

From Famine to Feast

Be opening your Bibles to 2 Kings 7. The northern tribe of Israel is undergoing great turmoil. The Syrians had invaded/seized the land and had surrounded the capital city of Samaria and things were desperate as nothing could get in and no one could get out. Food was in short supply and people were starving to death. Outside the gates of the city were four lepers sitting and pondering what they could do. They came up with three alternatives.

One was that they could sit there and if they did they would die.

Secondly they could go into the city and if they did that they would also die from starvation.

Thirdly, they could go and surrender to the enemy.

If they did that they may spend the rest of their lives as captives, but at least they might live or it could be that when they surrender into the hands of the enemy they will die. They decided that the third choice was the best option that they had so they got up about twilight and made their way down to the outskirts of the Syrian camp.

To their surprise, when they got there they found no one on guard duty. In fact, they found no one at all. As they entered one of the tents, they found that everything had been left just as it was. So they began eating and ate until they were full after which they took and hid some of the expensive items such as silver and gold. Then they returned and plundered another tent. Things were going very well. What they didn't know was that God had caused the Syrians to hear the sound of horses and chariots which sounded to them like a huge army was sweeping down on their camp from the rear. When they heard that they assumed that the king of Israel had hired the king of the Hittites and the king of the Egyptians to come down against them, so they panicked and fled. When they left, they left everything behind. There is several character types pictured in this story that reflect on the people of today.

First we see pictured here the soul that requires salvation. That is depicted to us by the lives of those in the city behind the great city walls. These people were hungry, helpless and hopeless and those three words in a graphic way describes the person that is lost; the person outside of Christ. There is a hunger that this world cannot satisfy. Then there is a sense of helplessness. At some point the lost will understand that without God they are powerless. We also notice that the man without Christ is utterly hopeless as he is in the world without God.

We also see in this story the seeker that received salvation. That's illustrated for us in the lives of those lepers. Here they are at twilight making their way from the walls of Samaria down the mountainside to the camp of the Syrians and when they did they discovered that God had brought about a great victory. As these men plundered the riches of those tents, they literally went from famine to feast in a matter of moments. These men went from rags to riches because they had the courage to step out to do what needed to be done. This depicts for us the man who discovers the unimaginable riches found in Christ Jesus. That's what we have in the Lord. ***Ephesians 3:8 ... the unsearchable riches of Christ; Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*** You see there are some blessing that cannot be found nowhere else. So in Christ we move from a hopeless end to an endless hope as we enjoy forgiveness/redemption and become a part of a new family.

What enabled these men to move from famine/feast was first their deliberation. **They faced realistically their situation.** They came to grips with reality. **Then they move from deliberation to a decision.** They decided something needed to be done and they did it. It was this action that allowed them to discover the great wealth that became theirs. **Finally we move to their delight.** They rejoiced. For perhaps the first time in their lives they lived like kings. In Christ Jesus, we become children of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

We also see the soul winner that reports salvation. Try to picture these men as they were enjoying themselves with their newly found blessings. They were celebrating themselves with excitement. After a bit, they began to think about the people in the city who didn't know what they knew. Perhaps as they sit outside the city walls they remembered the cries of the hungry babies and starving mothers. Maybe it was the wailing of the cold that had no clothing. Then all of a sudden there were two things that hit these men right between the eyes. **FIRST THEY CAME TO REALIZE THAT IT WAS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO SHARE THE NEWS.** 2 Kings 7:9 tells of this event. Notice particularly **2**

Kings 7:9 *Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: They said "We are not doing what is right. We have good news to share. We would do well to get back to the city and let the others know what's going on."*

Consider these lepers if they had decided not to share the good news but kept it all to themselves; the army had fled; food was available, untold wealth. As you consider this, picture a family in the city that have two children that die of starvation and he discovers later that these lepers knew the good news about food but refused to share it. They could have saved the lives of those children if that had only a few hours earlier gone to city with the news of hope. There is freedom and food available. If you had been that parent, how would you have felt toward those lepers? What would you think should have been done to them? Image being one of those lepers and later you found out that those children died because you kept quiet. You could have saved their lives if you had shared the good news, but you kept quiet. If that were you could you live with yourself?

I hope you can see where I'm going with this. We are like those lepers and we are sitting on the greatest news of the world – the good news of the saving gospel of Jesus the Christ; the news that there is forgiveness of sins and freedom from eternal damnation. We have the message that means the difference between spiritual life and spiritual death in the lives of others; the difference where they will spend eternity. Now we have the responsibility to share this news with them. The real question becomes what you are going to do with that message. There are people today that are willing to hear the gospel but only if they hear it from you because you are in a position with them like no other. And for us to fail to do our duty almost sentences them to eternal death. The Christian that knows the good news and refuses to share it is probably the most selfish person in the whole world.

Now I realize that sometimes we feel inadequate in talking with someone about salvation and question, "How can I talk to someone about their salvation?" My suggestion is tell them what you know and what you did. If you love the Lord and love the lost my question is, "How could you not talk to them about their salvation?" How could you have good news of salvation and keep it to yourself while letting people die and go into eternity unprepared for judgment. We have a responsibility to share.

Back to our story. These **LEPERS WERE ALSO REALIZED THAT THEY WERE ACCOUNTABLE TO SHARE THE NEWS.** Note the end of verse 9. *... if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.* They realized that it was a matter of life/death not only for the people in the city but also for themselves. *Some mischief* (judgment) *will come upon us.* They knew that they were accountable and that serves as a reminder that we too will be held accountable.

Listen to a warning that God sent to the prophet Ezekiel regarding his message to the people of Israel. **Ezekiel 3:17-19** *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. {18} When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. {19} Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.*

While I understand this passage is speaking to God's prophet and his responsibility to the people, I think there is an underlining principle here that God expects His people to share his news with the lost. We see Paul emphasizing the same principle in **2 Corinthians 5:10-11** *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. {11} Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.* As you read over that passage one understands that we are to warn the wicked that one day they will give an account of their deeds.

But a careful study of this passage reveals that Paul is also saying that we make it our aim to persuade the wicked because God will hold us accountable. *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; ... therefore ... we persuade men.* I hope you take this responsibility seriously and resolve to make those visits/calls that you have put off; invite someone to services that you've never before invited; reconcile that strained relationship. Every one of us is

expected to be a soul-winner. Not every Christian is expected to teach publically, but we have all been given the marching orders to and teach the gospel message. I'm convinced that was the reason the church grew so rapidly in the 1st century. Those that were scattered abroad went everywhere teaching the word. These people were not professional or skilled speakers. There were basically new converts with a love for the Lord and a love for the lost. They took their responsibilities seriously and realized that they were accountable to God.

The final category we see in this story is the sinner who rejects salvation. After the city received the message for the lepers, everybody in the city was celebrating. Everybody was having a big time except for one man. This man missed out on the blessings of God because of his unbelief. One reason he missed out on everything was because he rejected the word of God.

Let's do a brief recap. Elisha first approached the king and offered the city hope. The prophet said in essence (2 Kings 7:1-2) *"Don't worry, tomorrow things are going to be better. There will be an abundance of food."* God's prophet foretold a tremendous reversal of fortunes. Standing by was an officer of the king and he was skeptical. He said even if God could open the windows of heaven, do you think something like that could happen. He didn't believe Elisha. What this man failed to realize is that God can open the windows of heaven. This man missed out on the promised blessings because he ridiculed the message from God. Elisha was just delivering the message. When a person rejects the word of God, he is rejecting the God of the word. You cannot separate the two. You can't say I want what God gives, but I don't believe what God says. We are reminded in John 12:48 that Jesus said the word which he spoke shall judge us on the last day. Unbelief is the root from which all other sins stem.

As we close, I want you to see the result of this fella that rejected the word of God. Because of his unbelief, he received the wrath of God. Notice what Elisha said when he heard this man's ridicule. **2 Kings 7:2 ... Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.** Tomorrow when this all happens, you'll see it but you want participate in it. We see chapter 7 ends just exactly as foretold. As the news came that there was plenty of food and the people began to stream down to the Syrians camp, the king put this officer in charge of the gate. As he stood in the gate, the people were so anxious to get to the provisions, they trampled him down and he died. This man rejected the word of God and he experienced the wrath of God. Being trampled to death must be a terrible way to die. Step by step you feel your life ebbing away. As horrible as that must be, try to imagine how terrible it will be to die spiritual; to spend your life separated from God. That's the fate of those who die without Christ. But the good news is that you can move from despair to hope; from lost to saved by being obedient to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Invitation.