

## 2 Kings 8

We left off last time observing 4 lepers enjoying the abundant provision of God's grace. We seen the salvation of an entire city because of the fact that they were willing to share the message, to propel the good news of the great things God had done. How that the people didn't have to die, but that they could be saved if they would by faith come on out of the city of starvation and partake of the goodness of God. They realized that it wasn't right for them to be so blessed, to have the answer of life, and not share it with those who would otherwise die around them.

And what a powerful picture of how God wants to work practically in our lives today, we've discussed before how leprosy so typifies sin, who we are apart from His divine intervention, just being desensitized as the affects of sin slowly decays And destroys our lives. And in chapter 7 the lepers were starving, because of a great famine in the city due to the surrounding of that city by the Syrian army. So they decided to take a little venture of faith, they had nothing to lose, why not see if by being willing to lose their lives, they might find life. So they ventured down the path towards the Syrian camp only to find it completely abandoned with an over abundant supply of food/water, silver and gold. *Life*, and that more abundant, why, how? Because God had gone before them and made all the provisions for them that they might just enter into His goodness by no work of their own, simple faith. And God wants us to enter into the abundant life that He's provided for us in Christ, not by any work of our own, but by simple faith trusting that He's gone before us, done the whole work on our behalf, now we can just enjoy the great things He has done. But its not right that we enter in, and grow fat on God's goodness while there's a whole city out there starving, we need to tell them what we've come across in Christ. All that God has done, how that they don't have to die, but that they can be saved if they would just by faith come out of the city of starvation and partake of God's goodness. Jesus said, "*I am the bread of life.*" John 6:48 He said, "*This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.*" John 6:50-51 Is it any wonder that the Psalmist would conclude, "*Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!*" Ps 34:8

But unfortunately not everyone will be able to partake of the bread of life, because their unbelief, their doubt will disqualify them. *That* was the tragic ending of ch 7, the officer of the king who had mocked God's provision, couldn't receive that God could do such a thing, save them in such a way, he seen the salvation of God, but was unable to enter in to it. He died, disqualified, unfortunately not everyone will believe, but that doesn't in anyway divert the fact that God wants us to share the good news, that Jesus Christ has given His life for the sin of the world, that by believing in Him we receive the forgiveness of sin, the salvation of our souls.

Now chapter 8 opens up with a circumstance that most bible scholars believe to be out of chronological order with the rest of what's been happening. And the reason they believe that is because Gehazi (Elisha's servant) is seen speaking to the king with regard *to* Elisha. And it makes sense that it probably is an event that didn't happen right at this moment in the text, but it doesn't have to be out of order necessarily. Now we know that Gehazi (being a leper) wouldn't have been allowed into the city, (and there are some wonder if perhaps he wasn't one of the 4 lepers of ch 7, there's no way to really know) but its possible that the king may've spoken to him from the gate, where business was conducted with regularity.

I'm sure that generally speaking the king wouldn't have spoken with any leper, but Gehazi served to satisfy the king's curiosity so he may've made an exception with him on this particular occasion. Either way it really doesn't matter with regard to the primary point that's portrayed.

Vs1-2

You recall the occasion, Elisha would occasionally make his way through Shunem and whenever he did, this lady would beckon him to turn in and be refreshed, have a meal, get some rest etc. She spoke to her husband and even had an addition built on to the house that he could use as his own private sort of get away. One day Elisha said, "You've been extraordinarily kind to me for a long time, what can I do for you?" She said, "You can't do anything for me, this isn't about what I can get *from* you, but what I can do *for* you, I desire to serve and not be served." She was content, but there was one thing, Elisha asked Gehazi, "What do you think I should do for her?" He said, "Well, she doesn't have a son and her husband is old so its not looking good for her to have any children." Elisha calls her in, tells her that by this time next year she would have a son. And that's exactly what happened, but one day the boy was out in the field with dad, began to get a headache, dad said, "Go to your mother." Long story short the boy dies, she saddles a donkey and heads to Mt Carmel. And when she gets there Elisha is confused as to why she's come because the Lord hadn't told him, that kind of baffled him (and what an awesome place to be, walking so close with the Lord that you're surprised when you *don't* hear from Him as opposed to being surprised when you *do*). But he sent Gehazi ahead of them, Gehazi was unable to help the situation, Elisha came in to the boy, stretched himself out on the child and he began to turn warm, then he did it again, the child sneezed 7 times, opened his eyes, and was presented back to his mother alive. Now right after that event there in ch 4 we read that there was a famine in the land, and according to most commentators that's the famine that they believe correlates with this event. But be that as it may, Elisha now speaks to her, forewarns her of a famine to come, that it'll be 7 yrs, and that she needs to find somewhere else to live in that interim period.

Few things to observe here, 1<sup>st</sup> of all (I don't know if there's any correlation but its interesting) when Elijah declared a famine, do you remember how long it was for? 3½ yrs, Elisha asked for a double portion with regard to the Spirit that rested upon Elijah, now the famine that *he* declares will be for 7 yrs. But this is the way that God so often works, He put "the crunch" on the nation of Israel for 3½ yrs in the days of Elijah, but they're still walking in idolatry, no real fruit of repentance, so now God presses in on them a little more. And this is the way God works with you and me, its not His desire to just lay into us when we step out of line. But if we don't respond to the leading His eye, He breaks out the bit and bridle that we might be persuaded to walk in His ways rather than our own. Now the nonbeliever doesn't get dealt with like that, at times he seems to get away with things. How many times have your kids sought to justify what they did based upon someone else did. What do you say? "They're not my kids, but you are, so you're not getting away with it." The nation of Israel belongs to God, they're not to be doing as the other nations did, so He's seeking to bring them to the place of repentance. God had told them that one of the ways He would deal with and chasten them as a nation would be with droughts and famine. He said with regards to their disobedience, "*I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze.*" Lev 26:19 So natural disasters (though not always) but they can be a wake up call from God, as He's seeking to bring a nation to repentance.

It's interesting that when the heartland of the United States was being pummeled with over 400 tornadoes in one week in early May of last year, Bush was pressing in on Israel to negotiate their heartland with the Palestinians. It's like "Wake up, that land belongs to Israel." and I'm not prophesying by any means but its not going to be a surprise if more of those types of things happen as he renews his efforts to negotiate Israel's land away thinking that that will somehow bring peace to the world. I haven't read the book, but there's a book called "Eye to Eye" by Bill Koenig where he documents these radical things that happen in our country with in 24-48 hrs of our nation applying pressure on Israel to give up their land. The back of his book states, The three costliest insurance events in U.S. history, Four of the seven most expensive hurricanes in U.S. history, Three of the four largest tornado outbreaks in U.S. history, Seven of the top ten natural disasters in U.S. history ranked by FEMA relief costs, The largest terrorism event in U.S. history, followed by America's hundred billion dollar and growing war on terror. All of these major catastrophes transpired on the very same day or within 24 to 48 hours of the U.S. presidents Bush, Clinton and Bush applying pressure on Israel to trade her land for promises of "peace and security," sponsoring major "land for peace" meetings, making major public statements pertaining to Israel's covenant land and/or calling for a Palestinian state. So God will try to wake up a nation through natural disasters, again not all disasters are the chastening hand of God, but it can be.

Something we want to see and note about this woman is the fact that she heard the word and took heed to the Word. Remember James told us that it's not the hearers of the Word who are blessed in what they do, it's the doers. She was blessed while the rest of the nation was chastened because she was a doer of the word. Elisha said, "Arise and go, take your family with you, there's a famine coming and it'll be here for 7 years."

She believed the Word, and demonstrated that by how she responded *to* the Word. How do I know that you believe the Word of God? By the way you respond *to* the Word of God, do you take heed *to* it once you've come into the light *of* it? We spoke Sunday morning about walking in the light we've been given. Or do you hear it and not give heed to it, not give it its place in permeating *through* you, working change *into* you. She obeyed, therefore she was blessed, if you like dry times of spiritual famine and starvation, than just don't do what God's Word says and you'll get to experience the famine like the rest of the world. But if you'll heed the Word of God, God will take care of your life. Doesn't mean you'll never have tough times, but the Lord is in control of your life, and you trust in Him to take care of your life however He sees fit, you're just going to walk in obedience and trust in Him for whatever may come of it. God (through Elisha) promised to provide for this woman if she would walk in accordance with His Word, and she did, and so He did.

Now, you recall the widow that Elijah provided for during the days of famine when he was one the scene. It was a miracle, he said, "I know you've only got enough flour and oil left for one piece of bread, make it and give it to me and you'll never lack all the days of the famine." But here, Elisha who did more miracles than Elijah just sent this widow (presuming her husband is dead by now) to another land. Why not provide miraculously for her? Because God's not going to be boxed in, and formulized, God will take care of us, but He's going to move in different ways at different times in our lives. We spoke of mimicking the Master, a couple of Sundays ago as it pertains to ministry. But by no means was I suggesting to make a formula out of Jesus every movement. Jesus gave to us an example in service, self-denial, sacrifice, and we're to emulate Him in such things. But virtually every miracle Jesus ever performed He did so in a different manner. Why? Because if He always did it the same way we'd become mechanical in our relationship with Him rather than personal, we just go through the same motions and expect the same results.

But He would have us to seek Him daily, at each individual circumstance as to how He would like us to emulate His model of service, self-denial, and sacrifice. In Elijah's case, the Lord wanted to miraculously provide by multiplying her resources. In Elisha's case the Lord wanted to miraculously provide by forewarning her so that she could escape the wrath to come and be blessed in another land in her obedience to Him. So don't box God in, be open to Him moving in different ways at different times in your life, even if it brings about the same results.

Vs3-6

So between vs 2-3, 7 yrs go by. She comes back to Israel and apparently someone had found her place abandoned, decided to move in, make it their own. She no doubt sought to reason with them to no avail, so she decides to make an appeal to the king. Now there were some things that Elisha had done that had obviously been on a national level with regards to the publicity, but the king is there talking to Gehazi (and what the circumstances were that brought them together we don't know) but he wants to know some of the other things that have happened that didn't make it into the Samaria tribune, missed the public press.

Gehazi begins to tell him of the Shunammite woman, what had happened, from barren to giving birth, how the child had died, and been restored to life. And what do you know, at that very moment when he's telling the story, the woman comes walking up to the gate to seek an appeal for her land. Gehazi says, "This is her, the one I was telling you about." The king looks at her, her son probably standing right there beside her, and he says, "Tell me what happened." She tells him the whole thing, clear up to the point that brought her to his presence right then; how she just came back and found these people in her house. The king says, "Restore all that was hers, and not only that but every bit of proceed that that land has yielded over the last 7 yrs, make sure she's reimbursed for that."

You have to love the timing of God, I read somewhere that a coincidence is when God does a miracle and chooses to remain anonymous. What are the odds of her walking into the king's presence at the very moment Gehazi is telling her story some 7 yrs later? Well, they're 100% if you believe what the Word of God says. Ps 37:23 says, "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.*" Prov 16:9 "*A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.*" Paul told the Philippians, "...it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." Phil 2:13 So trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths, He'll lead you in paths of righteousness and take care of your life.

One other thing we should see here, God is still reaping good things out of the tragedy of her son's death and the subsequent raising of him from the dead. It's the Rom 8:28 thing, who would've thought that anything good would've come from a tragedy? But that tragedy gave God the opportunity to show Himself strong on Elisha's behalf, and now on her behalf before the king. If that whole situation hadn't occurred, odds are that when she came before the king he wouldn't have given her the time of day. He'd have told her that she shouldn't have left if she wanted to keep her place, "But you expect me to restore your land after 7 yrs of abandonment? You've made your own choice now deal with it." But way back then God foresaw this encounter and made the necessary provisions to ensure she'd be cared for, He's still using the testimony of what's happened in her and her sons lives for His glory and her good.

Vs7-8

It's the, "There's no such thing as an atheist in a fox hole," kinda thing. Elisha has been both a blessing and a burden to Ben Hadad, healed Naaman, but exposed his plans to the king of Israel. Earlier he tried to apprehend Elisha, now he's coming to him for help.

It's sort of interesting that when Ahaziah, the king of Israel that fell through the lattice in his upper room, that he sent to Baal-Zebub the god of Ekron to see if he would recover. And here we have Ben Hadad the King of Syria wondering about his life and he sends for Elisha to inquire of the Lord...I'm not altogether sure what to make of that, you have the king of what's supposed to be a godly nation inquiring of a pagan god, and the king of a pagan nation inquiring of the One True Living God.

## Vs9-10

Now when Naaman brought him a gift he didn't receive it, here we don't read of him refusing it, we don't read of his receiving it either, but it would seem he must've. But again the context of the other occasion was salvation by grace, such isn't the case here. But vs 10 almost looks like Elisha is encouraging him to lie, you have to be careful here. More than likely the sense of this passage is, "Go and tell him what you're going to tell him, but the Lord has shown me that he's really going to die." You see it wasn't the illness that was going to kill him, it was Hazael. And Elisha is telling him that he knows what Hazael is already purposed in his heart, "You're going to tell him that its going to be alright, comfort him, disarm him in that way and then you're going to kill him." "Go, say, 'You shall certainly recover,' but the Lord has shown me that he will really die."

## Vs11-15

He suffocated him, Elisha told him that the king would really die and he knew it. Than he just began to stare at Hazael until Hazael became ashamed, as if he was staring into his soul, just looking right through him, then all of the sudden Elisha just begins to weep. Hazael says, "Why are you weeping?" Elisha says, "Because I know the horrible atrocities you'll commit against Israel. You'll burn their strongholds with fire, dash their children, kill the young men with the sword, and rip open the pregnant women." Hazael says, "Am I some sort of a dog ,that I would do such a thing?!" He says, "You're going to be the next king of Syria, and these are the kind of things you'll do." And don't misunderstand what's going on here, I really don't think Hazael thinks he'd never do such a thing. He's simply trying to cover the wickedness of his own heart, "Why I never!" But Elisha says in essence, "God's shown me your heart," remember he stared at him until Hazael was ashamed. The bible says, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.*" Jer 17:9-10 Hazael put up a front, Elisha said, God sees right through that stuff. And God sees right through us too, He knows what's swimming around in our hearts. That's why David said, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.*" Ps 139:23-24

## Vs16-18

This is a theme that surfaces with regularity in the scriptures, how important it is not to become unequally yoked. Light trying to mingle with darkness, the believer with the non-believer, the bible is very clear, "*Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'*" 1 Cor 15:33 ASU The odds of them changing you is much greater than you changing them. Now Jehoshaphat was for the most part a godly man, but his son became corrupt, why? Vs 18, "The daughter of Ahab was his wife." You remember who Ahab's wife was? Jezebel, this was a wicked man, who raised wicked kids, so though dad sought to be the influence his son needed, this wicked woman had a greater influence upon him, why? She was his wife; wives take warning, be careful the influence you subject your husband to because that influence is great, be it for the good or the bad you wield the single most greatest influence with regards to humanity in his life, wield it well and with godly responsibility.

## Vs19-24

He was a real nice guy, did things like murdering all of his brothers after he became king so he wouldn't have a rival to the throne. Killed other princes in Israel, 2<sup>nd</sup> Chron 21 tells us that the Lord struck him with an incurable intestinal disease, and 2 years into it his intestines came out and he died in severe pain. And no one really cared when he died.

But did you notice vs 19, "Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah, for the sake of his servant David." The implication there is that when a person gets so wicked, God just ends them, they fill to the full the wine cup of the wrath of God and then He presses it to their lips and they're forced to drink it. But we see here that David's godliness provided an inheritance of grace for his offspring. Doesn't mean that they were saved because of anything he did, but that God extended grace, and further opportunity of repentance to them because of David. The bible tells us, "*The righteous man walks in his integrity; His children are blessed after him.*" Prov 20:7 So let me encourage you to walk in righteousness and integrity, that you might be a blessing to your children for generations to come.

Now there were ramifications, Edom revolted (which Isaac had prophesied after Jacob stole the blessing) Esau was wanting Isaac to bless him. And so Isaac said, "*Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, And of the dew of heaven from above. By your sword you shall live, And you shall serve your brother; And it shall come to pass, when you become restless, That you shall break his yoke from your neck.*" Gen 27:39-40

Libnah as well revolted, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Chron 21 tells us its because he forsook the Lord, these were ramifications that he reaped in forsaking the Lord.

## Vs25-29

What a mess, how important to establish godly roots in our kids, obviously they'll one day be accountable for their own decisions and unfortunately some of them will make the wrong ones, such as Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat. But if they're properly equipped it can make such a difference. Let me read you something I came across and then we'll close.

"Several years ago the Christian Life and Faith magazine presented some unusual facts about two families. In 1677 an immoral man (Max Jukes) married a very licentious woman. Nineteen hundred descendants came from the generations begun by that union. Of these, 771 were criminals, 250 were arrested for various offenses, 60 were thieves, and 39 were convicted for murder. Forty of the women were known to have venereal disease. These people spent a combined total of 1300 years behind bars and cost the State of New York nearly 3 million dollars.

The other family was the Edwards family. The third generation included Jonathan Edwards who was the great New England revival preacher and who became president of Princeton University. Of the 1,344 descendants, many were college presidents and professors.

One hundred eighty-six became ministers of the gospel, and many others were active in their churches. Eighty-six were state senators, three were Congressmen, 30 judges, and one became Vice President of the United States. No reference was made of anyone spending time in jail or in the poorhouse.”

The righteous man walks in his integrity, his children are blessed after him...

Prayer points: May we walk in integrity, providing our children with an inheritance of grace. May You search our hearts and see if there be any wicked way in us, lead us in the way everlasting. Help us to hear Your word and heed Your word.