

Lesser Known Characters 04 Suunammite-7 Qualities

by Joseph Balsan

The Shunammite woman was great because of her hospitality, spiritual discernment, and common sense, and we can learn from her example to have fellowship with the Lord in our homes and to discern between holy and unholy things.

Duration: 54:29

Scripture: Isaiah 43:2, Matthew 25:40, 1 Peter 4:8-10, Revelation 3:17-18

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the importance of trials and afflictions in drawing us closer to the Lord. He shares a personal story of visiting a man with a blood disease who was given only a few hours to live, but through prayer, he miraculously recovered. The speaker then discusses the value of hospitality and fellowship in our Christian lives, emphasizing the need to have a place for the Lord in our homes. He references the fourth chapter of 1 Peter, highlighting the apostle's teachings on using our gifts and seeking light from the Lord. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the importance of contentment in a busy and distracted world, sharing a story of a woman who found relief from her frazzled nerves by spending time reading the Bible and speaking to the Lord.

Transcript

And verse 1, or rather verse 8, And it fell on a day that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman, and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. And 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, beyond 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. And it fell on a day that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there.

And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunemite. And when he had called her, she stood before him. And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care.

What is to be done for thee? Wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people. And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old. And he said, Call her.

And when he had called her, she stood in the door. And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.

And the woman conceived, and barest son at that season, that Elisha had set unto her, according to the time of life. And when the child was grown, it fell on a day that he went out to his father, to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head.

And he said to a lad, 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 died. And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out.

And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again. And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? It is neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well.

Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward. Slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee. So she went, and came unto the man of God, to Mount Carmel.

And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite. Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well. And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet.

But Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone, for her soul is vexed within her, and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me. Then she said, Did I desire a son of my Lord? Did I not say, Do not deceive me? Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way.

If thou meet any man, salute him not, and if any salute thee, answer him not again, and lay my staff upon the face of the child. And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

Verse 35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro, and went up, and stretched himself upon him. And the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite.

So he called her, and when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out. May the Lord bless to us the reading of his word.

What I have before me, especially this morning in reference to the incident that we have read, is to bring out some of the qualities, or seven qualities, that make a person great. Now, we find in the word of God, that the word of God frequently speaks of men who are great. But I believe that this is the only woman of whom it is said that she was a great woman.

This is the only woman in the scripture of whom it is said that she was a great woman. And the remarkable thing about it is, that this woman was not a queen. This woman was not a prophetess.

This woman was not to, as it were, serve in a public sphere. But she was a woman, who if we were to describe her, was a simple housewife, who lived with her husband, and functioned in her home, never seeming to step out of the sphere of her home, until later on we find that after a famine, when the prophet had bidden her to go out of the land, she had gone out of the land. And you know, talking about being in the right place at the right time, after those seven years of famine, she came back to the land.

And you remember that the king of Samaria, or the king of Israel, had Gehazi before him, and he was asking Gehazi, tell me some of the great things that Elisha did. And while he was recounting some of the great things, it just happened that he was recounting how Elisha had raised the son of the woman from the dead, and just at that moment, or time, when he was recounting that story, this woman, with her son, came into the court, as it were. She was going to ask the king for her lands that she had had to leave for that period of seven years, and just as Gehazi was telling that story, why, there she was, right at the court, and Gehazi said, why, your majesty, your honor, why, here is the very woman with her son to whom this wonderful miracle was performed, and so she had the privilege of giving her personal account, and the result was that the king ordered that all the land should be given her, and all that had been reaped in those seven years of famine should be given to her as well.

But that is the only time, as far as I know, that we have this woman in a public place, but it is after the things that transpired which made this woman in the sight of God, and which he recorded of her that she was a great woman. What were the qualities that went to make this person great? After all, you know, the thing is, what do we esteem the most? Do we esteem most how we are in the sight of God, or how we are in the sight of men? Which is most important to me as a Christian? Is it what I am before God, or is it what I am before men? We can be sure of this. If you and I are right before God, he will surely make us right before those whom he would please amongst men.

And so the important thing for us is to be right in the sight of our God. Here in this fourth chapter of 2 Kings, we have brought before us this woman who had an experience with Elisha. And as we said, Elisha is to us a beautiful picture of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here was this woman in the ordinary course of human life, tending to the cares of her household and to the cares of her family, and yet she had the wonderful experience here that as Elisha passed to Shunem, it says she constrained him to eat bread, and so it was that as oft as he passed by, he turned and hither to eat, he turned and thither to eat bread. The first thing we notice about this woman, of course, we must understand that this woman was undoubtedly a believer. She was one who knew the Lord and knew what it was to worship and serve the living God.

But she is introduced to us as a woman who opened up her home to this prophet who was passing by from time to time, and she constrained him to enter in. Now, if we look at Elisha for a little while as a picture of our Lord Jesus, we know that that is the desire of our Lord Jesus. Remember that the last picture we have of the Lord Jesus in regard to the church age is brought to us in the third chapter of the book of Revelation.

There we see a church which, as it were, has put the Lord Jesus Christ outside, and we have the Lord Jesus standing knocking at the door, and he is saying, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and will sit with him and he with me. What a thought

it is to us that in this day of ecclesiastical departure, in this day of apostasy, it is possible for you and me to have an intimate fellowship, an intimate nearness with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Just as Elisha passed by that woman's house from time to time, every time that he came by, when she constrained him to come into her house. Now, someone has very well said we get as much of the Lord's company as you and I desire. How true that is, that we in our personal experience can get as much of the Lord's company as you and I desire.

We remember that incident in the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke, that as the Lord Jesus Christ passed and these two were on the road to Emmaus, suddenly he appeared with them and he began to speak to them. You remember the story, but as he unfolded to them the scriptures concerning himself, and their hearts began to warm, they finally came to their home. And remember what it says? It says, they constrained him to come in saying, Abide with us, for it is toward the tenth hour.

They wanted him to enter into their homes and to abide with him. You know, I think that these two things are related. If you and I have a place in our homes for our Lord Jesus Christ, we'll have a place in our homes for the people of God and for the servants of God as well.

Sad it is that today there seems to be a lessening of that wonderful quality of hospitality. Hospitality today is seemingly becoming a lost art. It is seemingly becoming something that is being lost amongst the people of God.

And yet, my friends, it is one of the rarest privileges and one of the rarest experiences that it's possible for us to have in our Christian life. To be able to have fellowship with the Lord in our homes and to have fellowship with those who belong to him. You remember then the fourth chapter of 1 Peter.

Peter is speaking about using the gifts that he has given. Now let us just turn for a moment to that fourth chapter of 1 Peter, and I'd like to notice this beautiful relationship that we have here in this fourth chapter of 1 Peter. Notice the apostle is speaking, and he is speaking, sometimes we often hear this verse quoted, of course.

It says in the eighth verse, "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Now notice how the Lord uses here the thought of hospitality and associates it with using the gift or the ministry that the Lord has given to us.

I believe that one of the things that went to make this woman great was that she was a woman who had room for those who belonged to the Lord, and having room for those who belonged to the Lord was an expression of the fact that she had room for the one to whom they belonged. Remember in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, "In that coming day the Lord will say to those on his right hand, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, "ye have done it unto me. "Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of these my brethren, "ye have not done it unto me." If we could only see the people of God as those who are His.

I remember when I was first saved we had a Sunday school treat. We used to have it New Years. And I remember a girl getting up and giving a reading that I've never forgotten, and that's over thirty-five years ago.

And I was just a young Christian at the time. And it was a reading about how a Christian woman was told that the Lord was going to visit her that day. And you know, of course the Lord going to visit her, while she became very busy about getting the house thick and spanned.

And suddenly there was a knock on the door while she was busy about her work. And there was a little child. And I don't remember what it was that the little child wanted.

It wanted some kind of attention of some kind. And the woman says, "Oh no," she says, "I'm too busy. "The Lord is coming today.

"He's coming to visit me. "I don't have time for you." And she turned the little child away from the door. And she continued busily about her housework.

And there was another knock on the door. And there was an old beggar. And he was asking for a piece of bread.

And, oh, she says, "Oh, I don't have time right now. "I'm expecting the Lord to come and visit me today. "And I just don't have time to bother with you." She says, "Please go away." And a third person came in the afternoon.

And she was thinking herself so happy because she was making so much progress in getting the house ready. The Lord was going to come to visit her. And she turned this third person away.

I don't remember what the problem was. But she turned that person away. She was so busy.

The Lord was going to come and visit her. And you know, in the late afternoon, she had the house all stick and span. My, she had it ideal.

And she thought, "My, the Lord hasn't come. "He certainly has timed everything perfectly. "And you know, supper came and He hadn't come.

"The evening came and went and He hadn't come. "The late hour came and He hadn't come." And she thought and she thought. And then she says, "Oh, Lord, why is it that You haven't come? "You promised You were coming today "and the hour is drawing near to midnight.

"Still You haven't come." He says, "Ah, my child," He says, "I came three times and knocked at your door. "And each time that I came, "you turned me away. "I came three times and knocked at your door." Ah, friends, He had come.

He had come in these various guises. But she didn't recognize Him because she didn't have a heart. She didn't have room for the one that was in need.

She had no room for Him. Ah, yes, she was great because she had room for the one who was in need. She was hospitable.

Notice in the ninth verse it tells us, "And she said unto her husband, "Behold now, I perceive "that this is an holy man of God "which passeth by us continually." The second thing about this woman that went to meet her great was that she was a woman of spiritual discernment. She discerned that this man who was coming to her door was indeed a holy man of God. Spiritual discernment.

Oh, how it's needed today. Have you ever thought that when we turn to the Word of God, we find that the last judge in the history of Israel, in the book of Judges, was a blind judge. Samson lost his eyes, you remember.

They took out his eyes. The last king in Israel was a blind king. You remember how this king had rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar? And you remember how Nebuchadnezzar finally caught him? And Nebuchadnezzar caught him and his whole family, and he slew his family before his eyes.

And then the last thing that he saw was to see his sons killed before his eyes. And then Nebuchadnezzar had his eyes gouged out. The last king in the history of Judah was a blind king.

The last church age, the last church that we find in the book of Revelation is a blind church. They say, we are rich and increased for goods and have need of nothing. And he says, thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind.

Oh, the spiritual blindness. In the book of Leviticus, it tells us that there were certain things that disqualified a man from being a priest. You remember that? And you remember that one of the things that sounds so strange is a man with a flat nose was disqualified from being a priest.

A flat nose. Just think of that. A man with a flat nose was disqualified from being a priest.

Why? Why would a man with a flat nose be disqualified from being a priest? A few years ago, it was the privilege of my wife and I to be up in Expo 70, up in Montreal. And in the course of our visit there, we went to the place where believers had this testimony for the Lord. And we happened to be there the day when they were giving a lecture on illusions.

Illusions. And they showed how you couldn't believe your eyes. As you sat in the seat, they had things taking place on the platform, things turning and various things.

You would swear as you looked at it and saw it, you would swear that this thing was going through this circle, and yet if you were to get up there, you would see it was not so. It was an illusion. And one of the things that they said is most people believe that they experience taste with their mouth.

But they said that's not so. Scientifically, that's not so. The fact of the matter is that you experience a great measure of taste with your nose.

You take up an orange, you take up a pear, you take up any of those things, and as you raise them to your mouth, your nose discerns what it is, communicates it to you, and the result is it enhances and activates your taste. And they said, for instance, if you've got a terrible cold in your nose, well, your nose is blocked. And it's not very easy to smell.

Your sense of smell is impaired. Why? Your sense of taste is impaired because your sense of smell is impaired. The priest with the flat nose was not allowed to function because he was a man who had no discernment.

He couldn't discern. His sense of discernment was impaired. And his sense of discernment being impaired, he could not function as a priest.

A man who could not discern between profane and sacred, between holy and unholy, between clean and unclean, was a man who was disqualified from functioning as a priest. If we don't discern between what is

holy and what is not holy, we won't function as priests. We won't be able to commune and fellowship with God.

Today we need discernment. Oh, the need of discernment! A brother that led me into the work of the Lord and with whom I accompanied often used to quote a verse. You know what that verse was? He would say to me, Joseph, he said, we need to have our eyes anointed with eye salve that we may see.

In this day of religious movement, in this day of religious activity, in this day when there are so many various movements, there is need today to be able to discern between high-powered salesmanship and really and truly being able to discern between high-powered salesmanship and what is truly the work of a holy man of God. To be able to discern between holy men of God, men who are teaching the truth of God, and men who are only speaking beautiful words which take in the simple, perhaps presented in a beautiful way, but which leave our souls empty, our souls dissatisfied and subject to deception. She was a woman.

You know, this is a good thing. A woman of discernment. The third thing we notice about her was in the tenth verse she says, 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.

She was a woman of common sense. Here we find that she, as this man passed by so often, she wanted a place where he could always come and be at home. And she was very simple and practical about it.

She was going to provide only what he needed. She says, Let us make a little chamber. I wonder, do we have a little chamber for the Lord? Do we have a little chamber in which you and I can have fellowship with the Lord? Have we made a little chamber in our life where you and I can have fellowship with Him? There were four simple articles of furniture in that chamber.

There was a bed. Why a bed? A bed so he could rest. You know, you and I need to find the rest that there is in Christ.

Oh, we're living in a world today that keeps us so busy, that keeps us so active. I read one time about a great nerve specialist. And a woman came to him with all frayed nerves, all distracted and upset.

And after examining her, he found that there was nothing organically wrong with her. It was simply a case of tension and nerves. And he said to her, I'm going to give you a very simple prescription.

Well, what is it? She said, I'm going to give you the simple prescription of every day for one hour, just sitting down and reading your Bible just for one hour and just speaking to the Lord. And at first she was sort of flabbergasted and sort of, you know, like, what a prescription. But then she thought to herself, well, it's not expensive anyway.

It doesn't cost too much to do that, and I can spend that hour. And so she did. And for a whole month, that's what she did.

Every day for an hour, she just withdrew and quietly read the Word of God. And peace began to come into her heart. Rest began to control her mind.

And after a month, she came to him vastly improved. And she says, Doctor, she says, you know, I wouldn't have believed it, but it's worked wonders. And he opened his drawer and he pulled out his Bible.

He says, if I didn't spend the time with the Lord every day, he says, I wouldn't be able to carry on the practice that I do. I need to find rest in Him. And then there was a table.

And the table, of course, suggests to us not only rest in Christ, but to commune with Christ, to commune with Him. Oh, what a wonderful privilege to have Him speak. You've heard the proverbial story about New York taxicab drivers.

Perhaps you've seen the television advertisement of the woman giving them one of these pills or something. Well, there was a Christian sister, and she got into the taxicab one time. And oh, of course, that taxicab driver was driving through that traffic, and he was furious and fussing and fuming at everything that took place.

And the sister said to him, she says, you know what you ought to do? You ought to read the Bible every day. And if you read the Bible every day, you'd get something from the Lord. Well, do you read the Bible every day? She certainly does.

I certainly do. Well, but what did you get from the Lord today that would help you in a circumstance like this? Because I get a word from the Lord every day. What did you get from the Lord that would help you in a circumstance like this? She says, what I got from the Lord today is this little verse.

And she pulled out a little piece of paper on which she had written the words, Let patience have her perfect work. Let patience have her perfect work. Patience for a circumstance like this.

That's the result of communion with the Lord, of having Him speak to me. And then, of course, the stool. And the stool, of course, suggests to us sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus, learning of Him.

My, what a privilege to learn of Him. And remember, that's what Mary had. Oh, Martha was so busy about her service, but Mary sat at His feet.

And then the candlestick. The candlestick speaking of the light which He gives to us. My, how much we need light today for life, don't we? Problems arise.

Decisions have to be made. We need light. Where can I get this light? Why, the Lord will give me light when I walk through the darkness.

Thou will be a light for me. She was a woman of common sense because she prepared a chamber for Him. She had a place for Him.

Do you and I have a place for Him in which we retire? And then you notice it tells us there in the 11th verse, and it fell on a day that He came to him and He turned into the chamber and lay there. And He said to Gehazi, thy servant called the Shunammite. And when He had called her, she stood before Him.

And He said to him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care. What is to be done for thee? Wouldst thou be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people. The fourth thing that characterized her was that she was a woman of contentment.

Contentment. My, that's a rare... I browse around in most unusual places wherever I go. I like to pick up books here and there, used books.

And I picked up a book recently written by one of the old Puritans. And you know what it was called, what the title of it is? The Rare Jewel of Contentment. The Rare Jewel of Contentment.

Contentment. What a rare jewel. You've heard the story of the man who advertised in newspapers.

He had 15 acres of land that he wanted to give away. And he would give it away to the man or the woman. California.

To the man or woman who was perfectly content. He wanted to prove that nobody was content. And sure enough, a man came to his home and he says, you're the man that's advertising these 15 acres of land that you want to give free to the man that's content.

He says, well, he says, I am that man. He says, I am perfectly content. And so I think you ought to give me the land.

And he said to him, well, if you're content, what do you want with my land? If you're content, what do you want with my land? Contentment. Here he said to her, would you be spoken of to the king? Do you want me to bring you before the captain of the host? My, he wanted to elevate her in society. He wanted to present her to the king.

She says, I dwell among my known people. I'm content to be with the people that I'm with. He said, are you and I content? Are you and I content with the people of God? Are we content with the assembly of God's people, mine own people? You know, we have troubles in assemblies.

If we didn't have troubles, we'd never grow. Because don't forget this, we grow by means of troubles. We grow by means of difficulties.

We have troubles in the assemblies of God's people. We have needs in the assemblies of God's people. But I still think they're the best that there are.

I still think that they're the delight of the earth. Of course, all of God's people are his delight. But I still think they're his people, and therefore they're my people.

I dwell among my own people. Are you and I content? Content. She was contented.

And another thing we find, the fifth thing we find about her is, in the 13th verse, while he was lying on the bed, he said unto Gehazi, say now unto her, behold thou hast been careful for us with all this care. What is to be done for thee? Now she had been very kind to Elisha, and Elisha wanted to do something for her. But I want you to notice here this expression, behold thou hast been careful for us.

Now in the revised version, margin, we have it says, behold thou hast showed us all this reverence. Behold thou hast showed us all this reverence. You know another quality that made her great? She was reverent toward the servant of God, and of whom he spoke, our Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, reverence is something that is almost lost today amongst the people of God. I'm so glad to see in this place that before the meeting they sit quietly while the organ is playing and meditate. You know, as I said, I was raised in the Roman Catholic Church.

I haven't been in it for 35 years. But one thing about a Romanist, when we stepped inside the doors, we had a sense that we were in the presence of God. And we need today to have a sense of the presence of

God.

Turn for a moment to the 89th Psalm. Notice what it says in the 89th Psalm. We have these words, the 89th Psalm, and the 7th verse.

It says, God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. When we come into the assembly of God's people, we're coming into the presence of God.

You know, if you and I were to come into the presence of the President of the United States, how we would behave ourselves. I mentioned a brother that I preached with before the Lord took him home, our brother McCullough, an Irish brother, rather quaint and unusual, those of us who knew him. He told about how one time he came to Chicago, and it was his custom to go, to drop in unexpectedly.

And so he dropped in unexpectedly at the prayer meeting. And of course, when he came to the prayer meeting, why, of course, he took part. And after the prayer meeting, why, he was taken to a home, but it was not usually the home that he stayed in.

And so when he got to the home where he was to stay that night, he called up his old friend. And when he called him up, why, he says, Brother Tom, where are you? He says, I'm right here in Chicago. I'm right here.

He says, why, he says, I missed you in the meeting tonight. Why, he says, Yes, Tom, if I knew that you were going to be there, I would have been there. And Tom says, Well, he says, you know, somebody greater than I was there.

Well, who was it? Who was it? Well, he says, the Lord Jesus was there. The Lord Jesus was there. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence.

And you know, I think that today, familiarity. I realize we're not in bondage like the Romanist. We're not in darkness like he is.

But I wonder if we haven't slumped to the other extreme today. Familiarity. Why, it's a wonderful thing to have an open Bible.

It's a wonderful thing to have boldness into the presence of God. It's a wonderful privilege to be able to know that as a believer, I'm a priest, and I don't need a human mediator here on earth to stand between God and me. That I have the Lord Jesus Christ.

But I wonder, has this familiarity with these precious truths made us careless and irreverent, so that we, as it were, are very careless about how we come into the presence of God, how we comport or behave ourselves in the presence of God, and that we have to do with God? I wonder sometimes, even in our speaking about the Lord, I find today an increasing talking and speaking of him as Jesus and Jesus Christ. Now, I'm thankful his name is Jesus, for that means Savior. But we know when we come to the Word of God, like the 13th chapter of John, for instance, the Lord Jesus says to his disciples, Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say, Well, for so I am.

I always love to hear the Lord Jesus giving his title that belongs to him. Oh, I know people say, Well, after all, isn't he our elder brother? Is he our elder brother? Does the Bible ever call him our elder brother? No, it doesn't. The Bible does tell me he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

If I was to come into the presence of the President of the United States, would I say to him, Dick? I certainly wouldn't. If I came into his presence, I would certainly give to him the title that becomes him in his office. And if he dared to call me Joe and say, Well, Joe, so-and-so, I certainly wouldn't feel free to say, Well, Dick, this is the way I think about it.

He might, in his condescension, call me by my first name. But that doesn't give me the warrant to become familiar with him. He is my President, our Lord Jesus Christ.

God hath made this same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Let us be reverent in our speaking of him. Give to him the honor and the title that belongs to him.

Reverence. Elisha says, Behold, thou hast been careful, or hast showed us all this reverence. Are we reverent? This woman was great because she was reverent.

But you know, this woman was great because she was a woman of faith. Now, you would have put that first, wouldn't you? That's what I would have done. You know, many people have a strange idea of the Christian life.

They think that if you become a Christian, everything is going to be smooth for the rest of your days. But you know, that's not the way it is, is it? The Christian has trials. The Christian has heartaches.

The Christian has difficulties. I wonder, when Elisha told her she was going to have a son, you notice it says in the 17th verse, The woman conceived and bare a son at that season that Elisha had sent unto her according to the time of life. And the 18th verse, it says, When the child was grown, it fell on a day.

It doesn't say a word about Elisha visiting that woman from the time that the child was born until that child was old enough to be out in the field with his father. Now, we don't mean to say that Elisha hadn't visited, but the Scripture doesn't say it. And the silences of Scripture are just as suggestive as the statements of Scripture.

Is it possible? Ah, yes, the Lord had given her this son. And the Lord intends that we should enjoy the relationships of life. Some people seem to have the idea that the Lord doesn't want us to enjoy.

He says we are to enjoy the good things that He has given us. Enjoy them, because they come from Him. But I wonder, is it possible that perhaps she became immersed in the earthly occupations, the earthly cares, and suddenly affliction strikes.

The child falls sick, and the child dies. What does she do? Ah, here's where we see her faith. You know, afflictions, oh, they come into the lives of Christians.

Do they mean that perhaps we've done wrong? Not necessarily. Affliction, someone has very well said, you know, when the king is going to knife anybody, he'll take a sword. And, of course, if that person vows, he'll bring that sword upon him.

When he brings that sword upon him, it is an honor. The Lord doesn't trust everybody with affliction. Afflictions are very beneficial.

Afflictions give us a sense of appreciation. Perhaps many of you here know my first wife was afflicted with cancer. After surgery, she had x-rays.

And these x-rays, while they were being taken, afflicted her arm to such an extent that she had such terrific pain that she had to go to therapy and to work that arm. And she'd go to therapy, and then every day, every day I would have to exercise her arm to get that movement back into that arm so that that pain would disappear. It was a grievous affliction.

But you know what it did? It gave me an appreciation of just the simple ability to move my arms around like things that I just took for granted. A person with arthritis, of course, would know what it is to have the freedom of movement that we take just so for granted. But the affliction gave me a sense of appreciation for the simplest movements of my arm and my legs that I took so for granted.

You know, I think that's one of the blessings of visiting the sick. When you visit the sick and you see what they've got, well, it gives you a sense of appreciation for the blessings that the Lord has given you. That's what affliction does.

It gives us a sense of appreciation. Affliction makes the promises of God real to us. It is said that in the library at the University of Cambridge, Thomas Bilney's Bible is there.

And Thomas Bilney's Bible is marked in various places. But one place in particular that it is turned to is the 43rd chapter of Isaiah where you read these words, When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned. And that verse is underlined.

Why? Because as he read his Bible that night before he was going to be led to the stake and burned, he underlined that verse in his Bible. When thou walkest through the fires, thou shalt not be burned. Offerings, afflictions, trials make the promises of God real to us, don't they? As we read those promises, which perhaps we had passed over until we got into the circumstance that we were in.

And suddenly those words became real. Those words became living. Those words meet a need.

Affliction. Affliction draws us to God. I read a little story about a general who had a man in his army who had a disease.

And this man was always the best warrior that he had. Why, he was always in the forefront of the battle. He didn't seem to regard his life at all.

He was in the forefront of the battle, fighting and winning victories. And Antigonus, the old Greek leader, thought so highly of him that he sought out the best physicians. And finally he found a man who had a remedy for his disease.

And he cured him. And when he was cured, he was no longer in the forefront of the battle. He says, oh no, he says, I don't want to be in the places of danger anymore.

I've got everything to live for now. I've got a family. I've got a home.

I've got riches to enjoy. Oh no, he says, I'm not going to be in the forefront of the battle. He lost a good warrior by curing his affliction.

Isn't it true that when we get into places of trials and afflictions, it draws us closer to the Lord? We see the emptiness and the vanity of the world. Last year about this time when I was down in a little place in Ottumwa, Iowa, we went to visit a man who had a blood disease. And the wife was called.

She says, you've got only four or six hours to live. The blood count had gotten so low that he couldn't live, the doctor said. And so as I visited them, the saints had prayed and he had come up.

He had come up. Still below normal, but nevertheless still come up and there was improvement. And I remember as I visited them, the husband and the wife says, you know, when we got that message and I was here, I thought to myself, my, the emptiness and the vanity of the things of time.

They're absolutely worthless. They're useless. Because everything was being taken away.

You know, when we get into such circumstances, we find the vanity and the emptiness of things. We find the worthlessness of things. We find the things that really matter.

Here this woman, when this came, what did she do? When this child got sick, when this child died, what did she do? Did she give up? She had faith. Faith to trust God. Faith to seek the prophet of God.

Faith to lay her knee before the man of God. She drew near to him to get his help. That's what faith does.

And faith was rewarded in that son being healed. And that brings us to the last quality. We find it in the 36th verse and 37th, when the child opened his eyes, he called Gehazi and said, Call this eunuch.

So he called her. And when she was coming unto him, he said, Take up thy son. Then she went in and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

Gratitude. Gratitude. Now, I want you to notice carefully this 37th verse, because this verse is contrary to nature.

It takes more than human nature to do this. What would have been the natural thing to do? Notice in the 36th verse, Elisha says, Take up thy son. What does it say? She took up her son and went out, thanking the prophet? Oh, no.

That's not what it says. It says, Then she went in and fell at his feet. She didn't touch her son.

She didn't touch her son until, first of all, she fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground in an attitude of worship and gratitude. And only then did she take up her son and go out. Contrary to nature, the natural thing would be, Take up the son, take him to your breast.

That would be the natural thing for a mother to do, wouldn't it? Take up her son, clutch him to her breast, and walk out thanking the prophet. That would have been wonderful too. But here we see, she thanked him first, and then she took up her son and went out.

Gratitude. Are you and I grateful? Are we thankful? Gratitude. Gratitude to God.

Gratitude for His blessings. Gratitude for what He does. She was a woman of hospitality.

She was a woman of discernment. She was a woman of common sense. She was also a woman of reverence.

She was a woman of contentment. She was a woman of faith. She was a woman of gratitude.

Seven qualities that go to make up greatness in the eyes of God. Seen in a woman, a common woman you might say, available to you and me, may they be developed in your life and mine in increasing quantity and character. Shall we pray? Our Father, we desire to thank You this morning for our Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank You that He passes by us continually, that He desires to dwell with us, that He desires to do great things for us, that He desires to bestow upon us blessing, that He desires to develop within us those qualities that will endure for eternity. We thank You this morning, our Father, that Thou art training us and fitting us for eternity. This little life down here passes by, but what we become, what we learn, what we acquire of our Lord Jesus Christ is that which we will carry away with us and enjoy throughout the countless ages of eternity.

Bless Thy Word to each one. We thank You for all who are here this morning, and remember those who could not be with us in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

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