

Elisha 13 - Missing the Blessing

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.
- 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
- How we need to be voluntarily responsive to the administration of ministry
- How we need to communicate the vision we have received of God to others by our direct witness and the testimony of our lives

Reflecting back on the last message, we should really try to do our best to help people see and understand God and the Gospel. We run into frustration, though, when some resist that message. The passage that we are going to look at today describes just that kind of

experience in ministry. King Benhadad of Syria was back on the attack, besieging Samaria at that time. Our interest is going to be in a counselor of the King of Israel.

1. Desperate times call for desperate measures -

Desperate times call for desperate measures. This does not mean that all measures are justified. It is just that when you live in extreme times it becomes more important to think harder. At least you would think so.

2Kgs 6:24-33 And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria.

25And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was *sold* for fourscore *pieces* of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five *pieces* of silver. **[The siege of Samaria was so hard that people would not only be willing to eat dove dung, they would pay a high price for it!]**

26And as the king of Israel **[Jehoram]** was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king.

27And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress?

28And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow.

29So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.

30And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the

woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, *he had* sackcloth within upon his flesh. **[Rough sackcloth was used in mourning as an affliction to the flesh to increase the sense of mourning. The times were so desperate that people had turned to cannibalism.]**

31 Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day. (Cont'd below)

The King Jehoram of Israel was desperate, but not actually desperate enough. He should have humbled himself before Elisha instead of being furious. When the times are so desperate, we should get a clue about how helpless we are and that we need real help. This is common in Twelve Step programs. The first thing you need to do is to admit you have a problem and need help. Although Twelve Step programs have some issues, we should find at least the first seven steps very interesting. The reason any of these steps might work is how compatible they are with Scripture. What is so interesting is that when people try the least bit to get honest with themselves they end up acknowledging God.

Twelve Steps of Alcoholics

Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. **[For us, we would just say God.]**
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. **[The Ten Commandments is a great place to start.]**
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of

our wrongs. **[God and ourselves is sufficient, but there is a wisdom in involving someone else.]**

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. **[For us, this is repentance and salvation in Christ.]**

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. **[This involves sanctification.]**

King Jehoram's prideful character is revealed in Elisha's response to the king's approach.

2Kgs 6, continued

32But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him; and *the king* sent a man from before him: but ere the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: *is* not the sound of his master's feet behind him?

33And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil *is* of the LORD; what should I wait for the LORD any longer?

When things are bad enough, there is more reason to expect that people will respond.

2. Not everyone will accept the blessings of God -

We have to get used to it, but not everyone will respond positively to what God has to offer. You can't make people receive God's blessing. Elisha prophesied how everything was going to turn around, but one of the king's counselors was too hard in his heart.

2Kgs 7:1-2 Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time *shall* a

measure of fine flour *be sold* for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.

2Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, *if* the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he **[Elisha]** said, Behold, thou shalt see *it* with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

There are many reasons why people have hardened their heart, but make no mistake about it, man's nature is to resist God.

Jer 17:9 The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

It often takes time to harden the heart. After all, how many times do we have to be told the economy is up and everything is better before we begin to suspect something is amiss? How many times do people get handed a Gospel tract which they throw away before they start just flat out ignoring you when doing tract distribution? How many times do we talk to a relative before they quit listening? There is something that *could* break the cycle, but it is going to require a great sense of repentance. The king's counselor was incredulous and probably thought himself quite the expert. He challenged God Himself that even if He were to open the windows of heaven not even God could make that kind of difference. It is a wonder he wasn't stricken down. It requires a broken and contrite heart to be able to be in tune with what God wants to do in our lives.

Ps 51:17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

In the meantime, there were four lepers who got desperate enough to leave their fate in the hands of God.

2Kgs 7:3-7 And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?

4If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine *is* in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.

5And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, *there was* no man there.

6For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, *even* the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.

7Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it *was*, and fled for their life.

Summarizing in the interest of time, the lepers ate and drank and took what they could. They realized that they had an obligation to tell the king, but when they went to him, the king was in disbelief. Those who are desperate enough often know to trust in God. You don't *have* to wait until you are poor or a leper before you give in to Him.

Mark 10:23-24 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

24And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is

it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

Jas 2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

The king held off until the next day until he finally consented to let someone go out to see whether the lepers were true. When they returned and told the king the people poured out to join in the spoils. But what about the king's counselor?

2Kgs 7:16-20 And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was *sold* for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.

17And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him.

18And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria:

19And that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, *if* the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

20And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died.

This is the case of so many people. They reject what God has to offer and end up getting what their own wisdom

can provide.

3. Behold, today is the day of salvation -

There is a consolation and a warning in this Scripture.

First, the consolation is for us that when people resist our efforts to give them the Gospel or Godly advice, it is not our fault if they don't receive it. This is in spite of whether we could have studied harder, been more sensitive, or been a better example. Each person receives the Word of God in an imperfect world but that does not make them any less accountable before God. We may not be perfect, but God *is*.

Rom 1:16-20 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

18For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.

20For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

John 16:7-10 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

8And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9Of sin, because they believe not on me;

10Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

Each person must answer to God. We might feel frustrated by not being successful in converting someone to Christ, but we have to remember that we don't do the conversion. This where we remind ourselves that we are called upon to be faithful to deliver the message, people are responsible to respond all on their own.

1Cor 4:1-5 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

3But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

4For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

5Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

Secondly, there is a warning. The warning is for those who hear the message of God. It is only really a minor fear that we let get in our way to responding to God. We might feel like our precious autonomy is being threatened. We are afraid we won't get to have our way when we want to sin, that someone is going to challenge us and we don't want to be told what to do. That is a terrible reason to resist God and spend eternity in a flaming Godless hell. Neither the king's counselor nor the lepers knew what was in store. The counselor resisted the Word of God from the prophet, the lepers merely abandoned

self to whatever God would have in store for them. In salvation, we might be only able to sin and not do any good to save ourselves, but we *could* just turn to God and surrender ourselves to Him.

2Cor 5:20-21 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

2Cor 6:1-2 We then, *as* workers together *with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

2(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

It didn't take but 24 hours for the counselor to meet his doom. In just the same way, you don't know what the next 24 hours will bring.

Jas 4:14 Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

No one can truly be manipulated into the Gospel. For their to be a true change, each one must genuinely surrender their heart over to Christ. What is your decision today?

1. Desperate times call for desperate measures - 2Kgs 6:24-33
2. Not everyone will accept the blessings of God - 2Kgs 7:1-2, Jer 17:9, Ps 51:17, 2Kgs 7:3-7, Mark 10:23-24, Jas 2:5, 2Kgs 7:16-20
3. Behold, today is the day of salvation - Rom 1:16-20, John 16:7-10, 1Cor 4:1-5, 2Cor 5:20-21, 6:1-2, Jas 4:14