

"The Wicked Heart of Man"

2 Kings 8:7-15

Introduction: Last week in our study of 2 Kings we looked at God's perfect timing in the life of the Shunammite woman after she had fled the seven-year famine by going to the land of the Philistines. We were able to see the miracle of the timing in 2 Kings 8:1-6. Today we shall continue in the passage and in so doing we shall follow Elisha to Damascus.

Notice 2 Kings 8:1

This famine that is announced here would come following the previous famine which we looked at in chapter 7. Last week we discussed how the people of Israel did not acknowledge God after He provided food to end the famine and after He used sound effects to end the siege. They were unthankful, and the Bible tells us that unthankfulness is closely related to unholiness.

2 Timothy 3:1-2

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

² *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy.*

When people are not thankful for what God has done and provided then it is not possible for them to worship God. Our hearts must be thankful in order for us to worship, praise and give glory to God. Therefore, because there is no thankfulness mentioned after the famine and the siege ended we can be sure there was no worship or praise offered to God from the people of Israel. Perhaps they saw the end of the famine and the end of the siege as the work of their false gods which they worshipped. However they understood it they completely missed that it was the hand of God showing grace and mercy.

Because of their unthankfulness God would send another famine and this famine would last for seven years. As severe as the previous famine would be this famine would be worse. We can only imagine how difficult life would be if there was a famine for one year but think about how difficult life would be when a famine lasted seven years! But there was something even more devastating that the people of Israel would face.

I. Elisha's Departure

Notice 2 Kings 8:7a

The Shunammite woman escaped to the land of the Philistines and Elisha escaped to Damascus. How devastating this announcement is. Not only would there be a famine of physical food but now we see that God will pull from the people those who teach the Truth

of His Word. Therefore, we can understand that there would also be a spiritual famine in Samaria. There would be no one to teach and deliver the Word of God. There would be no spiritual food. This reminds me of the words of Amos.

Amos 8:1-5, 10-11

Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit.

² And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.

³ And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.

⁴ Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

⁵ Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

¹⁰ And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

¹¹ Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:

This famine would be far more severe than a famine of physical bread. This is exactly what is happening in 2 Kings 8.

The Bible tells us that when people reject God He will withdraw His teachers and set them over in the corner.

Isaiah 30:20

²⁰ And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers:

This also happens in churches when people get to the place where they do not want to hear the Truth of God's Word. There are churches around that have silenced those who teach the Truth and so now they find themselves in a spiritual famine and they do not have the Bread of God's Word.

Notice 2 Kings 8:7-8

Benhadad, the king of Syria had become very sick and he heard that Elisha was now in the city. He therefore sent his servant to take a gift and inquire if he would survive the sickness or would he die. Let me remind you of the experience which Benhadad had with Elisha previously.

Notice 2 Kings 6:8-23

The king knew that Elisha was a Godly man and he knew that he was a servant of God. The king's life had been impacted by Elisha in an indirect way previously.

Application:

There is something in all of this which is a good reminder for all of us. While we serve the Lord and walk the path He has given to us there occurs what can be referred to as an "unintentional ministry". In other words, there are people whose lives are impacted by what we do and many times we do not even realize that we are leaving an impact. For this reason, we must be very careful to walk in obedience to the Word of God because while others watch we are actually teaching with the way we live. We certainly do not want to be guilty of teaching others to compromise or suppress the Truth of God.

Now let us get back to our text. Elisha arrives in Damascus and once he is there he is approached by the servant of the king with the question about the king's health.

II. The Prophecy

Notice 2 Kings 8:9

This generous gift was most likely an attempt to buy his healing.

Notice 2 Kings 8:10

We are not told if Elisha accepted the gift or not, but we are told that Elisha told the king's servant that the king would recover from the sickness, but he would also die. So, while he would recover he would die from something other than the sickness.

Notice 2 Kings 8:11

This seems like a strange verse so let me tell you what is being said here. Elisha fixed his stare upon the servant of the king unto the servant was ashamed. The reason the king's servant was ashamed was because when he heard the king was going to die he had upon his face an expression of joy. You see Hazael longed to be the king and when he heard the king was going to die he saw the opportunity to take over the throne. Hazael pledged allegiance

to the king but deep down in his heart he longed to have the king's throne. He did not care about the king, but he falsely pledged his allegiance only to gain a path to the throne.

Now we are also told in verse 11 that Elisha wept. What were the tears about?

Notice 2 Kings 8:12

Here was the reason for the tears. God revealed to Elisha that Hazael would become king of Syria and he would persecute and ravage the people of Israel.

III. The Response

Notice 2 Kings 8:13

Hazael's response was that he would never do such a thing. We must understand that at this time he could never see himself doing such a thing. He was not prepared for the answer which Elisha spoke to him. His response was something like we would hear today, "I would never do that!". When Hazael asks, "But what is thy servant a dog?" He was simply saying that what Elisha just described was something that a wild animal would do, and he did not see himself as a wild animal.

IV. The Actions

Notice 2 Kings 8:14-15

He went back to the king and told him he would not die of the sickness. The king then being satisfied relaxed and went to sleep and it was then that Hazael soaked a blanket in water and placed it over the king's face and suffocated him. He did that which he never thought he would do.

Let us now consider some very important lessons from all of this:

1. Many do not understand the evil they are capable of doing.

The majority of people believe that man is basically "good" and is on his way to getting better. But the Truth is the opposite is true.

Jeremiah 17:9

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

Romans 3:10-18

¹⁰ *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*

¹¹ *There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:

16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:

17 And the way of peace have they not known:

18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

This is a thorough description of man's true condition. But man does not want to accept this description for he thinks that he is basically good and even getting better. But the Truth is there is none that are good and there are none who can produce righteousness. Man is sinful and corrupt, and his sin nature will take him to depths he never thought possible.

Hazael underestimated how sinful he was. When Elisha gave the prophecy Hazael had no intention of killing the king nor of ravaging Israel. But the prophecy was fulfilled as Elisha had said. Let me show you another example of a man who underestimated the power of sin and the depth of his sinfulness.

Genesis 4:5-10

5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

9 And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

Cain did not think he would kill his own brother, but he did.

2. There is evil in every one of us just waiting for a chance to get out.

Evil waits in the heart of the greatest saint and it waits in the heart of the worst criminal. We are clearly seeing the wickedness of man's heart in our society today as God has lifted His moral restraints from our nation.

Illustration:

Just last week I read the story of the man who went into the Mall of America and was looking for someone to murder. He could not find an adult that presented the opportunity, so he grabbed a little 5-year-old boy and threw him off the 4th floor balcony down to a concrete floor.

This news surprises us but it shouldn't as we study the Word of God. Remember the school shooting at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999? There were 12 students who were murdered that day. One little girl that was killed was named Rachel Scott. Now let me share a story with you concerning a speech her father made.

On Thursday, May 27, 1999, Darrell Scott, the father of Rachel Scott, a victim of the Columbine High School shootings in Littleton, Colorado, was invited to speak to the House Judiciary Committee's Sub-committee. What he said to our national leaders during this special session of Congress was painfully truthful. They were not prepared to hear what he was to say, nor was it received well. It needed to be heard by every parent, teacher, politician, sociologist, psychologist and every so-called expert. These courageous words spoken by Darrell Scott are powerful, penetrating and deeply personal. There is no doubt that God sent this man as a voice crying in the wilderness. Following is a portion of the transcript:

"I am here today to declare that Columbine was not just a tragedy. It was a spiritual event that should be forcing us to look at where the real blame lies.

Your laws ignore our deepest needs; Your words are empty air.

You've stripped away our heritage, You've outlawed simple prayer.

Now gunshots fill our classrooms, And precious children die.

You seek for answers everywhere, And ask the question, "Why?"

You regulate restrictive laws Through legislative creed.

And yet you fail to understand That God is what we need.

Men and women are three-part beings. We all consist of body, soul and spirit. When we refuse to acknowledge a third part of our make-up, we create a void that allows evil, prejudice and hatred to rush in and create havoc... What has happened to us as a nation? We have refused to honor God and in so doing we open the doors to hatred and violence. And when something as terrible as Columbine's tragedy occurs, politicians immediately seek to pass more restrictive laws that contribute to erode away our personal and private liberties. We do not need more restrictive laws.

"Eric and Dylan would not have been stopped by metal detectors. No amount of gun laws can stop someone who spends months planning this type of massacre...

The real villain lies within our own hearts."

Conclusion:

The point from all of this tonight is that evil lies within everyone of our hearts. We **MUST** walk close to our Lord and cast out sinful thoughts and desires. We must **NEVER** think we are above sin.

1 Corinthians 10:12

¹² *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*