

2 Kings 13:1-25

Ch 13 takes us back up from the southern kingdom of Judah to the northern kingdom of Israel. As you know 1st and 2nd Kings has a tendency to sort of “yo-yo” back and forth so as to keep us current w/what’s happening both in the northern and southern kingdoms that comprise Judah, and Israel. And we just finished up w/regards to Joash the king of Judah who did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him. You recall how his aunt Jehosheba had saved his life when his grand mother was seeking to wipe out all the royal heirs. Now she was the wife of the high priest Jehoiada so Aunt Jehosheba and uncle Jehoiada raised him, keeping him hidden in the temple for 6 yrs. And in the 7th yr he was brought out, anointed as the king, Grandma Athaliah was put to death and Joash was used to reestablish righteousness in Judah. He focused on eradicating the temple and priest of Baal and rebuilding the Temple of the Lord. And we seen how that God’s people had a heart for God’s house, so they would bring their tithes and their offerings into the Temple, it would be placed (as it were) in an Agape box and then out of that they would pay the various contractors to do the work. And things went really well until Jehoiada died, and then Joash began the accelerated slide down the slippery slopes of spiritual decay. And when the prophet Zechariah the son of Jehoiada came to him and sought to call him back to the ways and the will of God, Joash had him stoned, the bible says that “Joash the king did not remember the kindness which Jehoiada his (that is Zechariah’s) father had done to him, but killed his son.” Well, because of that a couple of his own servants conspired against *him* and killed *him*. And though Joash goes down in history as a good king for Judah overall, the fact is that though much good came through him, in the end didn’t finish to well. Now ch 13 rewinds us about 17 yrs, and takes us back up to Israel to see what was happening there. Notice

Vs1-3

Now Jehu was the guy whom God used to erase the lineage of Ahab and Jezebel from the face of the earth, and so God rewarded him in that he told him that he would give his family the throne in Israel to the 4th generation. But after Jehu got rid of Baal worship he did nothing to end the calf worship that Jeroboam the son of Nebat had establish in the beginning. Perhaps you recall the situation, Rehoboam the son of Solomon refused to lighten the load on the people after his dad died, so they took off and 10 tribes banded together, and Judah and Benjamin banded together, and Rehoboam reigned in Judah and Jeroboam was made king over Israel. Well Jeroboam began to get a bit nervous because the Temple was in Jerusalem (Judah’s territory) and he thought that if the people traveled to Jerusalem all the time to worship, eventually their hearts would be drawn back to the house of David and they’d kill him. So he placed a couple of golden calves in Israel, one in Dan, the other in Bethel and said, “No need to travel to Jerusalem to worship, we’ve got a couple of places here for your convenience.” And in so doing he led the nation of Israel right into idolatry. And now all these decades gone by and we read of how its still entrenched in the nation and none of the kings have done anything about it. We notice 4 things in these 3 vs that should give us a bit of insight and they are #1 He did evil in the sight of the Lord, #2 He did not depart from it #3 It aroused God’s anger, which in turn #4 Brought God’s chastening.

Listen, the bible tells us “*Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.*” 1 Cor 10:11 In other words we don’t have the record of all these things so that we can sit around and cut them down and wonder why they never got it.

It’s been written for *our* admonition, for *our* rebuke, so that we might learn *from* them and not repeat the mistakes *of* them. Over and over again we’ve seen and *will continue to see* in Israel a repeated pattern of sin, namely idolatry, and we read, “They did not depart.” But these things were written for *our* rebuke, what does that mean? That God would have us to depart from the evil of idolatry. Because we serve a jealous God, who hates it when other things take priority over Him in our hearts. That’s what idolatry is, other things taking priority over your love relationship w/the Lord in your heart. Because whatever we place on that platform of the highest priority in our hearts, to that thing (whatever it may be, money, pursuing a hobby, being a workaholic, climbing the corporate ladder etc) we become a slave. We will be driven by the highest priority of our lives. Peter put it like this, “*...for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.*” 2 Peter 2:19 Jesus said it like this, “*No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.*” Luke 16:13 So to be overcome is to be enslaved, and to be enslaved to anything, or *anyone* other than Christ is to work ruin and destruction into your life. Sowing to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption. We’re to be overcome by Christ, slaves of righteousness. Paul said, “*For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.*” Rom 6:19 He goes on, “*...now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.*” Rom 6:22 You see God loves you, and it angers Him to see you invite anything into your life that will ultimately only *destroy* your life, and out of sorts priorities, or miss managed main concerns will do just that, we’re to love the Lord our God and Him only are we to serve. And when we walk away from that aim, it stirs the Lord’s anger, and ultimately if we don’t repent brings about His chastening hand. Why? Because, “*...whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.*” Heb 12:6 He goes on, “*Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*” Heb 12:11 Or to understand that another way, the chief aim of the chastening hand of the Lord is not our misery, but to train us in the way of righteousness rather than rebellion and to lead us to repentance. So if you find yourself under the chastening hand of the Lord, don’t despise it, learn to embrace it, be thankful for it, submit yourself to it that you might be trained by it. Because it bears witness that you’re His child, if you weren’t His child He wouldn’t discipline your life, but because you’re His, He will lead you in the ways of righteousness (if necessary) by chastening your life.

One other thing that we see here is that God *can* use the wicked to discipline the righteous, the Syrians didn’t serve the Lord, but they’re being used *by* the Lord to serve the purposes *of* the Lord.

Vs4-5

This in a way reminds us of the pattern that was taking place in the people in the days of the judges. The people would be oppressed by the enemy, time would go by, they would cry out to the Lord, the Lord heard them, raised up a deliverer *for* them but they always seemed to revert back to their old ways.

But what I want you to see here is the familiar pattern of the grace of God coming so quickly to the rescue just as soon as He's cried out to. Jehoahaz, who did evil in the *sight* of the Lord, who did not depart from his idolatrous ways *before* the Lord, was brought deliverance just as soon as he cried out *to* the Lord. God wants to deliver you, looks for opportunity to show mercy to you, but so often we become the victim of our own ways, and we have not because in our pride we ask not. As long as Jehoahaz was sort of "sucking it up" and seeking to deal w/it on his own, matters continued to get worse. But when he resolved to the fact that he couldn't do it on his own, needed to look beyond himself and cried out to the Lord, God was right there ready to show mercy.

2 Things to notice about vs 4, #1 God listened to him, and #2 God saw the oppression of Israel. God sees our oppression, and He listens to our cry. If you're at all interested in the type of oppression w/which Hazael oppressed Israel you can refer to 2nd Kings 8:12 where Elisha told him before he was king how that he would kill their young, and rip open their women w/child and all. Hazael was incredibly cruel to Israel, as a matter of fact you can read in Amos ch 1 how that some 50 yrs later God pronounced judgment on the house of Hazael and the Syrians because of their cruelty to Israel.

Now there are some obvious evangelical overtones in these vs w/regards to the fact that mankind is under the incredible cruelty of the oppression of sin, and God is just waiting for us to come to the end of us that we might cry out to Him that He might give to us a deliverer. I mean that deliverer was just waiting in the wings, God was ready and prepared to deliver them the whole time. But that deliverance wouldn't be imparted to them until it was asked for. You know where I'm headed w/this, Jesus is just waiting to deliver mankind from the oppression of sin, He sees it, is aware of it, but He won't deliver us from it until we ask. Again God sees *your* situation, He's aware of those things that stress, and oppress your life, perhaps you're there because you got yourself into a mess. I mean it's your own fault, God wants to help you, to be there for you, but you've got to invite Him into the equation, ask for His help that He might deliver you from that of that stressing, and oppressing situation. (But look at vs 6)

Vs6

What was the general attitude of the nation of Israel towards the deliverance that God had granted them? "Thanks God for the favor, I'll look You up the next time I need You." How typical is that? People in essence using God to get them out of a bind but have no real heart towards repentance. Van Halen wrote a song years ago called, "Best of both worlds" which by a loose translation said, "I want to live like hell, then go to Heaven."

And that's a mainstream mentality, but it doesn't work that way, people want to turn *to* God for deliverance, but not *away* from their sin in repentance. But repentance is more than just turning *to* God, it's also turning *away* from sin. We talked a bit about this Sunday morning as Paul was urging the Lycaonians to *turn from these useless things to the Living God*. In 1st Thess Ch 1:9 Paul speaks of how they turned *to* God, *from* idols. And that's always what repentance entails, a turning *to* God, *away from* something else. Anything less than that is not repentance, to turn *to* God, but not really *away* from something else, isn't repentance. But how many people want to keep God in their side pocket, get Him out when their in a bind, but other than that, "Don't bother me, don't call me, I'll call You." That's what seems to be happening here, and we wonder why would God raise up, and give a savior, and deliverer to such a sin bent people? But I suppose before we get to critical we'd do well to look in the mirror and ask the same question. We're such a sin bent, repeat offender kind of people, yet God in His love has given us a Deliverer, a Savior in Jesus Christ God didn't send Jesus to die for a people who had real potential, but just needed a chance to show it. His love *for* us isn't based upon anything *in* us, it's not about our goodness, because there are none that are good, it's about His love *for us* that's not based *on* us, He just loves us.

Vs7

Just utterly, totally, brutally beat them down unrelentingly. That's what the enemy wants to do to you

Vs8-13

Not a whole lot to say about Jehoash, he was a rerun. But there's not a whole lot to be said for the ways of the wicked period.

The bible says, "*You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the wicked; You have blotted out their name forever and ever.*" Ps 9:5 and again, "*The memory of the righteous is blessed, But the name of the wicked will rot.*" Prov 10:7 So there's just not a lot to say here, we've seen his story again and again. But we do back up here and get one glimpse into a certain happening in his life, and that's because it dealt w/the righteous, namely Elisha, notice.

Vs14

These words might be ringing a bell in your mind in that these are the exact words that Elisha said when Elijah was taken from *him*. Now the military might of a nation would be seen as lying in their chariots and their horsemen, so the idea here being that the true might of the nation lie not in a regime of sorts but in the righteous. What he's saying is basically, "What are we going to do w/out you? You're the true source of strength in this nation." Which is right on one hand but wrong on the other, "what do you mean?" Well it's true that having one individual on your side that hears from God is of more value than an entire army. It's true that the key to a strong nation isn't more defense spending (though I'm all for the military don't get me wrong), but the key doesn't lie in more defense spending, but diligent servants of the Lord who will be faithful to share God's Word and lead people to Christ. The bible is clear that, "...*Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.*" Ps 127:1 Which leads me to the

part of his logic that's faulty, it's *the Lord* who'll continue to be there *for*, and the protector of Israel just as He's always been, just because Elisha is dying, that's doesn't mean that God is disappearing. So often we make the mistake of getting our eyes on the man of God rather than the God of the man. But as we seem to say almost every time we're in a portion of scripture like this, God's *workmen* die, but God's *work* goes on. Elisha isn't the defender of Israel, the Living God whom He serves, *is*. So he's right in that it's always good, and to your benefit to have godly people in the mix, but God is the One who'll continue to be there for the nation of Israel w/or w/out Elisha. And that's what Elisha seeks to communicate w/him next.

But before we get to that I want to draw your attention quickly to the fact that Elisha died of a terminal disease, why do I point that out to you? Because as I said Sunday morning, contrary to a fairly popular opinion that godly individuals of faith don't get sick, the scripture makes it clear that just the opposite is true. I think that you're going to be hard pressed to find too many men in scripture of greater faith, used in more powerful ways than Elisha, yet even he fell sick, and of that sickness; died. I'm not sure why so many believers view death as such a horrible thing, and I'm not being fatalistic, Paul said, "...to die is gain." Because death is the vehicle by which God ushers us into His presence, so for the sake of redundancy, don't buy the lie that sickness, and lack of faith, go hand in hand. That's not true, the bible demonstrates even the godliest of individuals, those of the greatest faith, and most powerfully used of God at times fell sick, and so far all of them have died. (Except Elijah and Enoch and that's another study).

Vs15-17

So you're beginning to get the picture here, the king is saying, "W/out you we're sunk!" and Elisha says, "Go grab a bow and some arrows." and So he does, then Elisha says, "Put your hand on it." Then he places his hand over the king's hand, and the idea that he's communicating is that even as the *man* of God had *his hand* on the king's hand on the *bow*, even so the *Spirit* of God would have *His hand* on the king's in the *battle*. Elisha is saying, "It's not about *my* presence in your life, it's about the presence of God in your life, and God is going to use you as the instrument of deliverance for Israel, and the destruction of Syria." (This shooting of the arrow was in essence a declaration of war.) Elisha told him very clearly that he would be the vessel that God would use to strike the Syrians at Aphek until he destroyed them.

Vs18-19

The key word in these vs is "strike." Elisha tells him that he's to "strike" the Syrians until he's destroyed them, then he say, "Take your arrows and strike the ground." Now there are those who say that what's meant by that is that he was to continue to shoot his arrows into the ground rather than just grab them and start banging the ground w/them, I don't know but the idea remains the same and that is that as many times as he would "strike" (key word) the ground, God would use him to "strike" the Syrians. And he just wasn't very enthusiastic about the whole scene, he picked them up and whacked the ground 3x, or shot 3 arrows as it were and then he just sorta quit. Now that made Elisha mad, he said, "Why did you quit after 3, you should've struck the ground 5 or 6 times then you would've had total victory, but because you stopped short, so will your victory."

Now there's an object lesson in the works here and that is that Joash was to place the principle of the Word into practice in his life if he were to experience victory over the enemy. But because he grew weary, he wouldn't reap total victory, he'd only get out of it, what he was willing to put into it. The idea here is that God would have had him to commit whole heartedly, enthusiastically, and then he'd have had complete and total victory, but because he didn't really commit, be it a lack of faith, or just an unwillingness to do the unconventional either way ½ hearted interest reaped ½ hearted results. Now as it relates to various ministry endeavors we'd probably be staggered to see how many projects that God places on people's hearts that never come to fruition because the person meets w/opposition or discouragement along the way. But personally I believe the application is obvious as well.

And notice the interaction of God's sovereignty along man's freewill, God sovereignly promised victory, but to the extent that that victory was experienced was up to him. You want total victory, you need to be committed totally, he didn't commit on that level, so he didn't receive total victory.

But again the idea is that of placing the principles of God's Word into *practice* into your life if we're to gain victory. Now correct me if I'm wrong but in virtually every aspect or arena of life, practice is the key to both performance and proficiency. But generally speaking people don't like to practice, there's no real glory in it, it takes discipline, long hours, meticulous attention to detail etc... But practice pays off when I'm finally on stage, or performance night, when I'm out on the field, or in the operating room, (I'm glad that there are people who've dedicated their bodies to science so that when medical students crack open their 1st chest, they've at least had a little practice, and have a vague idea of what they're looking for.) But my point here is that God wants us to place our faith, and place godliness into practice, the bible says that we're to be clothed w/Christ, that we're to put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness w/longsuffering; bearing w/one another and forgiving one another. That we're to imitate Christ, He's given us an example that we're to do as He has done. We're to *practice* godliness. And God gives us opportunities to practice all the time. We generally interpret them as problems, but given the right perspective they're opportunities to practice imitating Christ, to place godly character into effect, to implement by faith the promises of God. And here's the good news, He's there for you, overshadowing you, helping you, holding your hand, He's willing to do the work in your life and use you as an instrument that demonstrates the victory He that He can give, but you have to be the one to place your faith into practice. Strike enthusiastically, whole-heartedly, and watch God go before you and do the whole thing.

Vs20-21

Seems that Elisha was committed clear to the core doesn't it? And there's much to consider here that we won't but one thing we see here is that out of death comes life. Of course there's an easy transition to the gospel right there, we see also that this other individual lost his life, then he was granted life. Of course Jesus spoke of the fact that if we lost our lives for His sake we'll find life, but then also there's no denying the fact that even in death Elisha was still used to give another man life.

What legacy are you leaving behind? I pray it's one that is godly, that God can use well after you're gone to bring others to life in Him. All 3 of those things are worth thinking about, meditating on, and musing through.

Vs22-25

How many times did he strike the ground? 3, How many victories did he obtain? 3, Just like the Word of God said. We'll end on this thought in vs 23, "The Lord was #1 Gracious to them, #2 Had compassion on them, and #3 Regarded them. Why? Because they were so cool and really wanted to follow Him? No, because of the covenant He'd made w/Ab Isaac and Jacob, because He's true to the promise of His Word. (By the way I love seeing the graciousness of God exuded in the OT because so many people want to make the God of the OT different and more harsh than the God of the NT, but it's the same God). He's gracious, compassionate, and has regard for us, why is God gracious *towards* you, having compassion *upon* you. And regard *for* you? Because you're so cool and really want to follow Him? No, because of the covenant He's made w/you through the cross of Jesus Christ We have been blessed w/every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places *in* Christ, and though we're at times *faithless*, God will ever be *faithful*.

Prayer Points: God we thank You for Your faithfulness, for Your grace, Your compassion, and Your regard for us in Christ. Lord help us to commit to You whole-heartedly, enthusiastically w/all that we are, not to grow weary in doing well. To put into practice the principles found in Your word that You might grant us victory over the enemy. Help us to keep our eyes on You rather than solely on the people used *by* You. And we thank You that even when we do stumble, and get ourselves in a mess, that You see our problems, and listen to our prayers, and are willing to deliver us in our time of need, help us to be humble before You, recognizing our dependence *upon* You, confessing our faults *before* You that we might continue to be used *by* You. In Jesus name...