

MISSEID

OPPORTUNITIES



Today we are going to examine a man who needed help. He was over his head with troubles. Part of the problem came from the poor choices his father and grandfather made. The other part of the problem came from his weak secular faith.

His life was entangled with worldly pursuits. He was nominally religious. He sometimes prayed. He knew the rituals associated with worship. He occasionally attended services.

He knew some of the stories of the faith, but that was it. He claimed to belong to the Lord, but the Scriptures report, “he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord and followed the sins” (*of those who went before him*) — 2 Kings 13:3.

How many “Christians” fall into this camp. People who are nominally religious, following the steps of their worldly parents or friends, instead of following the steps of their Lord.

Such was the life of Joash, king of Israel. He was better than the previous dynasty of Ahab and Jezebel, but he was still religiously secular and evil. His acts stirred the wrath of the Lord.

Amazingly, God still had mercy on this new King. 2 Kings 13:23-25 says, "the LORD was gracious unto them (*Israel*), and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet. . . . And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities, which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel."

In our lesson we will find Jehoash (*sometimes called, Joash*) overwhelmed with personal, political and national troubles. Even though God was gracious unto him, he could of had more, but he lacked faith. God offered to help him, but it required simple faith on his part.

All he had to do was comply with God's simple instructions. They were not hard. In fact, it was downright simple. So simple that a four year old could accomplish what was asked. But that was the problem. He must have thought the command to be foolish. So he half-heartedly obeyed. Sadly, he failed to receive all that God would have done for him.

This is the point of today's lesson. God often works in conjunction with our willingness to step out in faith. God asks us to do simple things, and He does the rest. God asked Moses to raise his rod over the Red Sea. This took faith on Moses' part to stand before the people and raise his rod. What if God did nothing? Moses would have looked foolish. But Moses had faith that God would perform that which He promised. Moses raised his rod in faith and God divided the Red Sea.

God asked Moses to strike the rock, and God promised that when he did, water would flow from the rock. This took faith on Moses' part. He had to stand before the people and strike the rock. Moses would have looked foolish if God did nothing. But Moses had faith that God would perform that which He promised. So in faith, Moses struck the rock, and God did the rest. The same was true when God asked Moses to throw a tree into the bitter waters of Marah to purify it. Moses had to step out in faith, and God healed the water.

God works in conjunction with our willingness to step out in faith. He asks that we have the faith the size of a mustard seed. Therefore, He asks us to do simple things in order to strengthen our faith, and He does the rest.

Such was the case with Joash. He was asked to do a simple thing but he failed to grasp the opportunities that God literally placed in his hands. His lack of faith cost him and his nation dearly.

1. Examine the following passages and discuss Joash's problem.

- a. What was happening to Elisha? — 2 Kings 13:14
- b. Discuss what happened to the kingdom under Joash's father's rule — 2 Kings 13:4-7, 9.
- c. As the new king of Israel, what kind of problems was Joash facing?

ANSWER:

In 2 Kings 13:14 we discover Elisha was very sick and about to die.

“Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.”

To grasp the significance of what is happening, Joash is the new king of Israel. He inherited the northern kingdom from his father, Jehoahaz. In 2 Kings 13:4, we find the nation had suffered severe oppression under the hand of Hazael, King of Syria, during his father's reign.

We also find that the problems grew so bad, that Joash's father finally sought the Lord in prayer, and the Lord provided a deliverer. Perhaps some unnamed general provided the nation with temporary relief (2 Kings 13:4-5). Even with this break in oppression we learn the kingdom of Israel was significantly weakened (2 Kings 13:7). By the time Syria withdrew their forces, they left the Israeli army with only 50 horsemen, 10 Chariots and only 10,000 footmen. Then Jehoahaz dies and his son begins his reign (2 Kings 13:9).

To further complicate Joash's problem, we learn the great prophet Elisha fell ill, and he is about to die (2 Kings 13:14). Our passage finds Joash rushing to Elisha's bedside exclaiming, “O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.”

Joash is a troubled man. He is the new king of Israel. He has a decimated army and there are growing threats from his enemies. His father is dead, and now the great prophet Elisha is about to die. He needs help.

2. What does Joash mean when he said, “O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof?” — 2 Kings 13:14. (see 2 Kings 6:8-11).

ANSWER:

Joash considered Elisha to be Israel's most powerful instrument of war. The chariot was the ancient world's tank. It was considered the mightiest military weapon. Elisha was considered to be mightier than 100 Chariots. Remember the power of God displayed through Elisha in 2 Kings 6:8-8:15.

For example, Elisha was able to foil many plots designed by Syria. He supernaturally revealed Syria's maneuvers before they took place. He even blinded an entire brigade — (2 Kings 6:8-11.) Joash understood the value and power behind Elisha. And Elisha understood the issues that troubled Joash's heart. Greater than that, God understood Joash's troubles and was willing to help him.

3. What did Elisha ask Joash to do? — 2 Kings 13:15-19. Why do you think the king only struck the ground with the arrows three times? Were Elisha's instructions clear?

ANSWER:

2 Kings 13:15-17 — Let me illustrate what happened here. Elisha made it clear that the the arrow represented the deliverance of the Lord from Syria. When the king shot the arrow Elisha declared, "you shall smite the Syrians in Aphek, till you have consumed them."

In 2 Kings 13:18-19, Joash was instructed to take his quiver of arrows (*12 arrows make a quiver*) and strike them on the ground. The first arrow was called "**the arrow of the Lord's deliverance.**" What might the remaining arrows be? They were the same as the first arrow . . . arrows of deliverance.

Joash understood the problem facing his nation. He experienced first hand the Syrian oppression. He knew the threat. He knew the power and viciousness of King Hazael and he understood that his son, Benhadad would be just as vicious. He should have struck the floor with the arrows endless times. But somehow he missed the point. More importantly he missed the opportunity that was handed to him.

I personally believe it was a weakness of faith. It seems to be the point of this narrative. Though he understood what Elisha asked, he could not imagine how God could bring such deliverance with only 50 horsemen, 10 Chariots and only 10,000 footmen.

Perhaps he was just humoring the old prophet who was days from death. Not really believing the power that was placed into his hands. The power to deliver his people. The power to overcome. The power to have victory and freedom. He failed to recognize the opportunity.

4. How can we apply this lesson? — Rom. 5:1-2, Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:24; Hebrews 4:16; 10:16; 1 John 5:14-15

ANSWER?

How many of us fail to see the opportunities God places before us? Every opportunity starts as a small thing. Moses had to have faith to raise his rod over the Nile and later the Red Sea. It took very little physical strength to raise the rod over his head, but it took faith to believe God would honor His word and bloody the Nile or divide the Red Sea. The same faith was needed when Moses struck the Rock to bring forth water, or when he threw the tree into the bitter water, to purify the spring.

Elisha needed the same type of faith to pour salted water into a polluted spring in order for God to heal it. He had to believe God would and could purify the spring. Faith was required when Elisha told Israel to dig trenches in the desert. He believed God would do as He said.

For us, we are asked to pray believing (Matt. 21:22; Mark 11:24) and to pray with boldness (Hebrews 4:16). As Christians we are justified (*by our faith in Christ*) and have peace with God. Because of this we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand (Romans

5:1-2). Furthermore, we are entreated to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. (Hebrews 10:19).

It is simple to do. Even a four-year-old can do it. But it takes faith. We are asked to bring our petitions before Him in FAITH, and then act accordingly. And how do we know what is His will? "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." — 1 John 5:14-15.

5. How does 2 Kings 13:20-21, 23-25 fit into our context? Is this revival/resurrection a random event or is it pointing to something more significant? How does this account help us in our spiritual walk?

ANSWER:

We then come to the story of the "runaway corpse," in which a dead body that is being buried providentially comes into contact with the bones of Elisha the prophet. The dead body comes to life. Remember that Joash is not a godly king. He is the king who is the recipient of the prophecy given through Elisha *while he is dying*. The context seems to make it clear that Joash was afraid of what would happen to his kingdom after Elisha died. Now that Elisha is dead, Joash may very well have reasoned that this prophecy was no longer valid. I believe this bizarre miracle was divinely designed to give Joash and the nation courage and hope, so that they would engage Syria in battle, and thus experience the victories that God had promised.

Did the king fear that a dead man's (Elisha's) prophecies were now lifeless as well? News of this miracle certainly reached the city and the ears of the king. If Elisha's bones still had power in the tomb, then surely his words were also to be trusted. I therefore believe that this miracle was specifically aimed at Joash. I am sure that the dead man appreciated the miracle as well, but I believe that this great manifestation of God's power through the prophet spoke volumes to the king.

This is the reason this chapter in 2 Kings ends as it does. Syria oppressed Israel, we are told, throughout the reign of Jehoahaz and was likewise trying to do the same in the reign of Joash. But God felt sorry for His people as He looked upon their suffering. In addition, God was committed to keep His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And so it was that God gave Israel victory over the king of Syria at the hand of Joash. It is no coincidence that the last sentence of 2 Kings 13 informs us that Joash defeated Ben Hadad of Syria three times.