

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to 2 Kings 7.

As we have been going through our study in 2 Kings – we have focused on the ministry of the prophet Elisha.

And I have pointed out time and time again how his ministry (his miracles, his interactions with individuals, his grace) all point to Jesus Christ.

In our study this morning, we are going see God extend salvation to His wayward people.

And just like in our past studies, some will choose to respond in faith and others will choose to respond with skepticism – they will have an unbelieving heart.

Let's pray...

The city of Samaria has been besieged by the Syrian army.

They have surrounded the city – and not allowing anything to come in or go out of Samaria.

All of the shelves at the local grocery store were empty – kind of like the toilet paper shortage we saw last year but with food.

And because food was becoming scarce – prices started to go up.

And we saw how bad it was at the end of the study last week.

The people were paying big bucks for donkey heads and pigeon poop – because that's all that was left to eat.

We even saw the story of the two women who had made arrangements to boil their sons and eat them – and one of them backed out when it was her turn to provide her son to be boiled.

By the way, our natural instinct is to think that the woman who hid her son did it because she either probably wanted to eat her son herself or because she probably never intended to boil him in the first place – the old, you go first trick.

But what if – she had a change of heart.

What if she realized what she was doing was wicked and repented???

We have all done things in our past that we regret???

[1Jo 1:9 NKJV] 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So things were really bad in Samaria – because they had turned their back on God.

But here at the beginning of chapter seven – we see that God didn't turn His back on them.

Church, God is faithful – when we turn our back on Him, He will pursue us and He will never quit.

He will never leave us or forsake us. That is His promise to us.

[2Ki 7:1-20 NKJV] 1 Then Elisha said, "Hear the word of the LORD. **Thus says the LORD: 'Tomorrow about this time a seah of fine flour [shall be sold] for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.' "**

I asked you make a note of where Elisha states, Thus says the LORD –

God had given the prophet Elisha a message to give to His rebellious people.

And in the message, He made Himself known to them and He demonstrated His power to them.

“Right now – you are paying 80 shekels of silver for a donkey head – an unclean animal head with little meat, in less than 24 hours, you are going to be able to buy a 4 lb bag of flour for 1 shekle or 8 lb of barley for 1 shekle”

Think of the amazing promise that God is providing.

He is promising their deliverance.

He is promising provisions – there will be such an abundance of food that it will be cheap to buy.

And it will be done in less than 24 hours – that way you will know it was Him.

2 So **an officer** on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God and said, "Look, [if] the LORD would make **windows in heaven**, could this thing be?" And he said, "In fact, you shall see [it] with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it."

So as soon as Elisha delivers God's message –

He is met by a skeptic – an officer of the king.

He hears God's word and says to himself – no way.

There is no way that we can have an abundance of food so quickly -

The reference to windows in heaven – is a reference to rain.

When the rain stopped during the flood – the scriptures tell us that the windows of heaven were closed.

So what the officer is saying here is that even if they had a good rain – the famine will not be able to end right away - it will take time for the grain to grow – so the people in Samaria will not be able to benefit immediately from it.

And Elisha responds to him by saying – because of your skepticism / your lack of faith, you're going to see the blessing with your own eyes – but you are not going to be able to partake of it.

You see, the issue that this officer had was that when he heard the proclamation of what God was about to do –

When he heard of God's great power and promise – he started to think it through and work out a solution in his mind – and it was then that he said – not possible.

Remember Elisha's words.

Thus says the LORD – God is promising that this is going to happen – and the officer's response is not even God is powerful enough to make it happen the way He said.

In the officer's mind – God is a little God and not a big God. He is skeptical of God's promise and His power.

I believe that many times, we make the same mistake that the officer did here.

After hearing the Word of God – His promises sometimes -

We become skeptical of how great a God we have.

We become skeptical of the promises He has given us.

And I will give you an example.

We all go through trials and hardships –

Many times, before we even bring our need to the foot of the cross – we attempt to come up with a solution on how to resolve the issue.

And when we have come up with the solution, we then pray that God will resolve the problem with our solution.

Our prayers become directional type prayers to God.

God, having problems at work – I need you to do....

God, our nation is falling apart – I need you to do the following....

We start telling God what to do in our prayer life.

And the problem with this is that when God doesn't answer our prayers that way we want Him to (using our solution) and in within our time frame, we start to think that God has abandoned us and then we start to accuse Him.

"God allowed this to happen in my life – God doesn't love me anymore."

We don't tell God what to do – we are simply to bring our trouble to Him.

He decides on how and when He will answer our prayer.

God has many more resources at His disposal than we do.

When we put our faith and trust in Him, His resources become our resources.

And God will sometimes use unforeseen ways to resolve the problems we face –

And that is exactly what He does to deliver the people of Samaria.

3 Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, "Why are we sitting here until we die?"

So there were four leprous men – the significance of this is that if the people in Samaria had it bad with the lack of food, these four leprous men must have had it even worse.

And the reason is that lepers had to live outside the city gates, they were not allowed in the city because they were contagious.

So the way they got food was by people throwing leftovers over the wall – if there is no food – there is no leftovers.

God is going to use these four lepers – these outcasts to deliver Israel.

4 "If we say, 'We will enter the city,' the famine [is] in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die."

So the lepers – they know they are going to die in Samaria.

So they decide to go to the camp of the Syrians (remember, the Syrian army is surrounding the city)

They are hoping that the Syrians will show them mercy – and if they don't and they kill them, they had nothing to lose because they were going to die in Samaria anyways.

5 And they rose **at twilight** to go to the camp of the Syrians; and when they had come to the outskirts of the Syrian camp, to their surprise no one [was] there. 6 For the Lord had caused the army of the Syrians to **hear the noise of chariots** and the noise of horses--the noise of a great army; so they said to one another, "Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us!" 7 Therefore they arose and fled **at twilight**, and left the camp intact--their tents, their horses, and their donkeys--and they fled for their lives.

The four lepers, they make their way into the Syrian camp and there is no one there.

They have been scared off –

Notice that it happened at the exact time that the lepers set out to go to the camp – at twilight.

So at twilight, the lepers start their journey to the camp and at twilight, the Syrian troops leave.

Why did the troops leave?

Because God opened their ears and they heard the same Heavenly Army that God opened the eyes of Elisha's servant to see back in chapter 6.

The same army that brought comfort to Elisha's servant, brought fear to another.

The noise is so great that the Syrians think that they are being attacked by two armies – but the lepers, don't hear it.

8 And when these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they went into one tent and ate and drank, and carried from it silver and gold and clothing, and went and hid [them]; then they came back and entered another tent, and carried [some] from there [also], and went and hid [it].

The lepers, they hit the jackpot.

Not only did the Syrians leave behind all their food, they left behind all their valuables.

So the lepers begin stashing some away and moving from tent to tent and finding more stuff.

9 Then they said to one another, "We are not doing right. This day [is] a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell the king's household."

After eating & drinking their fill and stowing away some of the booty, they realize there's way more there than they can keep - & behind them is an entire city of thousands on the verge of starvation.

Their conscience tells them what they're doing is wrong.

Church, these four lepers are a picture of us – believers.

As we grow in our relationship in Christ, as we enjoy the goodness of God, the Spirit of God will place the same burden in our hearts that was placed on the lepers.

We will be moved to tell others of the goodness we have found.

[1Co 9:16 NKJV] 16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!

We can either sit on it or we can share -

How much more enjoyable is the treasure of grace when it is shared with others.

I want you to notice that salvation came upon the lepers – but also notice that they are still lepers. They are not healed from the leprosy.

In the same way, the believer who accepts the work of Jesus Christ upon the cross, is saved from eternal judgment, but remains in his or her earthy state until death.

One day, we will have glorified bodies – but until then, we are not spared from illness during this life.

I also want you to notice that lepers did nothing to earn salvation.

That is because salvation is free. It was offered to them. It was a gift from God.

[Eph 2:8 NKJV] 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; [it is] the gift of God,

10 So they went and called to the gatekeepers of the city, and told them, saying, "We went to the Syrian camp, and surprisingly no one [was] there, not a human sound--only horses and donkeys tied, and the tents intact."

Here we have proof that the Heavenly Armies were only heard by the Syrian forces.

11 And the gatekeepers called out, and they told [it] to the king's household inside. 12 So the king arose in the night and said to his servants, "Let me now tell you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we [are] hungry; therefore they have gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, 'When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city.'"

The good news of salvation is told to the king – how does he respond???

Does he order his men to go get food for his starving people?

No -

No, he responds with skepticism.

Just like his officer.

He was there when Elisha made the proclamation – yet, he thinks it is too good to be true.

He thinks that the Syrians are setting him up.

13 And one of his servants answered and said, "Please, let several [men] take five of the remaining horses which are left in the city. Look, they [may either become] like all the multitude of Israel that are left in it; or indeed, [I say], they [may become] like all the multitude of Israel left from those who are consumed; so let us send them and see."

Question – How many died of thirst & starvation while this search was made?

The same thing happens for many who eventually come to Christ.

They hear the Gospel with its promise of forgiveness & new life & know they should respond.

But they delay.

The Spirit urges them to repent & believe, but they argue themselves out with the thought that they need to “investigate” things first.

My first boss, Ed Pena – shared the gospel multiple times to me – before I responded.

14 Therefore they took two chariots with horses; and the king sent them in the direction of the Syrian army, saying, "Go and see." 15 And they went after them

to the Jordan; and indeed all the road [was] full of garments and weapons which the Syrians had thrown away in their haste. So the messengers returned and told the king.

Two chariots were sent – why two?

In case one got ambushed, the other would be able to report to the king the presence of the Syrians. So there is still a little skepticism.

And the two chariots find a trail of goods from the camp all the way to the Jordan River.

This indicates that the noise that God had sent continued to frighten the Syrian army for 50 km.

And this would have indicated to the king that the Syrians were not going to be returning anytime soon.

16 Then the people went out and plundered the tents of the Syrians. So a seah of fine flour was [sold] for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.

So – just like God had said.

17 Now the king had appointed the officer on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate. But the people trampled him in the gate, and he died, just as the man of God had said, who spoke when the king came down to him. 18 So it

happened just as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, "Two seahs of barley for a shekel, and a seah of fine flour for a shekel, shall be [sold] tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria." 19 Then that officer had answered the man of God, and said, "Now look, [if] the LORD would make windows in heaven, could such a thing be?" And he had said, "In fact, you shall see [it] with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it." 20 And so it happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gate, and he died.

The king appointed his officer at the gate – the skeptic, the one who said that it was impossible for the famine to be over in a day.

And as the hungry people of Samaria run out to the camp, they trampled him and he died.

He was able to see God's blessing – but he was not able to partake of it.

This man did not benefit from the work of God because he didn't believe it was possible.

Our salvation works that way.

We only enjoy it if we believe.

The Bible tells us that our own sins have separated us from God.

The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ died on a cross in order to take our sins out of the way.

The Bible says that we can be made right with God if we will choose to receive God's forgiveness and believe in His Son Jesus.

Yet if we DON'T believe ...

(Jn 3:18 NKJV) "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

It works this way in all of our life. God wants to do great things in your life, but we need to trust Him.

(Heb 11:6 NKJV) But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

The four lepers dined, the king's officer didn't.

The only difference – faith.

Let's pray...

I came across a devotional this week – of a young woman who had gone through trial after trial in her life.

I can look back and testify that God has been in control in every area of my life. There have been troubles and joyous moments, but I do know that, if not for my Saviour, I wouldn't be here to tell all the great things He has done in our lives. My priority is with my Saviour. Jesus is the central Character in my life and without Him, life would not be worth living. I don't know what tomorrow holds, but I do know who holds tomorrow. I cannot thank Him enough for everything He has done, He is doing and He will be doing!

As it is written in Psalm 104:33: "I will sing to the LORD all my life. I will sing praises to my God as long as I live."

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 'May the LORD bless you and protect you. 25 May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. 26 May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

