

Elisha 4 - An Unbiased Ministry

Today we're going to look at another aspect of ministry. In this series of messages we have looked at the nature of ministry modeled by the life of Elisha. So far we have examined such things as:

- How a calling to ministry can sometimes look merely like a promotion
- How faithfulness and personal involvement are significant in ministry
- How a balanced ministry ranges from blessing to cursing, poor judgment, in rebuke, reproof, and exhortation.

Today we're going to look at how a balanced ministry is unbiased and plays no favorites. We are going to see this in the way Elisha ministers to two kings: Jehoram the King of Israel in the north, and Jehoshaphat the King of Judah in the South.

1. A tale of two kings -

Before we see Jehoshaphat with Jehoram, we first hear of him in 1Ki 22 where he had tried to work with Jehoram's father, evil King Ahab, in battle against the Syrians. Ahab was slain in that battle, but Jehoshaphat came back in peace. The report of this in 2 Chronicles 19 gives us insight to the character of Jehoshaphat.

2Chr 19:1-4 And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.

2And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore *is* wrath upon thee from before the LORD.

3Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.

4And Jehoshaphat dwelt at

Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beersheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers.

Jehoshaphat also went on to depend on the Lord for his battles as can be seen in 2Chr 20.

King Jehoram was the son of Ahab. Ahab was the king moved beyond moved beyond the worship of the makeshift golden calf idols that had been set up at the beginning of the northern kingdom years before. Jeroboam had set up the idols when God split the kingdom of Israel from the Kingdom of Judah. Years later, Ahab did even worse when he adopted Baal worship from the pagans who had not been driven out of the land. When Ahab died, Jehoram became king and his father's influence could be seen in his reign.

2Kgs 3:1-3 Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. 2And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. 3Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.

Jehoram dialed it back, but he still worked evil in Israel. He did not return entirely to the Lord. He failed to destroy the image of Baal his father had made, but only 'put it away.'

Twelve years into Jehoram's reign, Mesha, the king of Moab, rose up in rebellion. He had been subservient to Ahab, but once Ahab was dead, Mesha took advantage of the change in leadership. Jehoram called on Jehoshaphat from the southern kingdom of Judah to go to battle against Mesha. With Jehoram in the lead, the combined forces ran out of their supplies and were

in jeopardy of defeat. The character of each king is revealed at how they responded to their crisis.

2Kgs 3:10-12 And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!

11But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here *is* Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.

12And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

Jehoram was wicked, even though not as bad as his father. Jehoshaphat, might have had some problems, but he was distinctly a king who sought the Lord. In this moment of crisis, their natural inclination was manifest. Jehoram cried out *against* God, but Jehoshaphat cried out *to* God.

It would be interesting to consider the nature of each king's attitude toward the Lord. We could compare their attitude with ours and examine our hearts as to which way we lean. We could also look at God's grace and His provision for them. Since we are looking at Elisha in the context of ministry, we want to take notice of how Elisha treated them. As we look at the contrast between these two kings and how Elisha responded to them, we can get another perspective on the character of ministry.

2. No respect of persons -

The way to understand this passage is in the contrast between the two kings and Elisha's response that matched their spiritual character.

2Kgs 3:13-18 And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What

have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

14And Elisha said, *As* the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.

Elisha had no regard for Jehoram. Jehoram as much as said that he didn't need any prophet; that he had it all figured out and that they were doomed by God to lose. If it hadn't been for Jehoshaphat, Elisha wouldn't have had anything to do with Jehoram, but he had a message for Jehoshaphat. We next see God's grace. In spite of Jehoram, God was going to show His mercy and give them the victory.

15But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

16And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches.

17For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.

18And this is *but* a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

The people were failing from thirst, so God was going to provide water for them. Elisha told them to dig ditches to receive the water. God's abundance of grace was not going to stop there. He was going to give them victory over the Moabites as well. We read later how the Jews found the ditches indeed filled with

water the next day. In the sunrise reflecting off the water, the Moabites thought they saw blood and assumed the Israelite army had been destroyed and went to fetch the spoils. With their guard let down, the Israelites were able to win the battle.

Elisha demonstrated that he was unbiased in that he told the truth no matter what. The blessing that followed was enjoyed by anyone who was on the battlefield. *Our* focus is on the way Elisha responded to the two kings. It might seem that he had *disrespected* one, Jehoram, but *respected* the *other*, Jehoshaphat. We might use the word respect in the more general way here, but what he *really* had was a different *estimation*, or evaluation, of each king. He treated Jehoram the way one should deal with someone who has *no* regard for God. He treated Jehoshaphat the way one should deal with someone who *does* have regard for God.

Today, the idea of respect has degenerated to merely mean that you have to give in to someone's self-centered demands. You can see examples of this when someone full of pride makes a video for the internet where they are rudely demanding respect. What they mean is that someone should be caving in to their temper tantrum. Or, you might see fiery riots of people demanding respect. By this modern corruption of the idea of respect, it might look like Elisha disrespected Jehoram. It was not that Elisha disrespected Jehoram, he had a different *regard*, or view, or estimation for him than Jehoshaphat. He did not let the fact that Jehoram was a king influence him. He was a "straight shooter."

There are many proper ways we speak of respect but one of the ways the word respect is used more specifically in the Bible that fits here is not being a respecter of persons. We are going to look at respect in that regard as we examine *respecter* of persons, *non-respecter* of persons, and *dis-respecter* of persons.

There are 15 times in the Bible where we are warned about being *respecter of*

persons.

Lev 19:15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

Prov 24:23 These *things* also *belong* to the wise. *It is* not good to have respect of persons in judgment.

Rom 2:11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

This is a very important aspect of ministry. To be a respecer of persons means to have a prejudice based on an artificial standard for how you treat people. James wrote very well about this:

Jas 2:1-9 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons.

2For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

3And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

4Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

5Hearken, 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?

6But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

7Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

8If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

9But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

In character, one might be actually more respectable, but if you use wealth as an artificial gauge of respectability, you could run the risk of being a respecter of persons. Martin Luther King, Jr., was right when he said that men should be judged by the content of their character, not the color of their skin. It is in this same way that Elisha did not respect one king more than another. He did not respect the color of the kings' robes, but the content of their character. There was no artificial standard of celebrity that influenced his sense of ministry. He had no bias. He treated the kings according to the content of their character.

Being a *respecter* of persons vs. a *non-respecter* of persons involves whether we play favorites or treat people according to their character. Just as the opposite of love is apathy and not hate, being a *disrespecter* of persons does not mean treating people badly, it means dealing with *no one at all*. There are those who are equal opportunity disrespecters. They talk to no one and stay away from everyone. Friendships expose and subject us to a certain vulnerability. Being a disrespecter of others we become respecters of ourselves and regard only our own comfort.

3. An unbiased application of ministry -

The ministry characteristic we notice on this occasion is the unbiased *application* of ministry. For example, Jesus actually *is* better than everyone else but He humbled himself to dwell and work with us.

Mark 10:13-14 And they brought young children to him, that he

should touch them: and *his* disciples rebuked those that brought *them*.

14But when Jesus saw *it*, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Matt 8:5-7 And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,

6And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

7And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

Matt 8:2-3 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

3And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Matt 20:26-28 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

27And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

28Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Luke 10:38-42 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

39And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

40But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her

therefore that she help me.

41And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

42But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Jesus contended with the Pharisees and regularly gave them chances to respond. Pilate was about to consent to His death. Jesus did not answer any charge against Himself, but gave even him an opportunity to respond.

John 18:37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Jesus did not chase people out of the temple who deserved to be chased, but He had compassion on the people. He gave real answers to those to the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians when they came to challenge Him as He prepared to be taken to the judgment.

There are exercises one can do to make sure they are not respecter of persons. It all requires spending time with people. Spend time with those who by whatever the world standards are considered less than. Spend time with those who intimidate you. Look beyond the superficial and know that, in reality, you only have to scratch the surface to discover that each and every one of us is in some way "less than." You can begin with the household of faith, the church family.

Gal 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

One exercise to be avoid becoming a

disrespector of persons is to make up a notebook and go on a "Social Scavenger Hunt." A scavenger hunt is where you go out with a list of items to find. Whoever finds the most items becomes the winner. A social scavenger hunt is a phrase I made-up to describe a list of things that you can find out about people to know them better. There are many things that you can talk about with people beyond this list, but it can get you started.

- When is their birthday?
- How did they get saved?
- What is their job?
- What do they need prayer for?
- How many brothers and sisters do they have; how many older younger?
- Who in their family is saved?
- How did they meet their spouse?
- What hobby do they have?
- What ministries do they have?

When Jesus reached out to us, He did it by His grace. Grace is not a respector of persons. Grace is applied to all. The effect is equal to all *according to how it is received*. Grace does not depend on the person, but on God. He offers grace to all sinners without respect to how rich they are, how they look, how many Facebook friends they have, who they know, how many "likes" they have, etc. The effect of grace depends solely on our decision to receive it or not. Those who receive it will be saved. Those who reject it will be damned. It's nothing personal. God gives all sinners what they want – a Godless eternity. He gives all repentant sinners what they want – eternal salvation.

As Christ reached out to all, we need to do the same thing to others around us.

Rom 1:14-18 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

16For 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;

Rom 5:6-15 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

11And not only *so*, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

12Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

13(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

14Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

15But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

If you are not a child of God, you don't have to worry about impressing Him for salvation. It can't be done because as a non-respecter of persons He knows your character far better than you do. He knows that if you were treated appropriately, you would be judged and sent to Hell. But in His grace, also as a non-respecter of persons, He offers you the same salvation that is offered to anyone. What happens next depends on whether you receive His grace and accept Him as *your* Savior.

1. A tale of two kings - 2Chr 19:1-4, 2Kgs 3:1-12
2. No respect of persons - 2Kgs 3:13-18, Lev 19:15, Prov 24:23, Rom 2:11, Jas 2:1-9
3. An unbiased application of ministry - Mark 10:13-14, Matt 8:5-7, Matt 8:2-3, 20:26-28, Luke 10:38-42, John 18:37, Gal 6:10, Rom 1:14-18