room, she laid the child on the prophet's bed. As quickly as she could, she asked her husband for a servant and donkey so she could make quick visit to Elisha. Somewhat perplexed, the husband asked why she needed to make the visit since it was not a religious holiday. Obviously, she gave assurance that it was a spiritual matter that needed to be handled immediately, for he gave her permission to make the quick trip. As rapidly as she could, she rushed

to Elisha, the prophet of God, from whom she would seek help in her desperate and helpless hour of need.

4. The woman's faith in God and in His prophet Elisha was apparently unlimited (vv. 24-31). The mother rushed to Mt. Carmel where Elisha lived. Spotting her off in the distant rushing toward him, Elisha sent his servant to meet and greet her. But she refused to be delayed by conversation with the servant (vv. 25-26). As soon as she reached Elisha, she quickly slipped off her donkey and rushed up to him, kneeling on the ground and grabbing his feet (v. 27). Gehazi rushed over to push her away, but Elisha stopped him. For he sensed the mother's bitter grief and sorrow. Pouring out her soul to Elisha, she expressed that her pain was worse than having no child at all. In fact, when Elisha had promised the child, she had asked him not to raise her hopes (v. 28).

Without even taking time to respond to his dear friend, Elisha turned to his servant Gehazi and instructed him to rush to the boy. Reaching the boy as soon as possible was critical. The servant was to allow no one to interfere with his journey, not even for greeting a passer by. Once reaching the boy, the servant was to lay Elisha's staff on the dead child's face (v. 29).

But the mother refused to leave unless Elisha himself went back with her (v. 30). Note her *persistent faith*: her faith was in the LORD and in His prophet, not in the prophet's servant. Filled with *persistent faith*, she swore, taking an oath before the LORD that she would not leave Elisha unless he went back with her. Filled with compassion for this dear mother, Elisha arose and followed her to the home he had visited so often, the home where death now ruled.

Rushing on ahead, the servant Gehazi reached the dead child and laid the staff on the boy's face. But there was no response. The boy was not restored to life. So the servant rushed back to meet Elisha and the boy's mother to report what had happened.

5. Now note the miraculous reward of the woman's *persistent faith* (vv. 32-37). Finally arriving at the home, Elisha found the boy lying on the bed in the room that had been prepared for the prophet's visits. Shutting the door, the prophet began to pray to the LORD. At some point he stretched his body out upon the boy face-to-face, and the dead child's body began to grow warm (vv. 33-34). Getting up off the child, Elisha began to pace the floor, continuing to pray (v. 35). Then once again he stretched out his body upon the boy. Immediately the boy sneezed seven times, and God revived the dead child. At that point, Elisha instructed his servant to summon the woman (vv. 36-37). As she entered the room, her first sight was of Elisha holding the child in his arms; then she heard the prophet instruct her to take the child. But this she did not do. Rushing toward the prophet and her son, she fell at Elisha's feet and bowed to the ground showing gratitude and worship to the LORD. Before long she arose and tenderly took her son into her arms. She then went out to spend some precious

moments with the son who had been raised from the dead and given life by the power of God (vv. 36-37).

Thought 1. What a hope! To be raised from the dead! This is the wonderful lesson for us in this passage. God is going to raise the dead: all believers to live with Him eternally and all unbelievers to be separated from Him eternally. The wonderful hope of believers is the glorious resurrection when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to this earth. When we are raised from the dead we will receive our *permanent bodies*, bodies that will be perfected, free of all disease and aging, pain and suffering, deformity and defect. Just as this small child was raised from the dead and returned to the Shunammite mother, so we will be raised from the dead. Listen to what God's Holy Word says:

John 5:24-29 *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."*

John 6:40 *"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."*

John 11:25-26 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

Acts 24:15 *And I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.*

1 Cor 15:20-23 *But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him..*

1 Cor 15:35-44 *But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also*

heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendour of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendour of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendour, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendour. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

1 Cor 15:51-54 *Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”*

2 Cor 4:14 *Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.*

1 Th 4:13-18 *Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.*

Psa 49:15 *But God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself. ■*