

Elisha 4

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 June 1997

Preacher: Rev Kenneth Stewart

[0 : 0 0] Seeking the Lord's blessing, we'll turn to the portion of scripture we read, the second book of Kings, and the fourth chapter.

And really in a narrative of this kind it's impossible to focus on one particular text, and I want to tie together the whole narrative as we find it in the fourth chapter, where Elisha encounters the woman of Shunam, and the particular spiritual lessons that are taught in that encounter.

Now after such a miraculous defeat of the armies of Moab, which we have in chapter 3, we find Elisha back in more humble circumstances, and we find him, first of all, at the beginning of chapter 4, helping one of the widows of the sons of the prophets to clear a debt.

Now again, I don't want to look particularly at that with you just now, but to move on to the next incident in his life, where he encounters this woman of Shunam.

And this becomes a very significant incident in the life of Elisha himself. Shunam was a quiet and pleasant and prosperous village north of Jezreel.

[1 : 3 8] It was really quite far up, quite northerly in Israel. And Elisha passed through it quite often. And he passed through it because it was on the route to Mount Carmel, where he spent a lot of his own time.

Now it's not clear whether there was a school of the prophets in Mount Carmel, or whether Elisha just went there for quiet prayer and meditation. Certainly from his life he appears to have gone there often.

And you find in verse 25 of this chapter that that's where the woman finds Elisha when she goes to look for him. She finds him at Mount Carmel. She knows that he will be there and she expects him to be there.

If you were to trace a line from either of the schools of the prophets at Bethel, Gilgal, and Jericho, up right north to Mount Carmel, northwest, that would pass through the village of Shunam.

So that's what brings Elisha this way first of all. And when he's passing through, he's met by a wealthy woman. Now the word used here in verse 8 is a great woman.

[2 : 4 6] Perhaps the word is a little ambiguous, but it would appear to mean really that she's well-to-do or that she's well-off. And in fact, that's really confirmed by verse 22 where you find that she has servants.

And so clearly they were a family of some substance, herself and her own husband. But still, she uses that well. If God has given her wealth, she'll use it well.

And she's always apparently on the lookout to entertain strangers just in case, like Abraham, she entertains strangers and angels and awares. And she sees this man passing through.

She recognizes him with a kind of spiritual intuition, perhaps as being a man of God or being a godly man anyway. And she takes him home, we're told that she constrains him to come in and to eat bread with them.

Now the time spent between herself and Elisha and her husband is so spiritually profitable that the thing is repeated again. In fact, every time Elisha passes by Ishunam or every time he passes through it, he turns in there and it becomes a regular occurrence.

[3 : 56] And there they feast upon the things of the Lord. And she and her husband are glad to have fellowship with somebody who understands these things and is able in a great measure to help them to understand these things better.

They have fellowship, one with another, and their fellowship is in the Lord. And it becomes so profitable that they somehow feel the time must be lengthened.

It isn't enough. He comes for a meal and he's on his way. And so she hatches a plan and she suggests it to her husband and that's to build another chamber, perhaps a partition in the house or an extra part just outside with its own external access.

And this room is to have a bed, it's to have a table, it's to have a candlestick and it's to have a chair. It's just to have the bare necessity so that the man of God can live there with them.

And her husband is more than keen to do that. He is a man of God himself. And so that is built. And from now on every time Elisha passes through Ishunam, he stops there and his stay is lengthened and they have more precious and longer fellowship one with another.

[5 : 04] And so the Old Testament Christ, you could say, Elisha, the savior of the Old Testament, the one whose name means the same as Jesus in the new, he finds a haven like that with a family even as the Lord did.

This house must have functioned to Elisha in much the same way as Bethany functioned to the Lord himself where he found refreshment in the company of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Interestingly, there was a great death and resurrection in that family as well.

It seems that the parallels between the two are endless and a great death and resurrection was to come into this family as well. So it was a time of fellowship. Now as this goes on, Elisha feels that somehow this must be repaid.

And he asks the woman, do you want me to mention your name to the king or to mention your name in the courts? And she says, no. She says, I'm happy here amongst my own people.

And he speaks to Gehazi and says, what do you suggest? And Gehazi says, they have no son. He has spotted that, that there is something missing in the home. There is no child. And he brings that to Elisha and Elisha says, call the woman.

[6 : 11] And Gehazi does that. And he says to her, at this time next year, according to the cycle and time of life, you will conceive, you will have a child.

And she doesn't believe it. She says, don't deceive me. Do not lie to me, O man of God. But the thing is true. At the time of year, she conceives and she has a child.

Now, I suppose it would be easy in a sense just to pass on from this and to focus on the main part of the narrative. But we can't pass this by without noticing one or two things in it.

Because sometimes in narratives of this kind, you'll just pass them by and think you just have little details that don't mean too much. It's just telling a story. But if you notice carefully, you'll find that the whole passage here is full of what we could only call practical Christianity.

And that's really the proof of the pudding. It's the stuff of Christian life. It's what illustrates my Christianity. It's what shows it to be true. And it's what shows your own to be true.

[7 : 15] It is a Christianity lived in a day-to-day way. The fruits of godliness coming out in these people's lives. Now, it comes out in simple things. Take this woman.

She's a great woman, perhaps in the sense of being well-to-do or wealthy. But she's also great within. She's glorious within. She's like a daughter of Abraham, a daughter of Sarah.

She's clearly one of the 7,000 in Israel who have not bowed their knees to Baal. She's a godly woman. And that comes through as it should in the lives of women in the hospitality which she provides in the home.

Now, of course, the man isn't excused from that. He is also hospitable as he ought to be. But the burden necessarily of that falls upon the woman and how gloriously she illustrates it. How gloriously she illustrates it.

In verse 8, we're told that she constrained him to come in and eat bread. Now, that word is just as strong in the original as it is in the English. It is just as strong.

[8 : 16] I'm sure you're familiar yourself. Perhaps you still know people who do this who almost seem to urge you and to implore you to come in with them and to have a time of fellowship with them or to eat with them.

And that is real Christian hospitality. She delights in the fellowship of the people of God. She wants that fellowship.

She wants to hear of God and she wants to speak of God. And that clearly delights her soul. That was true of Abraham and it was true of Sarah. Abraham sat at his tent ready to entertain strangers.

And Sarah was more quick and willing to prepare the food that was necessary for them. The same was true of Lot sitting at the gate of Sodom. I have no doubt in my own mind that he sat there to help the people of God who passed through there.

If there were any passing through, he was determined to take them in and to show them kindness. And that should always be a mark of the children of God that they are hospitable and that they delight in the company of one another.

[9 : 17] Now my friends, that is a sign of a lively faith. And correspondingly, if that seems to disappear from my heart or from yours, it's a sign that my faith is deadening.

It's a sign that my heart is hardening. And it's easy to make other excuses for it. But the fact of the matter is that if my life is closing to the life of others, and if my door is closing to the guests that should and could come in, then it marks out coldness and spiritual apathy, declension and backsliding in my heart.

Isn't it true even in our own islands that there were times at the communion seasons when people were longing for people to come in? And not only just to come in and to pass by, but to stay.

What eagerness there was even in preparing a room or getting a room ready, thinking that a man or a woman of God was going to stay there and to live there for a weekend. There was enthusiasm.

And there was a desire to do it. A desire to have them. The thought of that fellowship and warmth. Has that gone? Has it gone? Or is the tide at least beginning to ebb?

[10 : 32] Is it the case now that you do it maybe grudgingly? Is it possible that now you're saying, Oh well I have to perhaps receive some for a few days. Or we're going to have to have people in tonight.

As you said you will become so busy. Or your house so good. Or your life so full. That maybe it's an inconvenience or a nuisance to bring people into the house. And that's not how this woman lived.

She was a great woman. A woman of means. A woman of substance. But her house and her heart was always open to the people of God. Now sometimes when you look even at things like the communion season.

When you look at it as it exists today. All you can say is what God said to Ezekiel. Son of man, can these bones live? And all you can reply is what Ezekiel replied.

Lord, thou knowest. Thou knowest. Because sometimes it looks so dead that you feel it can never return. But that my friend, it's not the language of faith.

[11 : 33] It's the language of unbelief. Will you not pray with me that your own heart and mind will be opened out to love. And to desire the fellowship of God's people.

Here she is. She not only has him in the house but builds an extension especially for him. That she can receive the people of God. Because she loves and she values that friendship and that fellowship.

You know yourself or you should be with you that a lack of fellowship breeds mistrust. It breeds suspicion. It breeds isolation.

It breeds a readiness to cast a stone instead of covering a fault or covering a sin. Whereas if there is a warm fellowship and an open heart.

You will be more ready to excuse than to accuse. You will be much more inclined to trust than to mistrust. And the church of God will weld together.

[12 : 33] And the two sticks will become one. And the dry bones will live. So our willingness to entertain and to have fellowship is a barometer indicating your liveliness and mine.

And you'll notice it's right through them all. These things that we call courtesy and which should be Christian graces. It's illustrating them all. For example, Elisha can't take the kindness without returning it.

Now that's a common thing. We grew up with that. But strangely enough, these things are disappearing. It's quite common for people to take, take, sometimes and not expect to give anything back. Elisha says, this woman has been careful for us.

What shall we do for her in return? The husband is not left out of the picture either. It's his job to build an extension. Is he willing to do it? He does it. He gets on with it and he makes a partition and he furnishes a room.

Again, because he delights in the fellowship of God's people. That's one thing. This woman is hospitable. And then again, you'll notice that she's content.

[13 : 38] And I'm not surprised to find these two things together. She is hospitable and she is content. She is content. In verse 13, sometimes I wonder if this is a kind of test that Elisha is putting before her.

What do you want? He says to her. What would you like me to do for you? Will I mention you to the king or to the captain of the host? In other words, he's asking her if I can put a word in for you in high places.

Do you want to become familiar in the courts of the king? Would you like to be raised there to a place where you will have closeness to the most powerful and influential people in the land?

I can do it. And he was as good as his word. He was a man who had just delivered Israel and who had just counseled the king of Israel. He wasn't promising what he couldn't deliver. He was promising what he could.

I can speak to you, he says, to the king and put a word in for you. And she replies with this beautiful answer. She says, I dwell among my own people. Now taken all in all, what she means by that is this.

[14 : 44] She doesn't just mean, well, I know the people around me and I'm comfortable here. There's more to it than that. What she is saying is this, that she has found a sphere of service. And that she is glad in that sphere of service.

She is ready to entertain strangers. She is hospitable. And she is doing the work of the Lord in her home in that way. Now she could increase her influence and she could increase her power.

And it would be good to be known by the king. And to have the king's counsel and to have the king's ear if any problem comes along. But she knows fine well that the more she increases that kind of thing, the more the cares increase along with it.

Yes, she says, you can give me better contacts, but you'll increase my worries and you'll increase my anxieties. And I'm afraid that by entering that circle, my real sphere of influence is destroyed.

The good that I am doing here is taken away from me. No, she says, I dwell among my own people and I will do the Lord's work and I will do it in this way.

[15 : 46] Now that again is a wonderful thing. Because she is no slave to grovelling ambition. And how many people are slaves to ambition today? Slaves.

You could be in chains and bondage to it yourself here tonight. All you want is to climb higher. Would that you could know this person or know that person. Or get a word in that ear and just move up a little higher.

That would be the answer to your prayers. It would be your dreams realized. It would be your ambition fulfilled to move up, to move up and to move up. Well, she's no slave to that.

Why? Because she's content. She is content. The art of Christian contentment. She is happy. Happy with what the Lord has given her here to do and she won't trade it for anything.

I'll bet there are more than one, there's more than one person in here tonight. And if you pushed it to the bit you would give everything you had if you could just be happy.

[16 : 51] If you could just be happy. You've moved up and you've got what you wanted. But you're not happy at all.

You're far from it. And the scriptures tell you that godliness with contentment is great gain. Not the gain that you thought of.

But it's the real gain and it's the true gain. And this woman from Shunem wouldn't exchange what she had for the world. And Elisha knows that from her answer.

So she is content and would to God that we were content with her, with that godliness. But Gehazi comes, just as I said, and he says to Elisha, this woman does not have a child.

And so into the home. And for a few years, perhaps five or six years, everything goes well in that home. It seems that the one thing that she did desire, the one thing that she would love to have, and that's the privilege to be a mother.

[18 : 03] The privilege to have a child, to shape a child, and in that home to raise the child, to put godliness into the heart of that child, and to make that child a good and godly father to others.

That one privilege, perhaps denied her, is now suddenly given her. And she can hardly believe it, that everything is complete. The home is complete, and she could desire no more.

It's as though her cup is full. And she would say, and she did, I'm sure, say, that my cup runneth over. And how much more special was this child, being the child of her old age?

She waited long for it. In fact, it was long since past the time, I'm sure, that she thought she could have that child. And it was the first child, obviously. And so how precious that child was.

Born, you could say, out of due time. And then suddenly, one hot summer's day, all that changed. The father was out with some of the servants, reaping.

[19 : 05] And like most little boys do, this boy wanted to go out with his father into the fields to do the work. She allows him to go. But his head is not covered.

And as he's going out towards his father and towards the reaper, suddenly he begins to shout. And he says, my head, my head. Now, his father isn't really aware of the urgency of the situation at all.

He just thinks that the young boy is complaining and that all he needs, perhaps, is just to sleep the thing off. And he himself wants to finish the work. And he turns to one of the servants and he says, go, he says, and take the child home to his mother.

So the servant goes and picks up the boy and off he goes back to the home. And by the time the child reaches the home, it's clear that his life, his very life, is slipping away.

And his mother almost senses it. She puts him on her knees and she holds him close to her own breast. And by the time noon comes, the child loses his life.

[20 : 12] He breathes his last. He dies on the knee of the mother who loved him, who welcomed into the world, and who received him as a gift from God, who could hardly cease thanking God when she suckled him.

He died as a small child on the knee and against the breast of his own mother. And it's as though her world, as it were, crumples around her.

It may be noon, but as far as she's concerned, the sun has gone down in her own life. She has lost the child that the Lord had so recently given her.

What can she say? Well, what did you say when that happened to you? And it's impossible for those of us who have never known it to think of the grief that these people passed through.

What can you say? How unsearchable are his ways? They are past finding out. Now, well, my friend, if you're the Lord's, I'm sure you've been brought to say one thing anyway.

[21 : 18] And that's this. And it may not have been easy for you to say, but you came to say it. At last you reached there. You climbed it and it was hill difficulty, but you stood on the top and you said it.

The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. And blessed be the name of the Lord. Now, that may be hill difficulty, but climb it.

And may it encourage you to climb it. To think in this way, that whatever you have and whatever I have is what I never deserved in the first place.

And once I remember that the gifts of God towards me are all undeserved, that puts another light on it when he calls them back to himself. Another light altogether.

What have I that I did not receive that was not given to me by grace and by kindness and the Lord himself took it away?

[22 : 16] So how can I complain when the thing is lost? And I'm sure many as a person in their grief would have said, well, it would have been better for me if I had never got that gift in the first place.

Rather than to receive it and to lose it. But one of the old poets amongst the Romantics, I can't remember which one it was, was it even Tennyson? Who said, it's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.

And that is true in this sense. Hard as it is, it's better to love and lose than never to have known that love at all. This woman loses the child.

And in her perplexity, she sits there with a dead child on her knee. What can she say? What can she ask? And what can she think?

Think. And just in connection with that again, my friends, things may be going quite well for you or for me just now. But the scriptures have not promised it to be always like that.

[23 : 22] The Lord has set the day of prosperity over against the day of adversity. He has set the one over against the other. Now, in the day of prosperity, prepare for the day of adversity.

May it not be true about yourself and myself that these things found us sleeping. And that these things overtook us unawares. Live in thankfulness.

Live in gratitude. Enjoy the day that the Lord gives you as long as that day lasts. Don't complain about your portion. Be thankful for what you have.

And when a thing then is taken from you, you will find it a little easier to bear. You will find that if you've lived in murmuring and in discontent, when the stroke falls, it will be near impossible to bear it.

And it may require a sharp and long prolonged period of discipline and chastisement before you are reconciled to that providence from the hand of the Lord.

[24 : 30] Now, this is where the whole thing becomes unusual. Because once the child dies, and once she weeps, she acts in a peculiar way.

In verse 21, we read that she went up. She lays the child on the bed of the man of God. Now, that's an unusual thing.

She goes up and she puts the child on the man of God's bed. She shuts the door on him and she goes out. And she called to her husband. Now, although that's...

These words would imply that she spoke directly to her husband. But if you actually look at the passage and take it all together, she must have sent the message. She sent the message to her husband saying, Send back one of your servants and bring one of the asses that I may run to the man of God and come back again.

Now her husband is confused. And he sends... Although he sends the ass back with the servant, he also sends a message saying, Why are you going to the prophet? It's not the new moon and it's not the Sabbath.

[25 : 34] And that clearly tells you that on the Sabbath day, the prophets of God were preaching. They were preaching in the house of God and they were preaching as prophets of God. And the people went to hear him.

Why, he says, are you going when it isn't new moon or Sabbath? And she just sends back this cryptic message. And it's a respectful message. And she just says that it is well or it shall be well.

And that's the message that she sends back to her husband. But then she takes the ass and she saddles it and she's a woman in a hurry. And it's a holy haste.

It's the holy haste of a woman who's going to God. It's not the unholy haste of a person in difficulty who goes somewhere else other than God. It's the holy haste of a woman who cannot wait but to get to the Lord.

She saddles the ass and she said to the servant, drive, she says, and go forward. And don't slacken your pace, whatever comes in your way, unless I ask you to slacken your pace.

[26 : 35] And she goes as fast as she can, northwest, and she's making for Mount Carmel. And Elijah is there, or Elisha is there, perhaps even in solitude, except for his servant Gehazi.

And in the distance he sees a chariot driving hard. A chariot driving furiously. And he knows from the moment that it's someone coming to see him. And as the chariot is coming closer, he recognizes the chariot.

And he says to Gehazi, go. He says, it's the Shunammite. Find out. From the speed I sense that there's something wrong. Is she well? Is her husband well? Is the child well? And Gehazi asks her the question and she just says, it's all right.

She doesn't trust him. And no wonder, we'll see in a few weeks why she doesn't trust him. He's a slippery kind of character. And she knows him to be that. And she's discerned him to be some kind of hypocrite.

And she says, it's all right. But the moment she comes to Elisha, she falls at his feet. And she says, did I desire a son? And Elisha is confused or perplexed.

[27 : 40] He says, the Lord has hidden it from me. The Lord has not told me. Her soul is vexed. Now Gehazi is trying to push her away. See, the people who are outside of close fellowship never really understand spiritual crisis when they happen.

They never really understand them. He's trying to get rid of her and to push her away. And Elisha says, leave her alone. The Lord has hidden it from me, but she is vexed. And she just says, did I desire a son?

I did not ask for the son. I didn't ask. Did you deceive me? Why did you give him in order just to take it away? Is that the end of it? Did you just give me that short thing and then just take it away?

And was that it? And Elisha sends back Gehazi and says to stretch his rod on the child. Gehazi does it. And nothing happens.

It happens. But when the woman hears that it's Gehazi is going, she says, I'm not leaving you. She says to Elisha, until you come yourself. So she and Elisha follow.

[28 : 41] And when Elisha enters the room, he prays and he goes through this strange ritual that Elijah himself went through of stretching himself out on the body of the child until finally the child's flesh becomes warm.

He sneezes seven times and he rises from the dead. Now, we'll deal with Gehazi later on. But I want to look with you at the woman and Elisha.

And I want to notice some very important things, especially about this woman. Now, in little things her faith comes through. She's obedient to her husband, yet she has a resolution herself.

And she has determination. She has faith and she has courage. She doesn't want to hurt her husband. She doesn't even inform her of what happened in that way at all. And she just says, all is well.

On the other hand, her husband trusts her, too. He doesn't just stop her. He could have said, you're not going to hear the prophet or you're not leaving the whole situation today. He knows that if there's something wrong, there's something wrong.

[29 : 50] And he leaves it just as that. He trusts her. She can be trusted. She is a wise, industrious, hospitable, Christian, godly woman. And he leaves the matter, as it were, in her hand.

But what I want you to notice is her unusual conduct. Now, I confess that for a long time, reading this passage myself, I thought that this woman did what she did because she was hungry.

Because she was in bitterness of soul and because she was complaining. And I thought that was her motivation at every twist and turn that she couldn't wait, as it were, to get to Elisha and to rebuke him.

But then when you look at the narrative, that's not what's involved here at all. It's not what's involved here at all. For example, why does she first of all take the child and lay him on the bed of the prophet?

If she is finished or angry with the prophet, why do that? Surely the last bed she would want to lie the child in is the bed of the prophet. In the second place, there's this.

[30 : 59] Why keep it a secret from her husband? If the child is dead, the child is dead. What's the point of hiding it for an hour, for two hours, for a day or two days?

The husband's going to discover that the child is dead. Why not just say to her husband, the child, your child is dead? She doesn't do that. She keeps it hidden from her husband.

She didn't want it revealed. And then again, there's no arrangement here for a funeral. It seems that a funeral is the last thing on this woman's mind.

She lays the child on the bed and sets out without any word to meet the man of God. How do you understand it? Well, you understand it like this.

From the book of the Hebrews, the letter to the Hebrews, chapter 11, where it speaks of the people who did great things by faith.

[31 : 58] I'll read verse 34 to you. It says that people quenched the violence of the fire by faith. That refers probably to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

They escaped the edge of the sword. Out of weakness they were made strong. They became valiant in fight. They turned to flight the armies of the aliens. And listen to this.

Women received their dead, raised to life again. Now, he's talking about the Old Testament here. He's talking about what happened in the Old Testament.

And one thing he mentions in the Old Testament is that women received their dead, raised to life again. Yes, but with that is the whole theme of the chapter.

What's that? By faith we understand. By faith we accept. By faith Abel did this. By faith Moses did that. By faith Abraham went out not knowing whether he was going.

[32 : 57] By faith Joseph gave commandment regarding his bones. And you've got to put those two little words into this verse as well. By faith women received their dead, raised to life again.

In other words, it wasn't just a matter of the woman having her child brought back. It was a matter of the woman going out believing that her child could be raised back from the dead.

And that's the only thing that explains her conduct. After her weeping, faith comes to the fore.

And what does her faith say? Her faith says, he killeth and he maketh alive. This is the Lord of life. This is the Lord of the resurrection.

This is God who destroys death and who brings death to naught. Who brings it to nothing. This is the God who destroys death. Who annihilates it.

[33 : 54] And who brings life out of it. And to this God she turns. And she turns to him with purpose, with faith and with vigor. And every single act is understood like that.

Why doesn't she tell her husband? Because she's determined the child will live before her husband comes home. That is why she doesn't tell her husband. Why does she lay the child on the prophet's bed?

Because she wishes the Lord through the prophet to bring the child back to life. That's why she rides fast and furious in the chalet to Mount Carmel. Because she is determined that these things will come to pass.

She wants a resurrection. And nothing less than a resurrection. Now, when we think of a resurrection, I suppose we often think of the resurrection of the body on the last day.

But resurrection in the Bible means more than that. In fact, there are two resurrections. They're mentioned in Revelation 20. I'm sure you've heard of the first resurrection and the second resurrection and the last resurrection.

[35 : 03] Two resurrections in Revelation 20. And, I know, there are those, I'm not going to go into this, there are dispensationalists, premillennialists, who believe that these two resurrections are two resurrections from the grave.

That some rise from the grave first and others will rise from the grave later. But the two resurrections in Revelation 20 refer to the two resurrections that the Lord speaks about in John chapter 5.

Now, if you have your Bibles open, if you could turn to John chapter 5. And we'll read one or two verses here. Because they're very relevant and very important. John chapter 5.

And we'll read at verse 24. John chapter 5 at verse 24. Now, this is Christ himself speaking. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but hath passed from death unto life.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is. Now, notice, this hour is coming, and actually now is. It's already present.

[36 : 31] When the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. Now, that's the first resurrection. And the Lord says, it is already arrived, that the dead are hearing my voice, and they are living.

But then in verse 28, you read of another resurrection. Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming. No.

Notice, this hour is not yet. This hour is absolutely future. The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.

They that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. Now, that is your first resurrection, and your second resurrection.

The first resurrection is when your dead soul, lying in trespasses and sins, without a noun or a spark of spiritual life, hears the voice of the Son of God in the Scriptures, in the preaching of the Gospel.

[37 : 36] He hears the voice of the Son, and is brought alive. The Son quickens whom he will. He makes alive whom he will. That is the first resurrection. And the second resurrection is when that soul has gone to glory, and afterwards the body is powerfully raised, again by the same Spirit of God, to be united with that body and glory.

That is the second resurrection. Ah, these things you think were revealed in the New Testament. They were not. They were revealed in the old. Do the Psalms not speak of them?

Does Job not speak of it when he says that yet? He says, in my flesh I shall see God. Do these women who believed not testify to the power of the resurrection?

Now and again in the Old Testament, God, because of their shadows and darkness in which they lived, God gave them real, visible, tangible signs of these things. Now and again, there is a resurrection.

It was seen in Elijah's day. It was seen in Elisha's day. A person brought back to life. Why? Just so that they would know, learn, understand, believe that God conquers death, and that God has the power of life, and that death is not the end of all things.

[38 : 52] And that in God we have life. Now, no longer are you seeing people raised from the dead in that way in this world today. I know there are charismatics who claim that.

But the fact of the matter is that these miracles ceased with the apostolic age. These things do not happen. There are now two resurrections, absolutely.

And that is spiritual resurrections and the last physical resurrection at the last day. And so the clear application of this to you and to me is just this.

This woman believed that her child can live. Do you believe that you can live? Do you believe your own child can live? Your son or your daughter, however destitute, however poor, and however miserable, do you believe they can live?

Do you believe they can spiritually rise from the dead? Now, you might say no, and you might say it with tears that it's past them. They've turned the corner and they've passed that stage. They've ruined their souls and they've ruined their lives.

[39 : 56] Well, it's dead men that God raises, nothing else. And how dead can you be? Just dead. Just dead. And that's it. God raises the dead. And you believe that.

You pray for that. You pray that God would raise the dead in your own family. And that he would raise the dead in our own congregation. That he would kiss them with spiritual life.

That they might live with yourself. And before you pray for your seed, pray for yourself. You think your own soul is too dead.

You think your own soul is twice dead, too far gone. And nothing can be done for you. Well, my friend, it can. And it's easy for us sometimes to look at people and say, well, what a change would be required.

Yes, what a change would be required. And who can effect it? By faith, women receive their dead, raised back to life. Not one of you is beyond the power of God.

[40 : 58] Not one of you, if you'll turn and ask, will be refused the grace of God in Christ. Not one of you. Whoever you are and whatever your situation.

The dead, will you not hear the voice of the Son of God? And will you not live? Will you not live? Why are you dying?

Live! Live! He'll give you life. Ask him. He'll give you life. And what about Elisha? Does he despair? No, he doesn't.

He sends Gehazi. Now, I don't really wish to enter too deeply into this because you'll notice that it parallels what happens in Elijah's experience when he raises the child.

So I don't wish to go over this point in too great a detail. He sends Gehazi. And like every charlatan, he's just got a staff, but nothing happens when he stretches out the staff.

[41 : 54] He's only got the outside. He's only got the form and the ritual. No life. No power. But when Elisha comes, he contracts himself.

He puts his mouth on the child's mouth, his eyes on the child's eyes. And as I mentioned with respect to Elijah, this is the Son of God who gives life. And that's how the whole teaching comes together.

In the instances of resurrection, you have the instances of incarnation. You don't seem to have the one without the other. When the child is brought back, what do you have but the mighty prophet of God, as it were, bringing himself down to the need and to the size of the one he is delivering.

And it's a forcible, a forcibly difficult thing for him to do. He must make himself small. Just as the Son of God had to make himself small. Why?

To kiss your mouth and mine. That's why. So that he could, as it well, inhale our death and impart his own life. Did he not give us the power of new hands?

[43 : 03] The power of a new taste. The power of new eyes. And the power of a new breath. He gave us that. He made himself small so that we could have life.

And Elisha did it. He labored for it. He prayed, we're told, in verse 34. He walked up and down because he labored to bring it about.

Are you laboring? It's all very well to say now and again, Oh, I would like a resurrection in my own soul. You can perhaps say sometimes to a preacher or to an elder or somebody, Oh, I'd like to be converted.

Would you like to be converted? I've heard that more than once. Would you really like to be converted? What's the proof of the pudding there?

How do I know that to be true? How can you say to me you want to be converted when you don't seek the Lord? When you don't ask life? If you want to be converted, it is given to you.

[44 : 08] Those who seek shall find. Ask, turn, and the Holy Spirit will be given you. That is the truth. He labored.

He prayed. And he sought the life of God. And the life of God was restored into that child. The flesh became warm. You notice it is gradual.

Sometimes, friend, when you're praying, God doesn't answer it all at once, but there's just a little sign. And it's as though it says to you, though the vision tarry, wait for it.

The vision, it shall surely come. As was said to Habakkuk, though tarry, wait for it. The flesh became warm. And then there's a sneezing seven times. Now, I don't know if there is any significance to that. I know that seven is the number of rest.

It is the number of Sabbath. And the resurrection, of course, and the Sabbath both marry together very clearly. The child comes back into life. He comes back into strength.

[45 : 04] And there, before the woman's eye, is the reward of her faith. I am God. I kill and I make alive. That is the God we preach. That is the God of the Christian faith.

That is no idol. He is our real and living God. And you'd better believe it. And believe it at once. And make haste to believe it. Run to Elisha.

Run to Jesus. As this woman ran. And ask life. And you will find that he will give that life to you. May the Lord bless his word. Let us pray.

Lord bless thy truth. We pray that thou would accompany it. With the power of the Holy Spirit. And make the things of Christ real. To even one soul here tonight.

That he would say. That I will take the cross. And I will follow him. For Christ's sake. Amen.