

DOING RIGHT

2 Kings 7:9

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Then they said to each other, "we're not doing right. This is a day of good news, and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace." 2 Kings 7:9 [NIV]

The God who fulfills His promises. (**2 Kings 7**) Did Elisha and the elders allow the king to enter the room along with his attendant and messenger? They probably did, but Joram was a somewhat subdued man when the door was finally opened to him, not unlike his father, Ahab, when Elijah indicted him for the murder of Naboth (**1 Kings 21:17ff**).

The only messages the Lord had sent to the rebellious King Joram were the army around the city and the starvation within the city, and the king still had not repented. Good news from the Lord (vv. 1-2). How fortunate it was for the kingdom of Israel that they had Elisha the prophet living and ministering among them! What would happen? Food would once more be available and the inflationary prices would fall drastically. The fine flour for the people and the barley for the animals would cost about twice as much as in normal times. This was a great relief from the prices the people had paid for unclean food.

The officer who attended the king didn't believe the words of the prophet and scoffed at what Elisha said. "Will it become like Noah's flood," he asked, "with food instead of rain pouring out of heaven?" (See **Gen 7:11**. The Hebrew word translated "windows" in the KJV means "floodgates.")

To the humble heart that's open to God, the word generates faith; but to the proud, self-centered heart, the word makes the heart even harder. The same sun that melts the ice will harden the clay. The next morning, all the people in the city except this officer would awaken to life, but he would awaken to death.

Good news from the enemy camp (vv. 3-16). The scene shifts to outside the locked gates of Samaria where four lepers lived in isolation (**Lev 13:36**). Nobody had told them about Elijah's promise of food. They were discussing

their precarious situation when they came to an insightful conclusion: if they stayed at the gate, they would die of hunger, but if they went to the enemy camp, they might receive some pity and some food.

Even if the Syrians killed them, it was better to die quickly from a sword's thrust than to die slowly from hunger. Lest they be observed from the city wall, they waited until twilight before going to the Syrian camp. Most of the camp would be resting and the lepers would have to deal only with some of the guards. But nobody was there! The Lord had caused them to hear a sound which they interpreted as the coming of a vast army, and the Syrians had left their camp as it was and fled twenty-five miles to the Jordan River, scattering their possessions as they ran (v. 15).

The Lord had defeated the Moabites by a miracle of sight (**3:20-23**) and now He defeated the Syrians by a miracle of sound. They thought the armies of the Egyptians and the Hittites were coming to destroy them.³ The four lepers did what any hungry men would have done: they ate to the full and then looted the tents for wealth, which they hid.

However, as night came on, they stopped to have another conference and assess the situation. Why should an entire city be starving, and mothers eating their own children, while four dying men are selfishly enjoying the resources in the abandoned camp? Furthermore, when morning comes, the whole city will discover that the enemy has fled, and they'll wonder why the men didn't say some-thing.

When the truth comes out, the four men would be punished for keeping the good news to themselves.⁴ It was night when they found their way back to the city and approached the guard at the gate. Since these four men lived just outside the gate, the guard must have known them. The lepers gave him the good news and he shared it with the other guards, and one of the officers took the message to the king. Once again revealing his unbelief and pessimism (**3:10,13**), Joram said that the whole thing was a trick, that the enemy was hiding and only trying to draw the people out of the city so they could move in. That was how Joshua had defeated the city of Ai (**Josh 8**).

It wasn't so much that he doubted the word of the lepers as that he rejected the word of Elisha. Had he believed the Word of the Lord; he would have accepted the good news from the lepers. One of the officers had the good sense to reason with the king. Let some officers take a few horses and chariots and go investigate the terrain. If it all turns out to be a trick and they are killed, they would have died had they stayed in the city, so nothing is lost.

The officer wanted five horses but the king let him have only two chariots with probably two horses per chariot. The men found the camp devoid of soldiers. Then they followed the escape route all the way to the Jordan River, a distance of twenty-five miles, and saw on the ground the clothing and equipment that the Syrians had discarded in their flight. The spies raced back to the city and shared the good news that the Syrian army was gone and their camp was just waiting to be looted.

It was indeed a day of good news as the people found food to eat and to sell back in the city, not to speak of valuable material goods that could be converted into cash. But the main lesson isn't that God rescued His people when they didn't deserve it, but that God fulfilled the promise He gave through His prophet Elisha. Note the emphasis on "*the word of the Lord*" in verses 16-18.

TAKE HOME LESSONS

1. PREACHING THE GOSPEL IS NOT NEGOTIABLE ***Mrk. 16:15-16, Rom. 1:15-16***
2. WOE ON ANYONE WHO FAILS - ***1 Cor. 9:16***
3. PREACHING THE GOSPEL MAKES YOU WISER- ***Prov. 11:30***
4. LET US WAKE UP FROM OUR SLUMBER - ***Rom. 13:11***