

## Elisha 17- Almost

As we minister to people, we will encounter those who will *almost* believe and trust Christ. They say that they "tried" Christianity. What they really mean is that they sought to *use* Jesus to fulfill their appetites and desires, but found that He would not be their tool. Or, perhaps they tried out Christian principles, but having no root in their hearts they moved on. The irony is that those principles *do* have a positive effect in general. A just society is blessed when it embraces them even if it doesn't endorse the Christian faith.

Then there are also those who actually become Christians and get distracted by the cares of this life and fall short of Christ's calling for their lives. For those who do live their commitment to Christ, there will still be shortcomings and failures. The problem is when life is *characterized* by a series of *almosts*. We *almost* follow through at critical moments in our service to God.

Let's see the example of this in 2 Kings 13:14-19 which represents a lost ministry moment because Joash, the king, *almost* did enough. He *almost* did enough to ensure a victory over the Syrians.

2Kgs 13:14-19 Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

15And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows.

16And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand *upon it*: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. **[This is reminiscent of the transfer of power that Elisha received from Elijah, except that Joash was not such a very Godly man, although he had started**

out well. It is truly a pity that Joash did not fully appreciate the moment, but Elisha was truly exercising an unbiased ministry to him in spite of his poor performance. This is common in ministry.]

17And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened *it*. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. **[To the east was Syria]** And he said, The arrow of the LORD'S deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed *them*.

18And he said, Take the arrows. And he took *them*. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed. **[Because he had just been told that this had to do with smiting Syria, Joash should have had some idea of the symbolism of the moment. What would have been more reflective of the significance of this would be if he had beat the ground with energy. There was likely something lackluster in his attitude that Elisha was picking up on.]**

19And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed *it*: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria *but* thrice.

Language possesses the remarkable ability to evoke emotions. Among the vast array of words, there are certain ones that carry a unique weight. *Almost* is just such a word. It can be crushing, but it can also be inspiring.

#### 1. The saddest word: *Almost* -

While seemingly innocuous, *almost* has the power to evoke a sense of longing, regret, and wistfulness. It can be the saddest word, for it encapsulates the lingering essence of missed

opportunities, unfulfilled dreams, and the bittersweet nature of life's uncertainties. At its worst, *almost* is the last word before entering into eternity in Hell.

*Almost* embodies the infinitesimal space that creates the infinite distance between desire and achievement. It represents the fleeting moment when success is within reach, only to disappear by a bad decision to turn away. It teases with the possibility of what could have been, leaving a trail of what-ifs and what-might-have-beens in its wake. The sadness lies in the recognition that mere inches separated us from our desires. *Almost* represents the split second when a decision is made. Almost happens in a moment of time.

*Almost* serves as a constant reminder of chances not taken, risks not embraced, and dreams left unrealized. It represents the haunting contemplation of the road not traveled, the decisions left unmade, and the paths left unexplored.

Prov 24:30-33 I went by the field  
of the slothful, and by the  
vineyard of the man void of  
understanding;

31And, lo, it was all grown over  
with thorns, *and* nettles had  
covered the face thereof, and the  
stone wall thereof was broken  
down.

32Then I saw, *and* considered *it*  
well: I looked upon *it*, *and*  
received instruction.

33*Yet* a little sleep, a little  
slumber, a little folding of the  
hands to sleep:

In the aftermath of *almost*, we grapple with the lingering question of what our lives might have been had we acted with greater courage or seized those fleeting moments.

What if Noah *almost* finished the Ark? What if Moses *almost* went to see what was happening at the burning bush? What if Abraham *almost* left Ur of the Chaldees? What if Jesus *almost* went to the cross? What if Paul *almost* answered the Macedonian Call? What if someone *almost* spoke to you about Christ?

The word "almost" echoes with unfulfilled potential, emphasizing the incompleteness of our endeavors. It speaks of unachieved ambitions, unfinished projects, and aspirations that fell short of fruition. Whether in personal relationships, professional pursuits, or creative endeavors, *almost* leaves us yearning for a sense of closure and the realization of our full potential in Christ.

The sadness embedded within *almost* derives from its stark contrast with certainty. Unlike definitive outcomes, the word represents the murky realm of uncertainty, where hopes and desires hang delicately in the balance. If only we had sufficient assurance, *almost* could have been turned into *victory*. It exists in the space between success and failure, tantalizingly close to triumph but ultimately consigned to the realm of missed opportunities.

Joash certainly missed his opportunity to have complete victory, but he was not alone in the Bible. Cain *almost* had a proper sacrifice. David *almost* had an unblemished record. Solomon was *almost* perfect in wisdom. The saddest *almost* was King Agrippa hearing the testimony of Paul at his trial:

Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, **Almost** thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

People want success and the blessing of God, they just want to skip the God part. They *almost* get the true blessing, which is to know God or living for Him. Once they know God, they can move on to *hope*, which is the happy flip-side of the sadness of *almost*.

## 2. The happy flip-side of almost: *Hope* -

Almost doesn't have to be sad. It all depends on whether you are looking back at what might have been or forward on what might be. If we don't fall short of God's promise of salvation, we use *almost* in a new way. Now we say, "It won't be long now, our reward is almost here. Instead of stopping short I can

move on." This sense of the word *almost* is conveyed by the word *hope*. For the sake of those who are new to the Bible, *hope* is more than just wishfulness or an expression of what we would *like*. Hope is a Bible word that speaks of our *expectation* based on God's promise to us.

Eph 1:15-18 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

16Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

17That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

18The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the **hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,**

Paul goes on to describe that inheritance which is a the glory of the resurrection.

We have the hope, or expectation, of spiritual power through the Holy Ghost.

1Thess 1:2-5 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

3Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

4Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

5For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

We have the expectation of eternal life because God cannot lie and promised

it to us.

Titus 1:1-2 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness;

2In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

We have the confident hope, or expectation, that Christ is going to return.

Titus 2:11-13 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

12Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

13Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

We need to exercise that hope firmly to the end because that is where hope is realized.

Heb 3:5-6 And Moses verily *was* faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

6But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

### 3. The happiest word: *Saved* -

If the word *almost* can be a sad word *or* a hopeful word, the happiest word has to be *saved*. Saved speaks of a bad situation redeemed.

Gal 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that

hangeth on a tree:

Titus 3:5-7 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

We are more than conquerors. We have the victory *now*. It is not just something that is almost here, but *is* here.

1Cor 15:55-57 O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?

56The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law.

57But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1John 5:4-5 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.

5Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Rom 8:31-39 What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

32He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

33Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth.

34Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

35Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation,

or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The tragedy has always been how many Christians have fallen short of victory. They *almost* started serving God. Perhaps you *almost* joined in soul winning but you "were busy" You *almost* got interested in knowing the Bible, but that was going to mean going to other services besides worship. You *almost* committed yourself to service, but what if you wanted to go on vacation some day and didn't want to make a commitment you couldn't keep 100%? You *almost* started reading through the Bible. You *almost* made a promise to God to get rid of the cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, or fornication. God's churches will be destroyed not by Satan but by Christians who *almost* took care of God's business. The even greater tragedy is that there are so many Christians who aren't even up to the point of *almost*.

If you are at the point where you *are* pursuing God, you are undoubtedly facing the frustrating times of being human. You *are* on the other side of *almost*. We don't have to go much longer...even if that means another 50 years. There will be plenty of victories on the way to the ultimate victory, but by all means don't let your guard down. 2Kgs 13:14-19,

1. The saddest word: *Almost* - Prov 24:30-33, Acts 26:28



2. The happy flip-side of almost: *Hope* - Eph 1:15-18, 1Thess 1:2-5, Titus 1:1-2, 11-13, Heb 3:5-6
3. The happiest word: *Saved* - Gal 3:13, Titus 3:5-7, 1Cor 15:55-57, 1John 5:4-5, Rom 8:31-39