

Elisha 11 - The Administration of Ministry

We have been learning about serving God from the ministry of Elisha. We have considered in the previous sermons:

- How a calling to ministry can sometimes look merely like a promotion. Only *sometimes* does God move in spectacular ways to bring people into ministry.
- How faithfulness and personal involvement are significant in ministry.
- How a balanced ministry ranges from blessing to cursing, or judgment, in rebuke, reproof, and exhortation. Ministry is not just all Polyanna positivity.
- How ministry has to be unbiased, ready to bless whoever God brings to us with what they actually need, not just what they *think* they need based on their appetites or, worse, lust.
- How we always minister out of the sufficiency of Christ to what people *truly* need.
- How the ultimate and highest priority ministry is soul winning

So far, from the healing of Naaman, we have examined from the young maid, Elisha, Gehazi and Naaman:

- How we minister within whatever circumstances we find ourselves.
- How we must maintain a purity of ministry with integrity.
- How we must not abuse ministry either directly or by neglect.
- How the fruit of ministry is not just the salvation of a soul. The fullness of the born again child of God as he, in turn, becomes a minister of God

When you look at the spiritual impact of a ministry moment, the easiest thing to notice is the devotional effect. Devotionally, we are drawn closer to God and deeper into our spiritual experience. But as we have seen so far, there are a number of factors from different people who were involved that

create quite a dynamic situation that were all part of this miracle. We are now going to look at the part of Benhadad, the King of Syria, and Jehoram, the King of Israel, who were remotely connected in Naaman's healing. The input of the kings could possibly seem only coincidental to the occasion. Their role was not very involved, but that does not mean that it was insignificant. The weak spiritual character and almost faithlessness of the king of Israel is worth consideration, but there is another aspect of ministry that we need to bring out. It becomes noticeable when we can look at the way Jehoram fumbled the moment when Naaman approached him for the miracle. The role of the kings presents an opportunity to recognize the role of *administration* and organization in ministry. The organization of the work of God might not *seem* critical, but its nevertheless a very important aspect of ministry.

1. Ministry conviction -

The small part of Benhadad and the weak way Jehoram behaved might make you miss their role. The first thing we want to consider is the necessity of conviction when it comes to the administration of ministry. Naaman had approached Benhadad first with a request, who in turn sent him on to Jehoram. Let's look at the two kings' interaction with Naaman:

2Kgs 5:5-7 And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand *pieces* of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

6And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have *therewith* sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.

7And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter,

that he rent his clothes, and said, *Am* I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.

Earlier in Jehoram's reign, he had gotten rid of an image of *Baal*, yet he followed the practice of Jeroboam and his *golden calves*. He had suffered from a number of incursions, or attacks, of Benhadad, the Syrian king. When Benhadad sent Naaman to him, it very easily looked like Benhadad was looking for an excuse to invade Israel again. The idea that Naaman would naturally report to these two kings reveals the common understanding of the role of a king as an administrator in the work of God.

All kings had a certain kind of responsibility as shepherds, or pastors. A pastor is not just a New Testament Church thing. Jeremiah referred to pastors nine times. We especially realize that this was a reference to *kings* as pastors when he prophesied against Jeconiah and Jehoiakim in Jeremiah 22. In chapter 23, Jeremiah complained about such pastors but looked forward to a king/shepherd/pastor who would lead in righteousness.

Jer 23:1-6 Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.

2Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.

3And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

4And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and

they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.

5Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

6In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Jehoram fumbled his responsibility. He *should* have had a grip on the administration of his kingdom. He should have called on Elisha for help right away. In his failure in his administrative role as king/shepherd we see the importance of good leadership. God didn't just give us a manual on religious rules for ministry, but clothed His principles in real life. No one in the Bible got things perfectly right, so we are left to learn by good, although imperfect, examples of leadership. We are also given people like Jehoram so that *we* can learn by their even *more* imperfect examples.

What we can see from Jehoram is that leadership requires conviction. Paul challenged Timothy to a ministry of conviction.

1Tim 4:12-16 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

13Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

14Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

15Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

16Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt

both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

Paul prayed for boldness in ministry:

Phil 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, *so* now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death.

Eph 6:18-20 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

19And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,
20For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Rom 15:15-16 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

16That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

Our conviction comes from the *Word of God*. We can speak so confidently and boldly as we have more understanding of the Bible. It is in a culture of victimization that we affirm weak leaders who tip-toe around us.

2Tim 4:2-4 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

3For the time will come when they will not endure sound

doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Churches that try to emulate a soft Jesus of their imagination and are trying not to offend will end up compromising. They don't remember that the Jesus who wept over Lazarus also turned the Temple tables upside down (not once but *twice*) and called the Pharisees, "snakes." People who stand for nothing will fall for everything. We have a mission and must press forward in that mission in spite of our imperfect understanding. We must do this as long as we are firm on the things we *do* have more sure understanding of. What we learn from Jehoram's failure is that there *should* be an administration organizing ministry efforts. We should not just expect ministry to *merely* happen. We should be ready to respond to the organizing efforts of bold church leadership.

2. The administration of ministry -

Jehoram lacked bold decisiveness to act. But as the concept of the role of a king implies, there has to be administration and organization. In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul addressed a sense of chaos that had evolved in the Corinthian church and the chapter closes out with this admonition:

1Cor 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

Paul identified the role of Titus who was to set up an orderly ministry in Crete.

Titus 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

Paul explained to the Ephesians the

work of the administration of ministry.

Eph 4:11-16 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

...

15But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

16From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Titus 2:1-8 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:

2That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.

3The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

4That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

5*To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

6Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.

7In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

8Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

There are so many things that could be said about organization in the church like the call for deacons or the spiritual gifts we receive for serving. We are to be organized in God's work, but it requires people to apply themselves to ministry to make it happen. Elisha compensated for the lack of direction from the king. What we can learn is that we need to be ready to be *responsive* to church administration.

3. Voluntary ministry -

There is something else we learn from how Elisha recovered the moment when Jehoram fumbled his administration. Although we approach ministry as orderly as possible, there is a difference in the way it is done in the kingdom of God than the way the world might do it. We see this in the approach that the King of Syria takes and the way the King of Israel takes. That is why it is important to notice Benhadad in addition to Jehoram. There is a difference in the role of the two kings that we need to see here. Naaman went to his own king first the way he should have. The king of Syria merely says "Go." In that simple statement, he had fulfilled his obligation of administration in the way that is typical of the world's understanding. He commanded that the healing *should* take place. Next, Naaman went to the King of Israel. The role of the King of Israel is *different* from the King of Syria. We don't see him taking charge of the healing and commanding Elisha to take care of the matter. There is a subtle difference in Jehoram's reaction. This is because there is a difference, between Jehoram and Benhadad. Their job descriptions were slightly different.

Pagan kings could be more commanding because the pagans looked at their role often in a dual way. A common perception of the king in the pagan world was that he served in a dual capacity as king *and* priest. In Israel, the king's role and the priest's role were differentiated. Saul and Hezekiah both crossed the roles. Saul lost his reign completely and Hezekiah became a leper.

Worldly man blends the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world into the role of their king, but God *separates* His Kingdom from the Kingdom of the world. The conflict of the Kingdom of the World and the Kingdom of God is a major issue that plays out all through the Bible and the history of the church. This is how you could have so many unbelievers as kings in Israel. Israel was not a worldly kingdom the way pagans exercised government, but it was not the Millennial Kingdom to come, either. Even though Israel belonged to God, it was not the Millennial Kingdom where the great King, Jesus, will have both roles as king and priest. The best that could be hoped for in this age is a government that is informed by the Kingdom of God. Jehoram was responsible for orderly government, but he should have known to call on Elisha to *invite* him. Fortunately for Jehoram, Elisha was willing to weigh in on the situation.

2Kgs 5:8 And it was *so*, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

From this whole situation we learn a very important aspect in the administration of ministry. All who minister in church do so voluntarily. Jehoram couldn't command Elisha to heal, but Elisha offered to help. When we look way further in history, it is interesting that John Calvin who was so prominent in the Reformation sought to resign as pastor in Geneva. Because of the way the church continued to be mixed with the state during the Reformation, the city council exercised the power to *reject* his resignation and he stayed on as pastor until his death. We are used to freedom of religion as it became established in America so that you know that I am here because I *want* to be here, not because I am forced to be

here by the government. So it is with any of us. No one here is *compelled* by man to serve God. This is one of the things that has made America so great. Modern countries which have had state churches have moderated the church/state function. The world's ultimate answer would eliminate the kingdom of God completely as communist countries have logically done. Those forces are currently at work here in America which is why Christians must be vigilant to maintain that which was created at the founding of the country. This church is here not because the government maintains it, but because *we* maintain it. There are those who are happy to enjoy what the church has to offer but won't participate to make church happen. No one is going to force you to serve God. Everything about the Christian life is voluntary. Elisha volunteered himself, but since this is a message about working within the organization of the church we should do so with the same volunteering attitude.

Your belief is not something forced on you. Your obedience to God is not forced...although you will miss out on God's best if you rebel! Whether people tithe, pray, study, or serve, it is all voluntary. It would be a mistake to think that if you don't *have* to do anything that you can then just neglect God. We have no excuse to lag behind and let the work of the Lord falter. You cannot *be made* to serve God, but you can oblige and make *yourself* serve Him. The whole idea of serving is so that you can enjoy the blessing of God. You don't *have* to serve God, but equally you don't *have* to be blessed! The consistent blessing of God comes to those who are working with Him, not against Him. Make yourself available and freely serve in God's work.

You can resist the pressure to get saved. You don't *have* to get saved. You can remain in your sin, become a slave to your lust, become corrupted in your soul and insist that you are righteous without God and then spend eternity in Hell...but I don't recommend it! It is your choice with what you will do with Christ! You can call on Him to save you forever and serve Him with your whole heart.

1. Ministry conviction - 2Kgs 5:5-7, Jer 23:1-6, 1Tim 4:12-16, Phil 1:20, Eph 6:18-20, Rom 15:15-16, 2Tim 4:2-4
2. The administration of ministry - 1Cor 14:40, Titus 1:5, Eph 4:11-16, Titus 2:1-8
3. Voluntary ministry - 2Kgs 5:8