

Elisha As A Messenger

2 Kings 6:8-8:29; 2 Chronicles 21:4-22:6

On every occasion when we have the privilege to open God's Word our prayer ought to be, **SLIDE**: "God as you teach, let me be teachable". To the teachable, the prophet Jeremiah (17:8) makes this promise, **BUILD** "He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

Paul exhorts the teachable to, **BUILD** "Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness" - Col. 2:7 (NLT)

Let's be the good soil of Matthew 13, men and women who are sensitive to God's movement in our lives that will produce attractive fruit to a watching world.

Don't look for a soulmate, look for a soil mate! – Debbie Breaux. How many of us wish we headed that piece of advice?, or are so glad we did?

Elisha And The Chariots of Fire - 2 Kings 6:8-23

Verses 8-12 The account returns to the intermittent warfare between the Arameans and Israelites. Time after time the Israelite king and his forces were delivered from ambush because of Elisha's warning, for by divine revelation Elisha was party to the Aramean king's secret plans (vv.8-9). Elisha's aid to Jehoram became common knowledge and was duly reported to the Aramean king, who had suspected a traitor within his own court (vv.10-12).

What does the king of Aram do? **SLIDE**: Does he **retreat**, **reflect**, and **respond** by **repenting** when confronted by the very obvious word from God? That's the proper, God honoring path. Does it take it? Oh no! He seeks to shoot the messenger.

Solomon wrote in **BUILD**: Proverbs 27:6, *Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.* I would ask, who are those voices that speak truth into your life that you often don't want to hear?

This scene reminds me of what took place when the king of Aram possessed Ramoth Gilead east of the Jordan (1 Kings 22:1-11). Ahab, the King of Israel asked Jehoshaphat if he would join forces. He said that he would BUT with a condition, that they must FIRST seek the Lord. Ahab brings in his boys and 400 of them tell him what he wants to hear.

SLIDE: But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there not a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?" The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him **WHY?** because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah." 1 Kings 22:7-8.

Micaiah's words cost him physical abuse and imprisonment.

I have a few authors I don't like very much. One is Dave Roper. He writes these words about pride,

SLIDE: “Pride is terrible trait manifesting itself in our passion for the best seats (see James 2:1-11), insisting on recognition (Luke 20:46), wanting to be noticed, longing for prominence, smarting when we are not consulted or advised. Dominating social situations, it displays itself when we resist authority or become angry and defensive when crossed or challenged. When we harbor grudges and nurse grievances or wallow in self-pity, it is the drive behind our penchant for associating with the rich and famous rather than the little people who make up most of our world. Humility means being led downward. It means being content when others are elevated above us and letting others advance even at our own expense. It means being glad when someone else is preferred. It means accepting humiliation, and looking upon every person who demeans us as a means of grace to humble us”

Yuck! I don't like it because it so true of me! I insist on recognition. I want to be noticed. I smart when I'm not consulted or advised. I resist authority and become angry and defensive when crossed or challenged. I want to harbor that grudge, nurse my grievances, and wallow in self-pity. I don't want to be led downward. I don't want to see the truth when I'm criticized. I don't want to retreat, reflect, and respond. I don't want to repent and therefore rebound. I want to shoot the messenger!

Wounds from a friend can be trusted, it's your enemy who simply tells you what you want to hear.

And so it is with the King of Aram.

13-20 Accordingly, having learned that Elisha had gone to Dothan (about 10 miles north of Samaria – **SLIDE: MAP**), the Arameans surrounded the city by night in order to take Elisha by force (vv.13-14). Doubtless Elisha knew about all this, too, but allowed himself to be trapped so that the subsequent entrapment of the Arameans might work to God's glory and for his good (v.15). When Elisha's servant awakened and saw the great Aramean force, he cried out in dismay to Elisha. Elisha, however, assured him that the forces of God outnumbered the forces of the enemy. In accordance with Elisha's prayer, the servant's eyes were enabled to see the company of an innumerable angelic army that stood ready to intercede for Elisha (v.17 See A. 12:7 and Heb. 1:14).

The scene reminds me of Moses' plea in the 33rd chapter of Exodus (vss. 13-16)



SLIDE: If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.” The LORD replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” Then Moses said to him, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?”

In the previous chapter, Elisha asks his servant Gehazi, “Where have you been?” He replies, “Your servant didn't go anywhere.” (2 Kings 5:25-26)

It's like when we asked our kids, “where have you been?” What was their response?, “Nowhere”. What have you been doing? “Nothing.” Clearly nowhere is somewhere and nothing is something and it was usually not good.

Elisha says to him, “was not my spirit with you with the man got down from his chariot to meet you?” **YES. HE WAS!**

I’m fond of lyrics of the popular song **SLIDE**: “Holy Spirit”:

*Holy Spirit, You are welcome here
Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere
Your glory, God, is what our hearts long for
To be overcome by Your presence, Lord*

BUILD: Let us become more aware of Your presence
Let us experience the glory of Your goodness

I have become accustomed to praying this prayer when my feet hit the floor in the morning. “Lord, today, make me more aware of what you’re doing in me, through me, and around me.”

In accordance with Elisha’s prayer, his servant gets his eyes opened. In contrast, the enemy army became totally blind and was led away by Elisha to Samaria (vv.18-19). Once inside the city, the army discovered that instead of taking Elisha captive, they were prisoners of Jehoram (v.20). **Quite a twist of fate.**

21-23 At Elisha’s directions, rather than killing their enemies (v.21), the Israelites treated them to a feast (v.22) and, having given them provisions for the journey home to Syria, sent them away (v.23). Elisha’s intercession and instructions proved ultimately to be the divine remedy for the momentary ills of Israel: the Arameans reported Israel’s kindness, and their guerrilla raids ceased.

(6:23b) “So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel’s territory”.

SLIDE: Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink...Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” - Rom. 12:17-21.

The Siege of Samaria (6:24-7:20)

Unfortunately, the example Elisha set of covenant faithfulness didn’t last. With no evidence of repentance by Israel, God withdrew his protective hand; and Israel faced a full-scale Syrian invasion. The Arameans were eminently successful, penetrating to the very gates of Samaria itself, and putting the city under a dire siege.

The lengthy besiegement evoked a severe famine that, in turn, produced highly inflated prices for the most basic of goods. So scarce had food become that one day as the king was on a tour about the embattled city’s wall, he stumbled on a case of cannibalism (v.26). By agreement two women had eaten the son of one of them (v.28); but when it came time for the second woman to surrender her son to the fire, she had hidden him.

30-33 Jehoram's reaction was one of anguished horror. He tore his robes as a sign of grief. Enraged and blaming Elisha (**the messenger**) for the whole affair, he dispatched his own messenger to seize and behead Elisha (v.31). When he had come to himself, however, he ran after his messenger, hoping to stay his hand. By divine insight Elisha knew the details of the whole episode and instructed certain elders who were with him to bar the door of the house until Jehoram could overtake his executioners (v.32). When the king arrived, he was admitted into the house (v.33). Convinced that the Lord had pronounced the doom of the city, Jehoram had all but given up any hope of the Lord's deliverance. Yet perhaps his realization that all that had transpired was from the Lord carried with it the faintest hope that God would yet miraculously intervene.

In chapter 7:1-2, Elisha seized on the king's last glimmer of hope (v.1). By the next day conditions would so improve that good products would be available again, even though at a substantial price. Jehoram's chief aide found such a statement preposterous (v.2). Even if the Lord should open the windows of heaven and pour down a flood of flour and grain, so dire had the famine been that even this would not suffice to effect Elisha's prediction.

God Moves Mysteriously (7:3-20)

Four leprous men, the most unlikely of messengers, who lived outside the city gate knew that their situation was desperate (v.3). They resolved to surrender to the Arameans (v.4). Death already stared them in the face; **they had nothing to lose by going over to the Syrians**. Slipping away at twilight they traveled to the far end of the encampment. As they moved cautiously into the camp, to their surprise they met not one man—the camp was totally deserted (v.5).

The Lord had miraculously caused the Arameans to hear what seemed to them the approach of a great army to liberate the besieged Israelites (v.6). Throwing caution to the wind, they had abandoned the camp with its supplies, running for fear of their lives (v.7).

8-14 The four rushed about eating and drinking their fill, gathering and hiding their new found treasure (v.8). When the exhilaration of the moment had worn off, they realized that as Israelites it was their duty to tell the good news to others (v.9).

Acting on the advice of his officers, Jehoram sent two chariot teams to scout out the whereabouts of the Arameans (vv.13-14).

The scouting party soon returned with the news. It was all true. For some reason the Arameans had fled in panic, leaving the road strewn with equipment and clothing as far as the Jordan River.

The king commanded the people to go to the Aramean camp and they plundered it. By day's end Elisha's amazing prophecy stood fulfilled.

The Reign Of Jehoram Of The Southern Kingdom (8:16-24)

The author of Kings shifts his attention to the southern kingdom and to the two sons of Jehoshaphat. Jehoram's ungodly character is noted along with the primary factor in the spiritual apostasy: his marriage to Ahab's daughter (v.18; cf. ch. 11). The Chronicler (2 Chronicles 21:11) adds that Jehoram caused the people of Jerusalem to prostitute themselves and led Judah astray.

19-24 The perverse nature of Jehoram is further evidenced in that after his father's death he slew all his brothers and any possible claimant to the throne (2 Chronicles 21:4).

Jehoram and Judah did experience judgment in the form of three military engagements (cf. 2 Chronicles 21:10):

- (1) Edom revolted successfully, a rebellion that nearly cost Jehoram his life in attempting to suppress it (2 Chronicles 21:8-10a);
- (2) Simultaneously Libnah revolted (2 Chronicles 21:10b); and
- (3) The Philistines and Arabians launched a massive attack that reached Jerusalem itself and cost the king all his sons except Ahaziah (cf. 2 Chronicles 21:16-17 with 2 Chronicles 22:1).

Conclusion

To wrap us our time together, I want to return to the 6th chapter when Elisha prays for his servant to have eyes to see God's hand in the midst of what appears to be a very dire circumstance.

I don't know how many of you have seen the film, Chariots of Fire. It won best picture in 1982.

The not so subtle message is that if the Lord's presence isn't at the core of what we're about, what we're about will ultimately let us down.

The film traces the story of two men: Harold Abrams who ran for **personal glory** and Eric Liddell, the Scottish runner who ran for **the glory of God**.

In the early part of the movie, Abrams is asked by his friend Montague, Abrams, sure, cocky, confident. Montague asks, “*I hate losing Harold, how about you?*” “*I don't know, I've never lost.*”

Towards the end of the film, Abrams is being massaged by his trainer just before the 100 meter final of the Olympic Games in Paris, 1924. Harold Abrams is getting ready, Montague has already competing in his event. Eric Liddell did not run in his key event, which was also the 100 meters, because the heats were held on Sunday. He changed his event and ran in the 400 meters so he could live with his conviction that he should not run on the Lord's Day.

Abrams is about the run the 100 meters. Liddell is not running in it. Montague looks at him and asks if he's ready. Abrams says, “*You know Montague I used to be afraid to lose, but now I'm afraid to win. I have but 10 seconds to prove the worth of my existence and even then, I'm not sure I will.*”

He ran it. He won. He went out in despondency. It is the climactic goal of life and it ultimately let him down. There was nothing left to celebrate. It was a downer even after the gold medal was draped around his neck.

Contrast that to Eric Liddell. His sister says to him, “*Eric, you're giving up so much. Why so much running and racing?*” He puts his hand on her shoulder and says, “*Jenny, God has made me for a purpose and it's for China, but He has also made me fast, and when I run I feel His pleasure.*”

Before he was about to run the final of the 400, the American athlete Jackson Schultz slipped a note into his hand which said, “*He who honors Me, I will honor, says the Lord.*” Eric crumpled that paper and ran with it. He blew the field away by more than 15 feet.

Two years after taking the Olympic gold, he sailed to China and fulfilled his dream of becoming a missionary.

During the dark years of World War II, he carried water for the sick and elderly, arranged games, taught Bible classes and grounded youngsters in chemistry with a textbook handwritten from memory.

Those who knew him during those bleak months said that he truly lived out Christ's Sermon on the Mount.

Sir David Puttnam, the producer of Chariots of Fire, stated, "*In many ways Liddell was the kind of person who, in my heart of hearts, I'd always dreamed of being. . . Few lives have more to teach us about the virtues of honor and integrity.*"

I'll always remember those lines, "God has made me for a purpose and it's for China, but He has also made me fast, and when I run I feel His pleasure."

Whatever we do as a profession. We may be teachers, managers, in the trades, executives. We may be retired and now grandparents and great grandparents. Many, if not all of you, serve in some capacity as a changemaker. Whatever it is, give it to God as an expression of your worship to Him and here is my prayer...may you feel His pleasure and sense His presence in the midst of it.