

The restoration of the Shunamite woman's land

Part 1

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[00:00:01] ...to continue, please, in 2 Kings, and this time in chapter 8.

I'll just read parts of verses, verse 1, The Lord hath called for famine, verse 3, And it came to pass, at the seven years end, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines, and she went forth to cry unto the king for her house and for her land. And the king talked with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, Tell me, I pray all the great things that Elijah hath done.

[00:01:05] It came to pass, as he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land.

And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elijah restored to life. And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that was hers and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now. Trouble comes.

[00:02:09] A man that is born of a woman is born unto trouble as the sparks fly up.

But the real test is, how are we going to react to it?

I remember when first I came about the meetings, I was introduced to a little piece of poetry that I think I could quote.

One ship drives east, and one ship drives west, with the selfsame wind that blows.

But tis the set of the sails, and not the gales, which determine the way she goes.

[00:03:05] And now, my dearly beloved brethren, I believe that's the truth in a nutshell. Here's a brother, a sister.

What a life they've had.

Trouble, sorrow, mellow, sweet, mature, full of the blessing of the Lord.

And here's another, embittered, shriveled up, sad.

What's the difference?

And I don't think there's any doubt about it. It's a question of how we have reacted to the sorrow.

This woman, of whom we have been reminded, the great woman of Shunem, [00:04:04] when death came into the household, what did she say to Elisha? As the Lord liveth, and as my soul liveth, I will not leave thee. The promise had come to her through the man of God, and she clung to him. And dearly beloved brethren, what we learn in the epistle to the Hebrews is that in the vicissitudes of the pathway, we can learn the heart of the one who's died upon the cross for us in order to bring us into everlasting salvation. We can prove it, and how? By clinging close to him.

I've been interested for a little while as to the limitations of the epistle to the Hebrews.

[00:05:02] Now, this might seem a very bold thing to say, especially when we've been introduced to one who can succor, and sympathize, and say to the uttermost. But I'm going to repeat it. There are very definite limitations upon the epistle to the Hebrews. Again, I say it's not only a question of proving him on our side, chapters 2, 4, and 7, but of you to moving in, chapters 8, 9, and 10. Minister of the sanctuary, you might say, we've surely reached a very high note. But as a matter of fact, I'm going to repeat it a third time. There are very definite limitations upon the epistle to the Hebrews. Why do I say that? Because he fed them with milk, and not with meat. He was really speaking of the most elementary things.

[00:06:06] Well, what are the more substantial things?

I'll offer a few suggestions.

The epistle to the Hebrews speaks of God 71 times.

But only once, in relation to us, do we read of the Father. Now, I think that's a tremendous statement, you know. The only occasion where the Father is introduced in regard to the saint is in the twelfth chapter, where we're introduced to the Father of spirits. And isn't that attractive?

In an epistle where God is so prominent, when it's a matter of our child training, I use that word instead of chastisement, we tend to connote chastisement with a heavy stick. [00:07:02] But as a matter of fact, chastening is child training. He has in mind our education.

And in regard to this, it's the Father that is brought forward. The knowledge of God in relationship, and like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

I think it's a delightful touch in Hebrews that we're brought to the Father. In addition, so far as our approach to God is concerned, you find that, and you will remember, the consecration of the priests in both Exodus and in Leviticus, that there was a question of washing them in water, figure of new birth, sprinkling with blood, [00:08:03] but then the top note in these Old Testament types was the filling of the hands, consecration. Where we read in the 10th chapter of Hebrews, you get the washing with water, bodies washed with pure water, you get the sprinkling with the blood, hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, but you don't get consecration. You don't get the hands filled. Likewise, you don't get

what Paul speaks of in the third chapter of Ephesians, you don't get the opening up of a mystery. There's no reference to the body or the assembly as such in Hebrews.

So, where are we going to find these deficiencies made good? [00:09:01] We'll find them, dearly beloved brethren, in other scriptures. In Ephesians 3, the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, the pass of knowledge, but we'll find them in the fourth chapter of John, the father, secret worshippers, those who will worship him in spirit and in truth. It's a wonderful thing, according to Hebrews, to draw near, but according to the fourth chapter of John, as worshippers, we get the gain of the full revelation of God. He is the word, John 1, the substance and expression of the heart of God, and we're able to come into the Father's presence, not only in the gain of new birth, John 1, not only in the gain of the sprinkling of the blood, the Lamb of God, [00:10:01] that taketh away the sin of the world, but with our hands filled, our hands filled with substance, our hearts filled with a precious sense of Christ, and what is worship? It's pouring out in the Father's presence, our soul's appreciation of the Lord.

Now, a great deal more could be said about this matter of access. Perhaps we ought to just remind ourselves that this is the distinctive truth and blessedness of the present dispensation in which we live. And without opening up all the details of it, I'll just remind you that this word, to be brought into God's presence, one word in the original, occurs eight times in the New Testament, [00:11:05] four times as a noun, and four times as a verb. We're brought in.

Now, the references to the use of this word give us an understanding of the meaning. In the Old Testament, the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, this word, access, is used in connection with sacrificial beasts, be it in regard to the peace offering, or in regard to the consecration of the priests. Also, this word, access, is used in regard to bringing people into the divine presence, the consecration of the priests. When we step outside of the Scriptures, [00:12:01] this word for access was used in the ancient Greek world for bringing people into an assembly, and in the Persian court, they used to have someone who would introduce people into the presence of the king. He had this name, the cognate word anyway, for both the verb and the noun. Now, when you put all this together, in regard to Christianity, you find that the saint is brought into the presence of God on the basis of sacrifice.

He's brought into the presence of God as a worshipper, but he's brought into the presence of God by one who brings us there.

Who is that? Well, thanks be to God, we know who it is. It is the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the one who has died for us, the one who has captivated our hearts in our wilderness journey. [00:13:01] He's the one, as the great, I almost used the Greek word, which I mustn't do, the one who takes us into the presence of the Father. Now, by him, that is the Lord Jesus Christ, we both, that is Jew and Gentile, have access by one spirit unto the Father.

And there in a verse, you find brought together all three divine persons, God has devised a means whereby we can be brought home to himself. He takes us into the presence of the Father, and we've got something to say. And what have we got to say? We tell the Father of all the preciousness that we've found in Christ.

Now, just as I close, I want to pose what I think is a very practical question.

[00:14:01] Why don't we draw the earth?

That verse in Hebrews 10 shows us that every provision has been made. Let us, with true heart, full assurance of faith, draw near, how?

Hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, bodies washed with pure water. The true heart seems to be connected with the bodies washed with pure water. The full assurance of faith is in connection with the blood. God has done everything on his side to make the way clear for us to go in. Why don't we go in?

Now, I think this poses a very deep question for you and me. Why don't we go in? We seem to prefer almost anything to going into the divine presence.

We'll even talk to the saints about our sorrows [00:15:02] rather than go into the divine presence. Why don't we?

Is it because we like this world so much? Is it because we're better down here?

Or is it, do you think, because heaven isn't attractive or real to us? Or is it just this, that we haven't really learnt the heart of the one who wants to teach us his heart in all the vicissitudes of the pathway that we're treading? Why is it? Why don't we draw in to his holy presence? I think that's a very searching question for every one of us. Why don't we draw in to God's holy presence? Well, I think one can see at least from the scripture that God has done everything on his side to bring us in. [00:16:02] On his side he delights to have us in his presence. Even the very circumstances of our pathway or conspire to draw us into his presence might the result of our meetings be to give us just a little bit more impetus to do so. Now just one word as I close. Do you remember that interesting verse in the twelfth chapter of Zechariah, I think it is, in connection with the remnant?

Do you remember?

In the time that's shortly going to come upon the nation we read God will pour out upon them the spirit of grace and supplications. Do you think it's an allusion to the fact that in the day when God recovers his people he's going to give them such a sense of grace, [00:17:03] such a sense of God for them, such a sense of all his dealings with them in the past and all that he is going to be in the future and all that he is for them in their present situation, they'll get such a sense of God on their behalf that they'll come into God's presence with supplications. I will pour out upon them the spirit of grace and supplications. I believe that's the way it works for you and me. If we are really touched in our affections in relation to the Father's love and his, if we're conscious that we're under the divine eye of the blessing then we won't be turning to any other source but to him and would be found glad to tread that blood-sprinkled way into the divine presence, not for our needs only, [00:18:03] but in the consciousness of favor tell the Father of all the glory and preciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. May we find impetus to do so for his name's sake.