

Introduction: We continue with the theme of God's daily care surrounding God's people even in the dark days of Elisha, as we study of that great prophet's life in this week's Bible notes.

Mon/Tues: read 2 Kings 3:1-7; 3:13-18 & 2 Kings 4:1. As a people *devoted to the one true God*, the enmity of the world is frequently directed toward the church in both the Old and New Testaments. The experience of bondage to hostile powers in Egypt comes to be known *throughout the rest of Scripture* as a model of what God's people in each age face from a benighted and evil world. Only God's care enables the church and individual believers to live fruitfully and purposefully in this world; only His eye upon them ensures their continued perseverance in hope; only His resurrection power guarantees that their work, in the end, will not be in vain; only His provisions, like manna from Heaven, give them their daily bread in a world that is a wilderness for them. We see, for example, how the LORD is able to rescue the poor widow of a true prophet (2 Kings 4:1ff) from the threat of her children being sold as slaves.

But even more amazingly, we see in this week's notes on 2 Kings 3 that He is willing to rescue even the ungodly king of Israel, Jehoram, from the threat of Moabite rebellion! Though Elisha clearly condemns Jehoram, the son of wicked king Ahab, saying to him in 2 Kings 3:13: "What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and mother," the prophet nevertheless promises this wicked king that he and his kingdom will be saved, for the sake of the godly king of Judah, Jehoshaphat (2 Kings 3:14).

Meditate and Pray: How patient God is with us in our wickedness. As *Tabletalk* magazine points out, we are just as undeserving of the LORD's help as the family of Ahab and Jezebel:

The Lord replied to Jehoram through Elisha, but only because He had regard for King Jehoshaphat of Judah, so wicked were Jehoram and his predecessors (2 Kings 3:9–14). There is a parallel here with our experience. In ourselves, we are sinners, and God has regard for us because of the final King of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:25).

Sing about God's undeserved grace, using hymn # 553 in our red hymnal:

1. My sins, my sins, my Savior!
They take such hold on me,
I am not able to look up,
save only, Christ, to thee;
in thee is all forgiveness,
in thee abundant grace,
my shadow and my sunshine
the brightness of thy face.

2. My sins, my sins, my Savior!
Their guilt I never knew
till with thee in the desert
I near thy passion drew;
till with thee in the garden
I heard thy pleading pray'r,
and saw the sweat-drops bloody
that told thy sorrow there.

3. Therefore my songs, my Savior,
e'en in this time of woe,
shall tell of all thy goodness
to suffering man below;

thy goodness and thy favor,
whose presence from above
rejoice those hearts, my Savior,
that live in thee and love.

Wednesday: read 2 Kings 3:1-13 & Ephesians 3:20-21. In earlier sermons this year, we marveled at the stupendous story of Elisha's miraculous help in the LORD's name to individuals in dire distress in 2 Kings chapter 4. Even in the face of famine, of crippling debt and the tragic death of children, the LORD by His Spirit is able to make His Word a comfort and the source of His people's hope. *Even at the eleventh hour, God is able to snatch victory and redemption from the jaws of defeat.* No wonder believers, therefore, are exhorted to believe that He is able to do, "exceedingly more than they ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20-21)!

But what a different response is elicited from the wicked and unbelieving. Behold the *panic* which ensues *when those who have not been living close to God* see a large-scale threat and don't believe God can help them out of it. Our example of such unbelief instead of faith in the face of catastrophe – is once again, Jehoram the son of Ahab and successor as the king of Israel.

When this king of Israel musters his army and successfully persuades the godly king of Judah and the king of Edom to join him in war against the Moabites, they end up cornered in the desert with an emergency: lack of water (2 Kings 3:8-9). What does Jehoram say in his unbelieving despair? "The LORD has called these three kings together to give them into the hand of Moab" (2 Kings 3:10). No hope in God's help! All is lost!

Meditate and Pray: Let us solemnly and humbly ponder the question, "Why is it, when calamity comes upon us, and we are afraid for our lives, that we instinctively accuse God of being against us?" The Twelve did this in the midst of the storm on the Sea of Galilee when they shook Jesus awake and accusingly asked, "Carest thou not if we drown?" (Mark 4:38-40) May God increase our faith so that we expectantly hope in Him even when we see no hope, humanly speaking!

Thurs/Fri: read 2 Kings 3:1-20. Because of the threat of Moab against the Ten Tribes, the king of Israel recruits the kings of Judah and Edom to help defend Israel from the army of the Moabites in 2 Kings 3:7-9. His fear drives him to make an alliance with the godly king of Judah, Jehoshaphat.

Yet when there is no water for their army's seven-day journey through Edom to the battle against Moab, Jehoram ends up accusing the LORD Himself of setting a trap against His own people in order to hand them over to the Moabites in 2 Kings 3:10. Only because godly King Jehoshaphat has faith is a godly word from the LORD secured for their venture. When Elisha is summoned, he brings the promise of God for a miraculous provision of water for their armies, promising as well the defeat of Moab (2 Kings 3:11-18).

Meditate and Pray: Oh, dear fearful brother or sister in Christ. Do not let local or national news networks, predicting disaster on the world stage and economic catastrophe, blind you to the amazing sovereignty of God over world events. If the hearts of kings are like water in the hands of the LORD, so that He can move even wicked rulers to do His will, how much more precious to God is *your believing heart and soul!* Though He righteously over-rules and even justly tricks the wicked into stepping into the trap of their own destruction, He will never deceive our hearts and minds. Rather, He holds wise and life-giving conference with His own, showing us what to do even when the world is being blown apart. What poise we can have with Jehoshaphat, knowing that, with Christ as our Captain of salvation, we have the Word of God controlling our lives. Sing about such *Word-based assurance* when we have given up hope with the words of this great hymn by F. W. Faber:

1. Workman of God! O lose not heart,
But learn what God is like;
And in the darkest battlefield
Thou shalt know where to strike.

3. Blest too is he who can divine
Where real right doth lie,
And dares to take the side that seems
Wrong to man's blindfold eye.

5. For right is right, since God is God,
And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin

2. Thrice blest is he to whom is giv'n
The instinct that can tell
That God is on the field, when He
Is most invisible.

4. Then learn to scorn the praise of men,
And learn to lose with God;
For Jesus won the world through shame,
And beckons thee His road.