

(In response to a query about storing each Weekly Reflection: It is helpful to create a Weekly Reflections Folder on your own device, and within that to have six Subfolders: 01 Bible Trustworthy / 02 Almighty God / 03 Practical Discipleship / 04 Prayer & Devotional / 05 Witnessing & Evangelism / 06 Faith & Topicals. You can then copy each new Reflection from your Inbox before reading it, paste it into its suggested Subfolder, and come to it calmly later on. All the previous Reflections are available on the website in their own categories, for downloading into your own Subfolders should you wish).

(Suggested Subfolder: 03 Practical Discipleship)

193 "Yes, all is shalom"

"And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman" (II Kings 4.8, A.V), with "great" implying here one who was distinguished, notable, wise. As Elisha passed their way often, this lady, with her husband's agreement, had "a little chamber" built on the wall of their house. It was simply furnished where Elisha could stop by to rest and sleep (vv 9-11) - an act of practical kindness which Elisha, this "holy man of God" (v 9), clearly appreciated.

He wanted to return her kindness in some way, but the lady, whose name we are not told, asked for nothing (v 13). Elisha learned from Gehazi his servant that she was childless, so, without her asking for this, he told her that within a year she would "embrace a son". Her response was abrupt! (v 16) - and we call to mind Sarah's response to similar news many years before (Genesis 18.1-15) - but sure enough, she was duly blessed with a son as had been promised (v 17).

But some years later came tragedy - too much sun, "my head, my head", the child being nursed in his mother's lap till noon, when he died (vv 18-20).

What was to be done? The woman laid the dead body of her son on the bed in that "little chamber", and resolved to go straight to the man of God. Her husband, giving us a fine example here of pastoral block-headedness, asked why she wanted to do this as this particular day was "nothing special"; the fact that his son had just died did not seem to affect his thinking! His wife's response was brief - "Shalom". She set out on the ass at high speed, on a journey of over 20 miles to Mount Carmel, urging the servant leading the beast to run as fast as he could and not to bother about her (vv 21-24) - they must have made quite a sight!

Now we are familiar with this lovely Hebrew word "Shalom" primarily as a greeting of friendship and concern, but as we explore the Concordance and Lexicon its fuller meanings come to light. For "Shalom" also encompasses

welfare, safety and peace; happiness, health and prosperity; rest, tranquillity and quietness; and perhaps above all, completeness and contentment.

So we see how extraordinary it is that this is the word used by the lady in response to her husband (v 23), and again, for a second time, in response to Elisha's three-fold enquiry, "Is it well with thee? - with thy husband? - and with the child?" (v 26). Frankly, everything seemed as far from "shalom" at that moment in her life as anyone could imagine! But here she is, calm, sensible, and unruffled by what has happened, because of her confidence both in "the man of God", and in the God whom the man of God served. She copes with this sudden tragedy by looking through it and beyond it to Almighty God and His servant. There lies the key to her saying, in all truthfulness, "Yes, all is shalom": what an example for the rest of us!

She fell before Elisha, clutching his feet, asking nothing of him but simply reminding him that she had never asked for a son! (vv 27- 28). First Gehazi was despatched, with Elisha's staff, but to no avail (v 31). Finally after much prayer and patience, "the flesh of the child waxed warm the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes" (vv 34b-35). Victory! We are reminded of Elijah at Zarephath (I Kings 17.17-24); of the Lord Jesus at Nain (Luke 7.11-18), and at Jairus' house (Mark 5.22-43), and at the grave of Lazarus (John 11.1-46); and above all we are reminded of God the Father at the grave of His own Son

In Christ now truly, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (I Corinthians 15.54b-58) - truths which in those pre-Messiah days this "great woman" of Shunem could only "see through a glass darkly" (I Corinthians 13.12). But she trusted, and the Lord honoured her trust.

How much more blessed are we today, in possession of God's full, final Truth! (Hebrews 1.1-4). It is as we "live and move and have our being" within His Truth, that "Shalom" indeed wins through.

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