

FAITH IN VICTORY

2 Kings 13:14-25

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2 Kings 13:14-21

Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, **"O MY FATHER, MY FATHER, THE CHARIOTS OF ISRAEL AND THEIR HORSEMEN!"**

Then Elisha died, and they buried him. And the raiding bands from Moab invaded the land in the spring of the year. So it was, as they were burying a man, that suddenly they spied a band of raiders; and they put the man in the tomb of Elisha; and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet.

He made a wise decision (v. 14). We haven't heard from or about Elisha since 9:1, when he sent one of the sons of the prophets to anoint Jehu to be king of Israel. This means over forty years of silence as far as the record is concerned, yet Elisha was at work in the land and the Lord was with him. Now he was an old man and about to die, and the king of Israel went to see him. Let's at least give Jehoash credit for visiting the prophet and seeking his help. Was it Elisha who told Jehoahaz that God would send a deliverer (vv. 4-5)? Was his son Jehoash that deliverer? Only Elisha knew God's plan and the king was wise enough to visit him.

It's too bad spiritual leaders aren't appreciated during their lifetime but are greatly lauded after they die. The Pharisees were better at building tombs for the dead than they were at showing thanks to the living (Matt 23:29-32). Faithful servants of God never "retire" even though they may leave their lifelong vocation and step back from public ministry. Even from his deathbed, Elisha was serving the Lord and his people. As long as God gives us strength and sanity, we should serve Him the best we can in whatever ways He opens for us. How grateful I am for "senior servants" who have counseled and encouraged me, and the memories of their lives and ministries are still a blessing to me.

The king showed respect for the prophet and even addressed him with the same words Elisha used for Elijah when Elijah was taken to heaven (2:12). Elisha was like a father to the nation and was more valuable than all their armies! Elisha knew that Jehoash was in trouble because of the Syrians and graciously used his failing strength to help the king. Yes, Jehoash was a compromising king who disobeyed God, but Jehovah is "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth" (Ex 34:6, NKJV). He had promised

deliverance for His people and He would keep His promise. However, Elisha gave Jehoash God's promise of victory but did it in a way that required the king to exercise intelligent Faith. **He made a great mistake (vv. 15-19).** King Jehoash was not a man of faith, but he could follow directions. However, he lacked the spiritual discernment and insight that people have who live in the Word and walk by faith. When the prophet put his hands on the king's hands, it obviously symbolized a conveying of power from God. When Elisha commanded him to shoot an arrow toward the area where the Syrians were in control, it clearly spoke of victory over the enemy (Deut 32:42; Ps 120:4). This much the king could have understood because Elisha gave him a clear promise of victory.

But when Elisha told him to take the remaining arrows and strike the ground with them, he didn't have the spiritual understanding he needed to make the most of it. Had he been a faithful worshiper of the living God, he would have seen the truth; but he was blind like the dead idols he worshiped (Ps 115:3-8). Shooting one arrow guaranteed victory, but the number of times he smote the ground determined how many victories God would give him. Because Jehoash had ignorant faith, he limited himself to only three victories over the Syrians.

As sick as he was, the Prophet Elisha expressed righteous anger over the king's ignorance and unbelief. What an opportunity Jehoash missed for utterly destroying his enemies!

"According to your faith let it be to you" (Matt 9:29, NKJV). It isn't enough for us simply to *know* God's will and obey it, as important as that is, but we should also *understand* God's will and God's ways (Eph 5:17; Ps 103:7). The commandments and acts of God reveal to us the character of God if our spiritual eyes are open (Eph 1:17-20). This is how we understand the ways of God and how better to serve Him, and this is how the Lord increases our faith.

He received a great encouragement (vv. 20-21). When Elisha died, the king may have wondered if his promises died with him. To encourage the king, the Lord graciously performed a miracle after Elisha died. The Jews didn't embalm corpses as did the Egyptians.

They merely washed the body and wrapped it in clean cloths along with spices. One day, when the arrival of Moabite raiders interrupted a committal service of a man recently deceased, the mourners quickly put the body into Elisha's tomb and fled. But God used that occasion to give the man life! Surely this miracle was talked about among the people and the king may have heard the account from the lips of the men who saw it. This miracle told him that, though the prophet was dead, Jehovah was still the living God and the God of power.

His promises would not fail! The Prophet Elijah never died but was caught up into heaven (2:11-12), but the Prophet Elisha died and was buried. However, Elisha performed a miracle even after he was dead. God

has different plans for each of His servants and it's not our business to compare one with the other or to question what He does (John 21:19-23). **He won the three victories (vv. 22-25).** The Syrians were determined to destroy Israel and make it a part of their empire, but the Lord had other plans. His covenant with the patriarchs (**Gen 12:1-3**) and defiled His land that God permitted both Israel and Judah to be defeated and taken into bondage. In 722, Assyria conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, and in 586, Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. The people of Judah returned to their land after the seventy years of captivity expired, but the people of Israel were assimilated into the Assyrian empire. and His grace toward their descendants moved Him to look upon Israel's affliction and rescue them from their enemies. It was only when the people sinned so flagrantly that they blasphemed the name of the Lord.

King Jehoash won three great victories against the Syrians, and this was sufficient to enable him to recover towns that Hazael and Ben-Hadad had taken from Israel, and then King Jeroboam II recovered the rest of the land. The Lord enabled Jehoash to increase his military power (v. 7) and overcome the Syrians led by Ben-Hadad III. God's promise came true and God's people were spared. During the reigns of Jehoash and Jeroboam II, the kingdom of Israel reached its zenith and there was prosperity in the land. However, with all its achievements and wealth, it was still a land filled with idolatry and much sin.

During the reign of Jeroboam II, the Prophets Hosea and Amos ministered to the people of Israel. When you read their books, you see the true conditions of the land.

- **FAITH IS ESSENTIAL IN A TIME LIKE THIS - *HEB. 11:6.***
- **WE NEED WISDOM IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION - *LUKE 16:8-9***
- **BE COURAGEOUS - *JOSH 1:6-9***
- **LEARN TO DEPEND ON HIM - *PS 62:5***