

Elisha 7 - Ministering In, not Under, Our Circumstances

We have been learning about serving God from the ministry of Elisha. We have considered

- 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, or judgment, in rebuke, reproof, and exhortation.
- How ministry has to be unbiased, ready to bless whoever God brings to us with what they actually need.
- 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

1. Never alone -

As we read about the miracle of the healing of Naaman, the Syrian general, we are going to notice that there were *five* people who were involved in this ministry moment. Each one had a different role that they played. This should remind us of Paul's remarks to the Corinthians who were creating a sense of rivalry in the church.

1Cor 3:4-10 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

5Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

6I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

7So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

8Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

9For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building.
10According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

There are some immature believers who pride themselves as being "lone wolves" who are out taking a stand by themselves and contending for the faith when all around them are compromisers who don't have what it takes to serve God. Or, perhaps they might feel closer to God if they are less connected and committed to people here below. There *are* times that we might have to take a stand, alone, for righteousness. There *are* times when we need to get away by ourselves to a quiet place with God. *Sometimes* we don't have get to *have* someone with us when we have to step up to a spiritual challenge. But, going it alone in our spiritual lives should not be the norm. When we think of those who have planted and those who have watered, we should always be mindful that our work is never done without support. Our ministry does not depend all on ourselves. Jesus demonstrated the power of people working together by sending the apostles out in pairs to spread the Gospel.

Mark 6:7 And he called *unto him* the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

In Moses' Song, we have the implication of power in two vs. one going out to battle in the strength of the Lord:

Deut 32:30 How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?

As we look at the first person in this miracle story, we are going to look at the one who got the ball rolling. She was young maid, a slave, who made all the difference. Being a slave, you might not think that she *could* make a difference because of her circumstances, but she did because she served God *in* her circumstances and not *under* her circumstances. She was not limited because of her circumstances. In fact, without her, there would *be no* miracle and no healing for Naaman.

2. The oppression of personal circumstances -

In one of my college classes years ago, I remember a story told about an experiment that was conducted to see how a crowd would react to a crisis. The professor and one of the university football players staged an attack. The professor had padding on the back of his neck and back while he stood in front of the class delivering his lecture. The giant football player ran into the auditorium and swung a pipe at the professor. The well padded professor dropped to the floor pretending to be hurt. The football player started to run up the aisle out of the auditorium when he was tackled by several large men in the class. When the video was reviewed later on by the class it was revealed that everyone, including the men who had tackled the aggressor, had been frozen for a few moments at first as if they did not know what to do. What actually prompted the men into action, was a slight, young, coed who stuck her foot out and tripped the "attacker." It was only then that the men were roused to take action. We should never think that we are too small or too weak to be of any use for God's work. Gideon's multiple thousands were paired down to 300 to fight the Midianites in battle. Gideon thought himself the least in his house. It was a small boy with a few loaves and fishes that Jesus blessed to provide for the multitudes. When the older Jews saw the foundation laid for the temple that would replace Solomon's, they cried. But God told Zerubbabel,

Zech 4:6-10 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This *is* the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

7Who *art* thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel *thou shalt become* a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone *thereof with* shoutings, *crying*, Grace, grace unto it.

8Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

9The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.

10For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel *with* those seven; they *are* the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

In the life of the Syrian general Naaman, there was a seemingly insignificant captive who waited on Naaman's wife.

2Kgs 5:1-4 Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, *but he was* a leper.

2And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife.

3And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord *were* with the prophet that *is* in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

4And *one* went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that *is* of the land of

Israel.

There are a number of things that could have kept her from being voted most like to succeed. She was young. She was not a strong warrior. She was not part of the aristocracy. She was a slave. She had no position of prominence. She was not one of the sons of the prophets. She was not a wife. She was a foreigner. She was part of the spoils of a battle. She had no family support. She was not wealthy. She had no standing in the house.

3. Ministering in, not under, our circumstances -

The young maid was captured away from a happier *time* in life a happier *place* in life, and happier *circumstances* of life. She might have been a slave, but she was not held captive by her circumstances.

- She most likely had a good reputation as a worker. They must have trusted her insights. If you are a flakey worker employers will not respect your input as much.
- She had every reason to hold back to get even with this man who had taken her captive.
- She had every earthly and human reason to complain.

Jesus taught the right attitude when He was questioned by the scribes:

Mark 12:29-31 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment.

31 And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Instead of living life with a grudge, she served God. She was more concerned for the person that she was ministering to than for herself.

The Scriptures are filled with stories of people who *could* have but *did not* complain about how unfair their situation was. The last words of Abel could have been, "No fair!" Joseph could have complained, "No fair!" The Hebrew children in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace could have said, "No fair!" Paul in the Philippian jail could have cried, "No fair!" But these, along with the maid, testified for the Lord, instead. There are some things we just can't get out of but in our personal condition we can serve.

When it comes time to speak up for the Lord, none of that matters. She *did* have one thing going for her that was more important than anything else: she knew the Lord. She knew to send him to the man of God. She believed that Naaman could get healing there. But make no mistake about it, it was not just healing that was in mind. If it was just healing that she had in mind any advice would do. She was sending him to something even greater. She had a respect for God that was beyond any of their circumstances. Naaman ended up getting healed of his leprosy, but there was something even greater than that which happened. We might make the mistake of being impressed with the *physical* miracle and miss the *true* miracle. Naaman is going to get saved.

Some people won't believe unless if there is a physical miracle in their life. But everyone alive has at least this miracle: you are alive and not burning in hell. If you don't know Jesus Christ as your Savior, you need an even bigger miracle. You need to get saved by trusting Christ as your Savior. Naaman thought he only needed a physical healing when what he really needed was spiritual healing. People sometimes come to church looking for relief in this life and might walk away disappointed because they don't get that relief. They miss the opportunity to have a new life in

Christ and being able to walk with God.

Just like the maid, we might be the pivotal moment in someone's eternity. As much of a somebody someone might be in this life, a few generations after they die they will be pretty much forgotten. In Christ, that is quite alright. In just the same way, we don't know the young maid's name, but she was known of God.

You can live *under* your circumstances and complain about how unfair everything is. Or, you can live for God, make an eternal difference for someone, and enter your final glorious reward in heaven. Are you serving God *in* your circumstances or are you just barely tolerating your lot in life? Choose to make a difference right where you live and work.

Maybe you are someone in need of the miracle of eternal life. Taking care of the problems you are facing begins with knowing Christ as your Savior and then walking with Him and other believers.

1. Never alone - 1Cor 3:4-10, Mark 6:7, Deut 32:30
2. The oppression of personal circumstances - Zech 4:6-10, 2Kgs 5:1-4
3. Ministering in, not under, our circumstances - Mark 12:29-31