

## 2 Kings 17:1-41

If someone were to ask me if I thought that the grace of God could be exhausted I would answer with an emphatic, “No.” The bible is very clear, “...where sin abounded, grace abounded *much* more,” Rom 5:20 Which simply put means (as we’ve stated before) that there’s more grace in God than there is sin in you, and that there’s no sin that you can commit which can’t be forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ washing *over* you, and having His righteousness imputed *to* you. Now we could easily divert here into the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit here, in that there is one sin that you can commit that God won’t forgive and that is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Which is to say that when you reject the work, and the witness of the Holy Spirit in your life (which is ultimately to point you to Jesus Christ) the bible says that He came to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And when you reject His work in your life, ultimately to the point of even leaving this planet having rebelled against Him, and having not received Him, than at that point there’s no forgiveness. The grace of God (though limitless) is *limited* to this life; you reject Jesus Christ on this side of eternity, than your fate is forever sealed on the other side of eternity, that’s what the bible teaches.

Now having said all of that, if someone were to ask me if God’s tolerance level for sin can be exhausted I would answer an emphatic “Yes.” You say, “Well that sort of seems like splitting hairs and a double talk sort of way for saying 2 different things about the same subject.” But that’s not really true, God *is* gracious, God *is* merciful, God *is* longsuffering, but God is *also* Holy, God is *also* righteous, and He is true. Which means in short that though He is gracious, He also judges sin. Now if one would simply repent, God’s grace would abound towards their lives, but if one *refuses* to repent, God will judge.

The reason I bring all this up is because ch 17 of the book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings gives to us God’s judgment of the nation of Israel because of their refusal to repent. Out of the 20 kings and over 200 yrs that the nation of Israel has been separate from Judah, not 1 king sought to serve the Lord, or walked in the fear of the Lord, but everyone of them walked in the idolatrous ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel sin. And as I’ve mentioned before as goes the leader, so often so goes the nation, those under that leader, those who follow a certain individual will begin to take on the hue, the various tones and nuances of that leader. (All the more reason to be mindful of your disposition if you’re in leadership because you set the standard, and people begin to take on your tones). But these kings went the way of the world, and so the nation followed suit, now the grace of God is there, forgiveness is waiting in the wings, but before forgiveness comes repentance, and apart from repentance there is only judgment. And as I’ve mentioned so many times over it’s like the sins of a person or a people are like a liquid filling up the wine cup of the wrath of God. And as that cup slowly fills to the brim, God will press it to their lips and force them to drink of their own ways.

Chapter 16 deals with Judah, King Ahaz who reigned for 16 years, *he* was a wicked king, and then he became “A has been.” But 4 years before he became “A has been,” Hoshea took the throne in Israel and he will be the final king of Israel, the cup of God’s wrath is filled to the brim during his reign and the nation having refused to repent for over 200 yrs will finally be carried away into captivity.

Vs1-6

Now there are sort of some interesting things happening here and I think that somewhere in here is a lesson for us but I haven’t quite connected all the dots just yet.

We find here Hoshea, king of Israel whose name means “salvation.” It’s the same name as “Hosea” and it’s a variant on the name of “Joshua.” So “Hoshea” and “Joshua” is just 2 different ways of saying the same thing. Now it was “Joshua” whom they were under when they were brought *into* the land, and we find here “Hoshea” as the one they were under when they were taken *out* of the land. Now for some reason that strikes a cord in me, they were under Joshua coming in, and they were under “Joshua” or “Hoshea” going out.

Something else that is interesting to me is that the last straw seems to be his seeking to yoke up with So the king of Egypt to deliver them from the tax burden they had to pay Assyria. You say, “So” “So what?” Isn’t it ironic that the whole reason they came into the land was to get *away* from slavery in Egypt, and now in this final act of Israel before the captivity they’re turning *to* Egypt to somehow ensure their freedom? So we have a Joshua that brings them in, a Hoshea that takes them out, Egypt whom they were fleeing from, and Egypt whom they’re turning to... And it just seems to me that in the bitter irony of these 2 bookends there’s something to be said, and when you figure it out, please let me know what it is. Now we know that typically speaking, that is speaking in “type” Egypt in scripture represents a “type” of the flesh. And anytime that you/I being in Christ seek to lean *on* or draw support or strength *from* the flesh, red lights should be flashing, because not only can that be a precursor to bondage, but it’s also a dangerous sign of drifting. Why didn’t he call upon the Lord? Why look to Egypt (the flesh) when the Lord wants to be strength *to* you and fight your battles *for* you? It’s an insult to God and a going against everything that He’s done *for* you and has sought to do *in* you via the cross of Jesus Christ Jesus came to deliver us from the bondage of sin and death, the chains of the flesh, and then to turn to the flesh for help in time of need rather than to Him is like a slap in the face of God. And anytime I go to the flesh rather than the Father I’m going to incur problems. The Lord had said through the prophet Isaiah (who was on the scene at this time) “*Woe to the rebellious children, says the LORD, Who take counsel, but not of Me, And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, That they may add sin to sin; Who walk to go down to Egypt, And have not asked My advice, To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, And to trust in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore the strength of Pharaoh Shall be your shame, And trust in the shadow of Egypt Shall be your humiliation.*” Isa 30:1-3 You could read Hosea ch 7 where the prophet speaks into this situation there as well.

The Lord said through Jeremiah, “Cursed is the man who trusts in man, and makes his flesh his strength. Multiple warnings were sent out via the prophets not to trust in, or look *to* Egypt in their time of need, but to seek the Lord. God had said that to trust in Egypt was like trusting in the staff of a broken reed, on which if a man leans it will go into his hand and pierce it, and He said, “So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him.”

And so too with regards to the flesh, over and over again the scriptures teach us to crucify it, place no confidence in it, make no provision for it. But yet how often we look to the flesh rather than the Lord and we find ourselves only incurring problems, bringing ourselves into bondage, all of which could’ve been avoided had we simply turned *to* the Lord, and trusted *in* the Lord for that battle rather than trying to deal with it ourselves.

But these vs speak to us of the political reasons Israel was carried away, Tiglath-Pileser (king of Assyria) had died, Shalmaneser was now king in his place, for 6 yrs Hoshea had paid tribute to Assyria. But he finally decided to try and do something about it, and rather turning to the Lord, he looked to Egypt as his strength and there was just no power there that could help him. Shalmaneser seeing what was going on dealt with the rebellion of Hoshea directly, besieged Samaria for 3 yrs, bound the king, and apparently gave him a life sentence in prison.

As for the rest of Israel they would be deported from their own land and assimilated into foreign soil. Now not every individual in Israel was transported, but all the leaders, the wealthy, anyone considered even remotely influential would be taken. So that all that would be left would be lower class, probably, illiterate what would socially be considered as the cast off’s of Israeli society. And they would be broken up into various regions of Assyrian territory, and they would take other people and place them in the Israeli territory and this would keep the rebellion, the hopes of an uprising slim to nothing. (It would be like...) and those who were placed in Israel, mixing and mingling with those who were left behind is what would eventually make for the “Samaritans” that we find even in Jesus’ day whom the Israelis basically considered garbage, they were just about as low as you could get (in a Jewish opinion) outside of maybe the Gentiles themselves. But they stem from this point.

So that’s sort of the political scene, but what was taking place had definite spiritual roots. We spoke Sunday morning about the way sin is, and how it may air itself one way, (for Paul it was political accusations, making for an uproar etc.) but the root always goes deeper, (in Paul’s case it was envy in the lives of others). Sorta the same thing here in that what took place on the outside seemed like warfare, and the political ramifications thereof, but below all that was the reality of spiritual ramifications over a couple hundred years of sin, rebellion and a refusal to repent, notice.

Vs 7 is the bottom line and then we'll see how that spilled out in other core ways along the way, but see it there, "The children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God." And in vs 8 they, "...walked in the statutes of the nations whom the Lord had cast out from before the children of Israel," then on top of that they also kept what the kings of Israel compounded onto to those things. It blows my mind how we think we'll get away with sins that others don't get away with. What? God cast *them* out because of the sins they were committing but He'll just wink at it when it's *you*? I don't think so, God is no respecter of persons, and to make matters worse, Israel had the law, they had the written word of God that spelled out His heart, His ways, for His people, the people in the land before them didn't have any of those things. Yet God cast them out, how much more than is He going to deal with those who *have His word* yet refuse to obey it, and submit themselves *to* it? It's like when the world does things it's horrendous, but when we engage in the same thing, well, we're under grace, it doesn't work that way. God judges non-repentant sin across the board. That's why Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians (Christians mind you, he was writing to the church) he said, "*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.*" 1 Cor 6:9-10 And again in Gal 5, "*Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*" Gal 5:19-21 Which is to say it doesn't matter if you claim Christ verbally, if you lead the life of the non-believer practically, you'll receive the same reward. Or to put it another way, God judges these sins in anyone's life not just the world, so that if He deals with them over their sin, what makes us think we can sin in the same way and get away with it. Jesus came to set us free, not so that we might be free *to* sin, but that we might be free *from* sin, and the bondage *of* sin. Now we all make mistakes, and you're going to fail, but what's the practiced pattern of your life?

If it's non-repentant sin, than God will deal with you accordingly. That's what the bible teaches, if you're hot God can use you, if you're cold than at least God can begin to break the ice and do what He needs to do to break through to you on that level. But if you're a fence straddler, claiming to be a Christian yet leading the life of the world, that's the worst place you can be. Israel was supposed to be the people of God, yet they were living like people of the world, so now God is dealing with them.

#### Vs9-12

God had expressly warned them over and over again in His word that to walk in the ways of those whom He was casting out before them would reap the same reward. He told them very clearly that even as the land had vomited out those who were there before them because of their sin, so to it would vomit them out as well. Just like we were saying, our sin is no exception with the Lord, He told them not to do it, they did it and now they're bearing the ramifications.

Now back in verse 9 you might just note there are no “secret sins” as far as the Lord is concerned. You might be doing them in secret, but the Lord sees it all. Jesus when He spoke of doing things in such a way as to ensure your reward affirmed that your Father, “sees in secret.” In Luke 8:17 He said, “...*nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light.*” Why, because God sees it all, Heb 4:13 “*And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*” The Psalmist said, “*Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me,’ Even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.*” Ps 139:7-12 So they thought that they were being secretive, and maybe before man they were, but not before God, or else we wouldn’t be reading of it here. But the fact is that there’s nothing we can do that will escape His attention, or somehow be missed/overlooked by Him, He sees it all and holds us accountable accordingly.

### Vs13

This is the grace of God, not only did they have the written word to resort to, but God also sent them warning after warning by the mouths of His prophets for over 200 yrs in Israel, and nearly twice as long in Judah. You see if you just read this ch out of it’s context you might think, “Man, God is hardcore!” But the fact is, His grace is overwhelming, hundreds of years have gone by whereby He’s just waiting on them to repent, and on top of that He’s pleading with them and sending out warnings *to* them by the mouths of His prophets. If someone violates me, I get pretty upset in about 20 minutes if there’s no repentance going on, God gave them over 200 yrs. And instructed them as to how to fall under the wave of blessing through simple obedience rather than impending judgment through rebellion and disobedience.

### Vs14-15

J. Vernon McGee sites 3 basic allegations against Israel in these last 3 vs in vs 13 the fact that they *disobeyed* God as He testified against them, calling them to repentance. #2 In vs14 They *doubted* God, like their fathers who did not believe in the Lord their God, and #3 In Vs 15 They *defied* God, rejecting His statutes and His covenant. And these are more of these core issues spilling out along the way. God’s judgment is incurred through disobedience, doubt, and defiance. We see this phrase, “Stiffened necks” in vs 14 speaking of stubbornness, and pride. The bible says, “*He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, Will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*” Prov 29:1 How important it is to remain teachable, willing to heed the warnings and rebukes of God’s Word. They didn’t believe God, of course with out faith its impossible to please Him, but His Word, be it for your good, or otherwise will come to pass whether we believe it or not.

He warned them of judgment, they lived in unbelief and here they are, in the midst of judgment. And this phrase in vs 15, “They followed idols and became idolaters,” literally means, they followed vanity and became vain. Or they followed emptiness and became empty, or even, “...they followed after worthless things and became worthless.” You’ve heard it before, you will become like your G/god, whatever it is that is the master passion and chief pursuit of your life. If it’s the things of this world, you’ll become worldly, things of vanity, you’ll become vain, empty pursuits leads to an empty life. In Ps 115 he speaks of those who have idols of silver and gold, and he says, *“They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell; They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat. Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them.”* Ps 115:5-8

The point being that if you’re not serving the True and Living God, than you’re blind, deaf and mute regarding the things of the Spirit. You will become like that which you serve, loving, gracious, compassionate, eyes open, able to hear what the Spirit is saying, walking in holiness, doing the work and will of the Lord. Or dead to the Spirit, completely carnal, blind, deaf, and mute regarding righteousness and the life led in the Spirit. God has told us what we need to do, trust in the Lord, receive Jesus Christ, abide in Him and in His Word, now we can choose to obey, or stiffen our necks in unbelief, think it’s no big deal, have our secret sins and all, but you can be sure, that just like this, your sins will find you out.

#### Vs16-18

Now we understand again that it’s impossible to be removed from God’s sight as we mentioned earlier, this is a reference to God removing His hand, His hedge of protection from the nation and giving them over to the end of their own ways. Again the Psalmist said, *“The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry. The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.”* Ps 34:15-16 So God has removed them from the place of His favor, and is giving them the just reward of their ways. They “sold themselves” to do evil, name your price, what is it that will cause you to forsake the Lord, a night of carnal pleasure, enough money to justify the situation in your eyes, power, influence, popularity. People sell out so cheap, they sell themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking the Lord to anger. Now only Judah is left, but they’ll wind up in the same boat ultimately.

#### Vs19-23

Which means obviously until the day that this record was written, they were still there. But in all that time, they never forsook, or repented of the idolatry, the witchcraft, the occultic practices, the astrology and all the rest, child sacrifice, the calling up of the dead, serving nearly every god but their own. And when you sell yourself into sin, it’s just a matter of time before you’re enslaved and in bondage to the enemy, there’s no way around it. He warned them, He told them it would happen and now it has.

## Vs24-29

So this was a polytheistic sort of a circumstance, in typical pagan fashion they served any # of god's and they just added God into the mix. They were being attacked by lions, figured the God of this land must not be pleased with them, so they sought to find out what this God needed from them. It wasn't like they were forsaking all others that they might cling solely to the Lord, they just wanted to appease the Lord, so they could continue on in their ways. You remember when the Syrians were warring against Israel back in 1 Kings ch 20, and the Syrians lost up in the hills so they reasoned, "Israel's God is the God of the hills, but not of the valleys, let's take them on there." They thought God's were regional, they learned that God is Lord of all, but that's the mentality here.

Now Bethel was where one of the golden calves were established and because that's where this priest settled that tells us that more than likely he was pretty twisted in his theology at best, but he taught them the fear, or reverence for the Lord, and they did that.

## Vs29-32

So you see what they wound up with was this twisted religion of pagan practices with some rules and regulations from the law sort of mixed up in there somewhere. They had their own priests and they sought to sacrifice according to the law, but they also did all the other religious requirements of all the other *pagan* practices. It was just a real messed up situation, notice vs 33.

## Vs33-41

Doesn't that phrase just blow you away? "Feared the Lord, yet served their own gods." What does that mean!? It means they didn't want the consequences of doing their own thing, so they went to church, but that didn't stop them from doing whatever they wanted to on the weekends, or any other night of the week. They believed in Jesus, consented to the resurrection, and even believed He'd come back one day, but for all that they still partied, still lived promiscuous lives, and served their own gods. The gods of lust, the gods of money, the gods of various destructive pleasures, but they sacrificed to the Lord, kicked a \$20 into the plate when it went around and figured they were ok. They weren't ok, you can't serve 2 Masters, you'll love one and hate the other, or serve one and despise the other. It's the Lord who delivered you from the bonds of Egypt, who with an outstretched arm and great power, redeemed you from snares of your flesh, of the sin that was destroying your life, it's Him and Him only that you're to fear, that you're to worship, and that you're to serve. We're not to be consenting to and taking part in whatever seems right to whoever if it's what they truly believe, we're to be careful to observe His statutes, His commands, and to obey His Word forever.

Prayer Points: Lord help us to keep you as the sole focus and priority of our lives. That we might follow after You, and so become like You. God, we thank You for Your grace, and mercy, that You're so longsuffering, forgiving, and compassionate. Yet for all that we realize that You've called us to be a repentant people, a people who seek after You, rather than thinking we're somehow exempt or that you'll wink at sin in our lives. Help us not to take Your grace for granted, but to walk in holiness, for You are Holy. Lord, would You teach us what it means to follow You with our whole heart, thank You for Your faithfulness.