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"From Sheri Leming's Desk..."

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THE SPIRIT OF GEHAZI

Gehazi isn't exactly what one would call a well-known Bible figure. But I believe his is a cautionary story that should be told the world over, especially in our day. To Gehazi was given the blessing of a front row seat to the life of Elisha, one of the great Old Testament prophets. What a privilege it must have been to be up close to witness the miraculous events that God accomplished through this prophet. What an incredible role model Elisha was to Gehazi. But there was a problem, for you see, instead of Gehazi's heart's desire being as that of Elisha - who wanted a double portion of the spirit of his master, Elijah (2 Kings 2:9), Gehazi settled for something *so...much...less* — and foolishly squandered this incredible opportunity.

Limitless opportunities were squandered by Gehazi. The woman from Shunem, to whom God miraculously provided a son, *twice*, and the dramatic healing of Naaman, are just a couple of examples. The latter is told in 2 Kings 5. Interestingly God gave Gehazi a close-up glimpse of someone dealing with leprosy, a condition of which unbeknownst to Gehazi, would himself become all too familiar. Naaman was a man who had to lay aside his pride and in doing so, he was touched by God. This was a lesson Gehazi desperately needed to learn. Naaman had to set aside the way he thought things should be, and submit to God's messenger. And he was cleansed, restored, and **grateful**. So grateful was Naaman that he journeyed a distance to Elisha's house with a handful of gifts for the prophet. But Elisha **would not accept any gifts**, despite Naaman's urging.

This really got under Gehazi's skin. How could Elisha refuse all of those incredible gifts? He became a man obsessed. He couldn't for the life of him figure Elisha out. Who relinquishes even a single opportunity to gain more? Gehazi didn't understand the heart of Elisha because he didn't understand the heart of God.

Leviticus 23:22,

'When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, *you shall not reap to the very corners of your field*, nor gather the gleanings of your harvest; you are to **leave them for the needy and the alien**. I am the Lord your God.'

Both Elisha and Gehazi were fiercely motivated by love. Elisha had a love for God, while Gehazi had a love for...*money*. So much so that it produced an inability to appreciate what, or should I say, Who was at the root of Elisha's motives. As we will see, the *root* of Gehazi's motive was *evil* (1 Tim. 6:10).

2 Kings 5:20, "But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, "Look, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, while not receiving from his hands what he brought; but as the Lord lives, **I will run after him** and **take** something from him"

So Gehazi chased down Naaman's caravan on foot. I guess you could say he was motivated. (*Much more so than when the Shunammite's son had died, and Elisha had to tell him not to dilly-dally on his way to help the boy in 2 Kings 4:29.*) Naaman got down from his chariot and asked if everything was all right. Gehazi said everything was fine, but his master had received some unexpected guests and wanted to give them some silver and a change of clothing each.

Naaman was all too happy to oblige and urged Gehazi to accept twice as much silver as well as clothing. Gehazi's response was basically, 'Well, if you insist!' Naaman even went so far as to provide two servants to carry these gifts back to 'Elisha'. Gehazi took the gifts straight away to hide them in his house. What a contrast can be seen between Naaman and Gehazi! Naaman had undergone a remarkable transformation —not even considering the fact that he was no longer a leper. The greater miracle was **his changed life** — for he was no longer a proud, arrogant man, but a grateful and humble servant. On the other hand, there was Gehazi, who had enjoyed all the privileges of having a master like Elisha, yet was about to *pierce himself with many griefs*.

The life of Gehazi makes me think of a great quote from Winston Churchill that I have framed sitting on my desk:

“To each there comes in their lifetime a special moment when they are figuratively tapped on the shoulder and offered the chance to do a very special thing, unique to them and fitted to their talents.

What a tragedy if that moment finds them unprepared or unqualified for that which could have been their finest hour.”

Then Gehazi returned to Elisha. Wah, wa, wah. He did not realize that God had revealed his whereabouts to his master. So to cover up one lie he told another. Never a good plan!

“He who tells a lie is not sensible how great a task he undertakes; for he must be forced to invent twenty more to maintain one.” Alexander Pope

I love the way one translation condenses this initial exchange to two words, “*Whence, Gehazi?*” Gehazi's answer reminds me of the logic of a toddler who is in trouble with his mom - ‘*I didn't go anywhere!*’ As my Nona used to joke, “You've gotta be somewhere!” Elisha then explained that God had revealed everything Gehazi had done. Busted! Further, he asked Gehazi, “*Is it time* to receive money and to receive clothing?” (v. 26). False prophets of the day were causing enough trouble for the true prophets; so any conduct that had even the hint of being self-seeking should be avoided at all costs! I believe the same can be said today. We must live very careful, God-Honoring lives (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Elisha then told Gehazi that not only did he take Naaman's money; he would receive his leprosy as well! “And he went out from his presence a leper *as white as snow*” (v. 27). If only Gehazi had chosen to submit to God, for then *his scarlet sins* would have been as *white as snow* - Isaiah 1:18.

Luke 4:27 (NKJV)

27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed *except* Naaman the Syrian.”

There are countless lessons to be learned from the life of Gehazi. One of them is that Gehazi's *ingratitude undervalued Elisha*. He ended up using the privilege and opportunity of his position of working for the prophet for his own *profit*.

Think ingratitude is one of the ‘*lesser*’ sins?

2 Timothy 3:2

For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, *ungrateful*, unholy...

Read more on the sin of ingratitude *and its consequences* in **Psalm 106** – *it will send shivers up your spine*.