

Blessings of Believing

2 Kings 6:24-7:20

June 20, 2010

The events of our study today take place in the northern kingdom of Israel. Elisha was the prophet and as we have been studying there have been many examples of the power of God working through Elisha.

What's interesting is that the moral condition of Israel in those days was exceptionally dark. One of the sons of Ahab was reigning as king at this time and he was little better than Ahab who was known for following after other gods. They had turned their back on Jehovah and were going after Molech, the Ashtoreth, Chemosh and others.

But while the nation of Israel had turned their back on God, He was continuing to make Himself known to them by demonstrating his power through Elisha, making known the promises of his Word to them, and giving them the warnings that their unfaithfulness would bring death to the nation.

As we pick up the story in 2 Kings 6, Israel found themselves in battle again with the Syrians and at this point, Syria had the upper hand and had even besieged Samaria, the capital of northern Israel.

Besieging a city was a powerful tactic used in those days to destroy an enemy without risking the lives of the soldiers. And if it was successful, the city would be left intact with only the people destroyed within it.

Things had become so desperate in the city of Samaria that a donkey's head was selling for 80 pieces of silver and two cups of dove's dung was selling for five shekels of silver.

It was in the midst of this terrible famine that God made an unbelievable promise. The famine would end overnight and 2 gallons of flour would be selling for \$.65.

But as the story unfolds, it is filled with practical spiritual application and insight for all of us.

I. Don't Remain Outside of God's Hand

- When we look at how difficult things had become we have to ask ourselves, "How did this happen?"
- God gives us great insight into this when we understand the principles of his Word. First of all, we understand that the way of the transgressor is hard (Proverbs 13).
- Secondly, we understand that they had turned their back on the Lord long before this. In other words, they had departed from God; they were outside of God's hand of protection.
- Scripture tells us that, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are saved." (Proverbs 18:10)

A. Start with taking responsibility

- As the king of Israel was passing by on the wall a woman cried out to him for help. The king answered, "If the Lord does not help you, from where shall I help you?"
- That clearly suggests that he's blaming God for the lack of help, but this is the same king and these are the same people who turned their back on God long before that.

- Then, when the king heard how desperate things had become, his anger burned against Elisha, which meant he blamed Elisha as well.
- There is a common problem right there. How many people do you know get angry and blame others rather than taking responsibility for themselves?

Illus - We live in a society that blames other people. Examples of frivolous lawsuits abound. How about the man who ordered a milkshake at McDonald's and was holding it between his legs...

Illus - But blaming other people goes as far back as, well, Adam and Eve. When God asked Adam if he had eaten from the tree of which he was commanded not to eat, he was somehow able to blame his wife and God all in one fell swoop. Then Eve in turn blamed the serpent.

Illus - If we're not content in our marriage couldn't that be James Dobson's fault? After all, he was the one who told us how good marriage could be.

- The truth is that God was the one who warned them that if they turned their back on God, they would find that the way of the transgressor is hard.
- God even told them in advance that things could get so ugly that they would be reduced to cannibalism.
- Oh how ugly things can get in our lives if we are left to our own devices. I know so many people who have said that *they would have died had not the Lord rescued them from themselves.*

- The answer, then, is to run to the tower of the Lord as fast as we can. For there the hand of the Lord is always with us...

Psalm 139:1-10 He has enclosed us behind and before.

B. Taste and see that the Lord is good

- When the king had come to Elisha to vent his anger and complete his blame shifting he said it clearly, "This evil is from the Lord; why should I wait for the Lord any longer?"
- God responded through Elisha by giving an unbelievable promise that the next day at about the same time, they could buy six times the amount of food for 1/5 the price. In other words, God would deliver Israel in one day. That was the word of the Lord; that was God's promise.
- The royal officer of the king said what no doubt many were thinking, "Behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, how could this thing be?" *They couldn't imagine how God could do it, so they concluded that He couldn't do it.*
- Elisha's response was powerful and important for us to understand. "*You shall see it with your own eyes,*" *Elisha said, "but you shall not taste of it."*
- Unbelief would keep this man from tasting the promises of God. God was about to do a marvelous thing, but he refused to believe it and so therefore he wouldn't taste of it.

Luke 14:16-24 Parable of Jesus; many are invited who will not taste.

- There are some who only watch while others are partaking. But God is calling you to believe, to partake, to taste and enjoy the promises of God.

2 Corinthians 1:20, For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes;

Psalm 34:8, O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Psalm 119:103, How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

II. Feast on the Promises of God

- Israel was out of options, the situation was beyond desperate.
- But they had taken God out of the equation. God wasn't out of options; they just hadn't turned to him for help.
- But God in his mercy was going to deliver. That's the reason Elisha was there, God kept calling them back to himself, in spite of their lack of belief and turning their back on God, God was still demonstrating to them that he was still on the throne.
- *We may not know what tomorrow holds, but we know who holds tomorrow.* God would deliver, but they would have to believe.
- There were four lepers outside the city. Again, leprosy is a picture of sin. They were outcasts, diseased, and terminal. They had no options, so they decided to throw themselves on mercy.
- If you think about it, those same three options are available today; go into the city and join everyone else who is dying, stay here and do nothing and die, or go after mercy.

A. Be careful how you listen

- When these four lepers went over to the Arameans, behold, there was no one there. For the Lord had caused the army of the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and the sound of horses, the sound of a great army.
- Elisha had asked that God would open the eyes of his servant to see the horses and chariots of God, but here God opened the ears of the Syrian army to hear it. For one it was a source of encouragement, for the other a cause of fear.
- What you tune your heart to has everything to do with what you tune your ears to.

Luke 8:18, “So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have: even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.”

Illus – When Israel heard the taunts of Goliath, they heard something very different from what David was hearing. Be careful how you listen.

- When Jesus was speaking to the churches in the book of Revelation, seven times he said the same thing... be careful how you listen.

Revelation 2:7, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

- Paul said something similar to the church at Rome...be careful how you listen.

Romans 10:17, So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

B. Let others know the good news

- When the lepers discovered that the camp of the Syrians was empty, they ate and drank and carried away silver and gold and hid them for themselves.
- Then at some point they said to one another, “We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, but we are keeping silent.”
- Others were suffering and starving and yet they were keeping the news to themselves and they realized that it wasn't right.
- We, too, know that there is good news that transforms lives, that takes the broken and brings healing and hope.
- "But they don't want to hear," you might say.
- There are two kinds of people that we might talk to about the good news of Jesus Christ. There are those who know they are sick, who know they need a physician and then there are those who do not know and who do not want to hear.
- When the Jewish leaders saw that Jesus was eating with sinners and tax collectors they question his disciples, “*Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?*”

Mark 2:17, And hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but

those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Revelation 3:17-18, “Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. I advise you to buy from Me... eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.”

C. Is anything too difficult for the Lord?

- When the king heard the good news, he wouldn't believe it. He thought it was a trick.
- Unbelief will keep you from enjoying the promises of God. How many people do not take God at his word and therefore don't have the promises that God is giving to them?

Jeremiah 32:17, “Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You!”

- Just because we can't imagine how God might answer, doesn't mean that God is out of options. If anything too difficult for the Lord? What we need to do is to ask.

James 4:2, You do not have because you do not ask.