

Kings and Prophets 14-01-17b

We pick up our study now in 2 Kings 3 at the point where Elisha has been sought out in the camp. He's the one prophet of God in a crowd of prophets of Baal, prophets of Asherah, and the large army and baggage train. Everybody is parched and thirsty.

They've gone a week now and haven't come across any water at all. The king of the northern kingdom of Israel, alas, God has brought us out here to die, which reminds you a lot of what the Israelites said after they came out of Egypt. So he says, call me a musician, and we saw last time that this isn't just some sort of spooky, mystical aid to meditation.

This had a point because the music in Israel has words, and the words to the music in Israel is where the value really is. And so we looked last time at Psalm 107, and if you don't have a note in your Bible in the margin at this point for Psalm 107, you ought to put it there, because I would bet a couple of lepton, a couple of widow's mites, that this is the song that the instrumentalist played at Elisha's request, talking about the faithfulness of God. When they cry to the Lord in their trouble, He saves them out of their distress.

Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, Psalm 107. So the musician plays this song, or one very like it, and all of these kings, think about it, even the king of Edom is a captive audience for a Bible class. He's got to sit there and listen to all of Psalm 107 being sung and played by one of these guys, which, by the way, the tribute had been levied by David.

The singers in Israel and the hymnal had been put together by that same David. So David levied the tribute, you're having trouble collecting the tribute, now King David's got an answer to help you collect the tribute, if you'll just listen to the song from the guy who has a job as a musician, because King David set it up in Israel, Psalm 107. When the musician played, the hand of the Lord came upon him, and God reveals, and I think possibly even through this word, through this psalm, what the answer is.

Psalm 107 says that God satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness, that he brings forth streams in the desert and water springs from dry ground, makes a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. And that's what's coming up in the rest of this chapter. When we get to the destruction of Moab, that's what happens.

That's Psalm 107, 35, he turns the wilderness into a standing water and a dry ground into water springs. That's what's about to happen. And once they rout Moab and fulfill God's command on it, it's going to be verse 34, fruitful land will be turned into barrenness because of the wickedness of the people who dwell there.

And that's precisely what God is going to do. So that's why I think this is the song. So he says, make the valley full of ditches, thus says the Lord, you shall not see wind nor shall you see rain, yet the valley shall be filled with water, so that you your cattle and your animals may drink.

This is the dry season. And there is not going to be a storm. There's not going to be clouds heavy laden with moisture coming over and producing a giant thunderstorm.

This apparently is a rainfall that takes place up in the hills and the water. And this, by the way, is a documented phenomena in that part of the land to this day. There will be rain showers that you can't see when you're down in the plains of Moab.

It's not Moab today, but when you're down in that area, there will be water that comes flowing into the plain from the Wadis. And you never saw the rainfall that put it there because it has happened at such a distance. But, of course, God could have supernaturally done this.

But it is also a naturally occurring phenomena. The trick is, can you get the naturally occurring phenomena to occur naturally just when you need it and just when you want it? People have tried to explain all the ten plagues by, well, you know, if you hold your mouth just right and a volcano blows up, then it will happen. Well, but will it happen after you've already gone into Pharaoh and told him it's going to happen? That's the tricky part.

So, it's a simple matter in the sight of the Lord, verse 18. He will deliver the Moabites into your hand. The water would seem to be the minor thing and delivering the Moabites a major thing, but God reverses them.

He says, it's a simple thing for God to give you the water and, oh, by the way, you'll win the battle. And you shall attack, look at verse 19, every fortified city and every choice city, cut down every good tree, stop up every spring of water, and ruin every good piece of land with stones. Now, this is an interesting command on several fronts.

I am going to wager mentally with myself that you probably did not know that cutting down trees while you are besieging a city is prohibited in the Mosaic law. Deuteronomy, chapter 20, verses 19 and 20. When you besiege a city for a long time while making war against it to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them, if you can eat of them, if they're food trees, fruit trees, dates, and so on, olives.

If you can eat of them, do not cut them down to use in the siege, for the tree of the field is man's, by implication, for food. Only the trees which you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down in order to build siege works against the city that makes war with you until it is subdued. Well, in reality, that doesn't pertain in this situation.

Why? They are not besieging, they're not building siege works, they're not going to be there so long that they've got to be careful about maintaining a food supply and building siege works. This is a victory God is going to give them and they don't have to do it themselves. It isn't going to be by their efforts.

But it's an interesting side note because God does tell them to cut down the trees and a few of the ones who knew the law might say, well, wait a minute, and then they'd have to check and say, oh, well, in this case it's okay. This, by the way, point of application, is why it is important to

memorize your scriptures accurately. And when you are in discussions with people, do not let them misquote scripture.

A change of a phrase, a little addition here, a little subtraction there, this is what got Eve in trouble in the garden, right? What did God say about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? What were they not supposed to do? What were they prohibited? Of every tree in the garden you may eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat of it, for in the day thou eatest of it, dying thou shalt die. Thou shalt surely die, right? When Satan brings this up in conversation, what does he say? Hath God not said you may eat of every tree? And Eve says, well, on this tree, he says, we shall not eat of it, neither shall we touch it. And God didn't say anything about touching the tree.

You could take that thing down and teach yourself juggling or whatever you want to do. I don't know if they were pomegranates. I don't know if they were apples.

I don't know if they were oranges. Tree of the knowledge of good and evil, I'm thinking it might have been persimmons. You want to learn about good and evil, just pick your persimmons at the wrong time.

That will teach you good and evil. Personally, I think it was a persimmon tree, but that's just me. It could have been figs.

It could have been anything. It could have been dates. But she didn't remember and she got argued into a different position.

She got argued into, she got suggestible. God knows that in the day you eat of them, you will become wise like him, knowing good and evil. And when she saw the tree looked good, was good for food, was desirable to make one wise, rationalized, rationalized, rationalized, she took and ate and gave to her husband and he ate.

It's important to know your scriptures. Know them well. And if you can't remember, what other age in the history of mankind have we had such a proliferation? Pull it up on your phone.

Pull it up on your tablet. Pull it up on your old-fashioned cellulose pages here with black ink on, but check it. Don't let people misquote scripture.

Don't let people get away with characterizing scripture in ways that are not accurate. If anybody ought to know their Bible, it's you all. And don't let people distort it.

Don't let them make it into something it's not. The Bible says, do not let your good be spoken of as evil. Don't let the word of God be spoken of as evil.

And if somebody starts quoting the skeptics Bible to you, you let me know. There's not a single point that I have ever read, seen, heard tell of from the skeptics Bible. Some of the guys that read that chat board that I'm on a couple of years ago, I think I answered over 50 questions

that somebody just copied and pasted from the skeptics Bible about here's all the errors in the Bible.

And what they do is they just firehose you. They say, look at all of these errors. Well, I just took them one by one by one by one, answered them, took me the better part of a Saturday, just went down and explained them all, pointed out where it was a stupid question, where it was a misunderstanding.

The question itself was uninformed. And I answered every single one of them. And I said, you know, next set, please.

Well, they give up after a while because do not let the word of God be distorted and spoken ill of by naysayers. You can defend the word of God. There's nothing wrong with it.

It is without error. It is comfortable. It is compatible with science.

In fact, the Bible has got more scientific harmony than any other piece of ancient literature that addresses things like creation and the sequence on which life appeared and what takes place in storms and how the movement of the stars takes place and what are the constellations in the Zodiac. And, you know, somebody tries to tell you that the Bible says pi is equal to three. I can show you that that's a complete falsehood.

So anyway, sell that to say, know your scriptures. And it's okay to cut these trees down. A, you've got a direct command of God.

And B, God is not contradicting himself. It's two different situations. So he says, cut down the trees and stop up every spring of water and ruin every good piece of land with stones.

Now, what has been their problem coming around here and trying to win this victory? What did they run out of? Water. What is it they are going to do to the Moabites when they are handed a victory? Deprive them of water. What else are they going to do? The Moabites do not want to send the tribute which has been in what? What form did the tribute take? Sheep, lambs, and rams, right? So many elephs a year of these.

So many troops of woolen goods and lambs. So what are they going to do? Stop up the springs. What can you not do when you can't get into the spring? What were the Midianite girls trying to do when Moses showed up? Couldn't get the lid off the well, right? Remember that? He helped them water their stock.

If you can't water the stock, the stock aren't going to survive. If you don't want to pay tribute of the fruit of the land, I'll take away the fruit of the land, then you'll be in compliance. Because you'll be sending the percentage you're supposed to send.

Your percentage of zero is zero, so you're in compliance. No problem now. You have no sheep, you send no tribute.

So one way or another you will comply. So that's the plan. So it happened in the morning when the grain offering was offered.

When the grain offering was offered, of all the different ways that you could denote time, why would this be used? It's the time of the morning sacrifice. This is as you start the day. Now, what happened yesterday? This is the first morning after there has been a major drawing of attention to the God of Israel, the prophet of Israel, a prophecy from that God, through that prophet, saying that that God is going to hand them a victory, and so assumes the victory, that here are your instructions for after the victory.

Oh, by the way, you're going to defeat the Moabites, so now here's a whole paragraph on what you need to do after you get that victory. So the next morning, what is everybody thinking about? Are they thinking about Baal? Are they thinking about Asherah? Are they thinking about, well, how many men did the Edomites bring? What is everybody thinking about? What is the news the day after the prophecy? What's on everybody's mind? So everybody's thinking the God of Israel. Wow, He's really here.

The prophet has spoken all of this. So now, what are they thinking about in the morning? It's time for that morning sacrifice. You know, I wasn't even paying attention.

I hope somebody was offering that Yahweh sacrifice in the morning because I wasn't paying any attention. I was down watching the Asherah prophetesses dance around or something. I was paying no attention.

But now, time is measured by obedience to God. Time is measured by the morning sacrifice. And at the time of the morning sacrifice, of all the times in the morning, this is the time when most eyes would be directed toward God, what happens? Suddenly, and notice it wasn't before the offering, it was at the offering, when the offering was offered, when in the camp they honored God like they're supposed to, and everybody's paying attention on this day, maybe for the first time in decades, first time in some of their lives, that they paid any attention to the offerings that are supposed to be offered to the God of Israel.

And when that offering is offered, and this sticks in their mind, what happens? Suddenly, water came by way of Edom. Now, which way did they march? You remember the topography, Dead Sea. They've marched around the south.

They've gone past the south edge of the plains of Moab, and they're hooking around to attack in a northwesterly direction. Where is Edom? They picked up the Edomites southwest of the Dead Sea. That's sort of west-southwest.

That's where Edom is. They marched through there. So where is this water coming from? It's coming from the Edom direction.

Now, what are the consonants in the word Edom? They're the same in English as they are in Hebrew. What are the consonants in Edom? D-M, right? Okay, so, water came by way of Edom,

and the land was filled with water. When all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them, big surprise, we fortified the north, they've all come around.

Somebody figured out that they were coming around the south. What did they do? All who were able to bear arms were gathered, and they stood at the border. So they're at the border.

They're now alerted. There's a bunch of people still up north, but the ones who can get there are on this southern border. That's why they had to roust up anybody who could even pick up a spear, because the professional army is all up on the northern border.

So they're getting the, you know, did you ever serve? Grandpa, can you still, you know, put a cane in one hand and a spear in the other and go stagger down there? Anybody who can bear arms is gathered, and they stand at the border. They rose up early in the morning, and the sun was shining on the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood. As red as blood.

The word for blood in Hebrew has two consonants in it, D and M. The word for blood is D-M. Dam, Edom, Adam, all of these cognates are related and are similar in Hebrew. Red, blood, dust of the ground, Adam, man himself.

There's huge word plays going on here. And Edom. Remember, Edom is all the descendants of whom? Esau, who was what kind of a guy? Red.

What color was the mess of pottage he sold his birthright for? What color are lentil stews? Red. It's all woven together here. Sold your birthright for a mess of pottage.

That's where the Edomites came from. Now, you've reunited here. You've reunited the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom, and who are the Edomites? This is Jacob's brother, right? That's why they're on the side.

Who are the Moabites? Moab and Ammon came from where? That's Lot's illegitimate, incestuous offspring, right? But this is taking them back through their history. By the way, when's the last time we saw water turning to blood? When's the last time you can think of water turning to blood? Out of the ten plagues in Egypt, what's plague number one? Water turning to blood, right? What's the first big issue that Israel faces when they leave Egypt? What can they not get across? Water, right? Water is an impediment. The water isn't their friend.

Kind of like the Dead Sea there. Water, water everywhere, not a drop to drink, right? So this is, it's not shallow, one-dimensional reference. It's sophisticated, three-dimensional reference.

Do you remember a time when you had a crisis? Because, first of all, there was water that was a problem, and then there was no water. They go further into the wilderness, and they get to the Bitter Springs, and they can't drink it. And pretty soon, God's got to bring water out of the rock, right? Here, God brings water out of the ground, but the water is red.

Now, here's what's really interesting to me. Why is the water red? It's one thing when Moses says the water's going to turn to blood, and all the water turns to blood. Even water in pots and jars in Egypt turned red and was undrinkable.

And they were digging holes, trying to hope that the soil would filter the water so they could get something to drink and not die of thirst in Egypt for that whole week where the Nile had turned to blood. Here, the water is not said to be blood, hasn't turned to blood, doesn't have, you know, whatever all the naturalistic explanations, red algae. You know, we had, not too long back, we had a lake here in Texas turn red.

It's happened in the Netherlands, it's happened all over the world, different times when water will actually turn red. Why is this water red? Is the water actually red? No, it's water. It's H₂O.

Why is it said to be red here? When the sun was shining on the water, the Moabites saw the water on the other side. They saw it as red as blood. So which direction are the Moabites looking as the sun rises in the east? And there's a reflection of the blood-red skies in the water, and it's reflecting in places where they know there should be no water.

This isn't wadis, this isn't creek beds, this is unusual spots on the ground. Why? God had the Israelites dig these ditches. The Moabites know their own territory.

They know that area and that border. They've grazed sheep out there. They've probably gone over and beyond.

They know it well. There shouldn't be any water where they are seeing these red spots. And it's red because the sun is shining off it, and they think, well, that can't be natural water because there is no natural water.

If there was, I would have watered my sheep there. So what do they conclude? The water, and by the way, what do you think the first effect of that water showing up was? What's the first thing that happened after that water showed up in all those ditches? Canteens are getting filled. Cattle are being watered, right? Sheep are being watered.

They're drinking of that water. So for the combined forces that we'll call them the allies, is the water good or bad? It's good. It's a blessing for them.

They see it, and they love it. And it is a fulfillment of God's promise of provision. The Moabites, pay attention now, the Moabites see the very same water.

But to them, it appears to be something completely different. How many times in your life, how many times in our modern culture, do we look at a thing one way, and those who are far from Christ look at it a different way? We look at it as a blessing. They look at it as a sign or as some sort of mystical portent or some significance to them that we know it doesn't have.

It's the very same thing. It's not the thing. It is the view.

It's the perspective, right? And people looking into the sun are seeing this water completely differently than the Israelites who are not only seeing it but drinking it. It's a blessing for the Israelites. It is going to end up being a curse for the Moabites because they're going to misinterpret God's provision as a sign that it's a big opportunity for them.

When the Moabites heard the king said come up, they went out. They rose up early. Good strategy.

Early bird catches the worm, right? So they're out there early. They're on the borders. They think they're prepared.

They have the same kind of thinking that the king of Israel had when he started this whole expedition, right? Our intelligence is good. Our spies picked this up. We've got the jump on them.

We're out there early. We're on the border. We've got all of our guys.

We're ready to go. And now they see these red splotches. And what do they think? They said this is blood.

The kings have struck swords and have killed one another. That alliance couldn't last. That northern and southern kingdom got mad at each other.

The Edomites got ticked off over something. And they've had a big intramural blood fest out there. And these are puddles.

You have to wonder how gory was the warfare that they would look at that distance and think that's human blood out there in all of those ditches. I don't know about you, but as awful as modern warfare is, in some ways it can't be as bad as people hacking each other into small pieces in an open field. Because these guys think it is a reasonable conclusion that this is the detritus and the leftovers of warfare.

That much blood. Later on when it talks about how the valley will run with blood as high as the horse's bridles. Well, this is what they think has happened.

Therefore, Moab to the spoil. And that word in Hebrew, to the spoil, is shalal. Shalaloo.

It's almost like hallelujah. But it's shalaloo. He says to the spoil.

Now, if you're really good at Bible trivia, you will recognize shalal. Especially if you put maher in front of it. Remember that? One of the longest names in the Bible.

Maher Shalal Hashbaz. Remember that? One of Isaiah's sons. You remember what his name means? Hurry the booty, hasten the spoil.

This is the word. Shalal. To the spoil, Moab.

To the spoil. Now, keep your finger here in Kings. Speaking of Isaiah, turn over to Isaiah chapter 15.

Do you remember, those of you that did Isaiah, and are still here to wear the t-shirt, do you remember just the big, broad outline of Isaiah? 66 chapters, but it's kind of like a mini Bible. How many books are there in the Old Testament? Oh, come on now. How many books in the Old Testament? I want to hear it all at once.

How many books in the Old Testament? 39. How many books in the New Testament? Oh, now that's just weak. How many books in the Old Testament? How many books in the New Testament? 27.

For a total of? 66. How many chapters are there in Isaiah? 66. How many are in the dismal negative section of the first part of the book? 39.

How many are in the wonderful, comfort ye my people, here comes the blessing? 27. It's like a miniature Bible, right? Now, there is a hinge in there at about 33 to 39, kind of the spine of the book, and you've got a flap on this side and a flap on this side. That's the big structure, but it's dismal in the first 39 chapters.

Remember, there's a bunch of woe songs that get pronounced, and dismality is not just on Israel, but on their surrounding nations. So in Isaiah chapter 15, oh, coincidentally, it's about Moab. And what does it say? The burden against Moab.

Because in the night, Ar of Moab, these are towns, by the way. Ar is a town in Moab. Ar of Moab is laid waste and destroyed, because in the night Kier of Moab is laid waste and destroyed.

He has gone up to the temple and Debon, to the high places to weep. Moab will wail over Nebo and over Medeba, over all their heads will be baldness and every beard cut off. Over their heads will be what? This is the same word that was thrown at Elisha by the youths in Jericho.

Same word. It doesn't mean male pattern baldness. It doesn't mean I've reached an advanced age and I'm a wise elderly gentleman, a fount of wisdom for the youths.

This word means to shave, to make bald. And by the way, the every beard cut off, the word cut off there, basically means the same thing, to diminish, to reduce, to take something away so that there is less of a thing. It doesn't actually mean to cut.

It means to diminish, to remove. I had a pound of flour, but I baked three cakes. Now I've got two teaspoons of flour.

It's been diminished. That's the idea of this word. If you cut your beard, you've got like a Hollywood movie star beard instead of a good Duck Dynasty beard.

You've just got a little one going there. But over their heads will be baldness. This is the word that was used for Elisha, and it means to make bald, to shave, to create an artificial baldness.

In their streets they will clothe themselves with sackcloth. The tops of their houses, their streets, everyone will wail. We bitterly, Heshbon and Elealeh, will cry out.

Their voice shall be heard as far as Jahaz. Therefore the armed soldiers of Moab will cry out. His life will be burdensome to him.

My heart will cry out for Moab. Her fugitives will flee to Zoar like a three-year-old heifer. By the ascent of Luhith they will go up with weeping in the way of Horonaiim.

They will raise up a cry of destruction, for the waters of Nimrim will be desolate. The green grass has withered away. The grass fails.

There's nothing green. The abundance they have gained and what they have laid up, they will carry away to the brook of the willows, for the cry has gone all around the borders of Moab, wailing to Eglaim and wailing to Be'er Elim. Be'er means wells, right? Be'er Sheva, seven wells.

For the waters of Dimon will be full of blood. I will bring more upon Dimon, lions upon him who escapes from Moab, and on the remnants of the land. And it goes on in chapter 16 to detail the destruction of Moab.

Now, is Isaiah earlier or later than our account? He's later. So this is allusive as well as predictive. It draws on history, the history we're looking at, and it's no accident that baldness is mentioned.

It's a little wry, sly allusion to Elisha, who is initially only incidental to the expedition. They just are kind of surprised that Elisha happens to show up. Nobody actually invited him.

He's lucky he was there, so to speak, right? And in the same way, you would easily overlook this if you didn't know the story of Jericho, if you didn't know the story of the 42 youths and the two she bears. But he's here, and then you've got these waters turning to blood. Now, do the waters actually turn to blood? No.

This is another really interesting thing. God deceives people. He doesn't just fail to tell them the truth.

God actively deceives people. He does it on purpose. I don't think you can find any book in the Christian book section that's going to talk to you about God outright fooling people on purpose.

But that's what he does. For example, here these people see the water. God knew where to have them dig the ditches.

He knew the sun was going to come up. He created a nice red sunrise, and he knew the angle, just like he knew that when our eyes would look through water droplets, we'd see a rainbow. And he put his bow in the cloud to assure Noah that the earth wouldn't be destroyed by a flood.

Same thing here. And not just here. The Lord has done this in other places where people will

hear the noise of warfare and flee.

But if you think about it, there's a time when the Syrians are attacking, and there's a noise of battle. Remember when Gideon has the lamps and the pitchers and breaks them? It's a deception. They thought there was a huge army surrounding them when there was only a few, and they wind up slaughtering each other.

The advancing invading armies that come down, and then they think they hear an army coming after them, and they flee, and there wasn't even anybody there. There is a pattern of God using these misapprehensions to create fear and instill fear or overconfidence. In the first case here, there is overconfidence.

They think the red is blood, and they overconfidently rush out without a plan to be slaughtered. And this is intentional on God's part. There are people who are uncomfortable with any sort of intelligence effort or deception or subterfuge when it comes to warfare.

Well, God is all about warfare, deception, and subterfuge. And if you end up with a career in military intelligence or cryptography or creating tanks out of canvas and cardboard and making the enemy think there's a bunch of stuff here when there's not, and you think, well, that's lying. I've got a crisis of conscience.

Thou shalt not bear false witness. In warfare, you fight to win. And God uses deception.

This is not an encouragement to be a deceitful person. But in warfare, it is a legitimate tactic. And God himself uses it.

So the war is undertaken here. And you have the overconfident Moabites rushing down into the field, thinking that these guys have already slain themselves. And they came to the camp of Israel.

In verse 24, Israel rose up and attacked the Moabites so that they fled before them, and they entered their land, killing the Moabites. They destroyed the cities, and each man threw a stone on every good piece of land and filled it. They took the cities apart.

They took people's houses and public buildings apart, and every soldier, every Edomite, every southern kingdom, every northern kingdom soldier grabbed a granite block, carried it out, and dumped it in a field, dumped it down the wells, dumped it down in the springs, and ruined the land. The Moabites are not going to have an army to come out and pick up all of these stones and rebuild the cities. It's going to take them months and years to undo what the Israelites are doing.

This is God's command. Why? What does it say in Psalm 107? God will take a good and fertile land and ruin it because of the wickedness of the people. God's not vindictive.

He's not implacable. He's not vengeful. He is just.

They have brought this on themselves. You remember back at the beginning of our study when Solomon was warned by his father, watch some of these guys. As long as he stays in his city of refuge, as long as he abides by our agreement, he's safe.

But the first day he steps outside the city, the first day he breaks the contract, his life is forfeit. These people were spared by David on the condition that they pay their tribute. They stopped paying their tribute.

It doesn't matter how much time has passed. They're in breach of contract, and God is punishing them for that. And this is really just a delay of their destruction that would have taken place under David anyway.

Destroyed the cities, threw these stones out. They left the stones of Kir Hareseth intact. The slingers surrounded and attacked it.

So this is the city where they've chased the king. Misha the king of Moab saw the battle was too fierce for him. He took with him 700 men who drew swords to break through to the king of Edom, but they could not.

Evidently, the Edomites were the ones attacking this particular city. The northern and southern kingdom Israelites are out chasing down all of these scattered bands and groups and distributing stones and all that. The Edomites are doing the mop-up, and they've got the last holdouts, these 700 men and the king, and the Edomites have surrounded the thing.

They've got the slingers. They've got this sort of special artillery skill. So Misha takes his eldest son who would have reigned in his place and offered him as a burnt offering an olah on the wall.

And this is actual no-kidding child sacrifice, and he does it right on the wall in front of everybody. And there was great—this isn't indignation. This is shock and horror.

It's one thing to hear about these things. It's something else to witness it and hear this young man screaming in agony as he is burned alive before them. And everyone is so disgusted.

You want to talk about post-traumatic stress. This is the kind of thing that can really send a kind of shock through you that even this kind of warfare did not. It's one thing when everybody suits up and says, okay, we're going to hack and slash.

It's something else when the people you're supposed to be fighting for and sparing in the course of the battle, somebody takes one of them and wantonly slaughters them in front of your eyes, burns them alive right before you, and you hear the hideous, piteous screams and cries, and everyone is just so shocked that they just don't even want to prosecute the battle anymore. So they departed from him and returned to their own land. Well, what is our conclusion from all this? I would offer three thoughts.

The first one we've already talked about. You do not measure success and failure by the circumstantial outcome. We are the people of God.

We belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. And what is right and wrong for us is measured by the Word of God. If it's right, it's right.

It doesn't matter how it turns out. If it's wrong, it is wrong. No matter how well we might think it turned out, circumstance doesn't prove what was the better course.

The Word of God shows us what is the better course. What is Psalm 119.105? Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Thy word I have hid in my heart that I might not sin.

The Word of God pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and judges the thoughts and intents of the heart. It's the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is where right and wrong occur.

And just because it turned out well and easy and prosperous, doesn't mean it was right. And just because it doesn't go well and a lot of people wind up having a bad taste in their mouth, doesn't mean it was wrong. That's number one.

Secondly, we want the perspective of God's people. When you see the water filling the ditches, do you want to be falsely confident and go out to your destruction? Or do you want to drink deep, be refreshed and restored and be given the victory by God? The same water produced both effects. It just depends on whose side you're on, what your perspective is.

We want to have the perspective from the Word of God to see things as they are. World events, national news, legislation that's passed, acts of Congress, laws, pronouncements, ups and downs of American life, and so on. It's all in your perspective.

What is red blood and sowing the seeds of destruction for one person is refreshment, restoration, and victory for others. We want to be on the right side of that equation. And we know how to do it.

It's not a mystery. It's not deep. It's not far off.

It's a matter of desire. It's a matter of commitment. It's a matter of obedience.

It's a matter of making the choice and then implementing that choice. Third and finally, there are horrific evils in this world. There are going to be people who will take their son up on the wall and slaughter him before your eyes.

And it is shocking. There's no getting around it. How do you process that? People are going to have awful experiences in warfare.

You're going to see, some of us have seen, some awful things, and I've not by any means seen

the worst of it, but I've seen enough to satisfy me that a little of that goes a long way. How do you process grotesque evils in this world? Same way you process everything else. What does it remind us of? This is the reason we're in this life after we're saved.

When we see these things, when we see the effects of sin, what it is to allow evil, what it is to allow creatures who are separate from God, who have no desire for a relationship with God, to operate on their own independent of God, this is what results. And this is our inoculation. A lot of those shots, when we were little, hurt.

When we used to get the old, you know, I don't think people get that scar anymore that a lot of us older ones have with the, you know, the little pinpricks. It hurt. But we're preserved for life from smallpox, from rubella, from polio, from awful diseases that could take our life.

It's painful in the moment, but you're inoculated. This life is that. The reason God's not going to have to make us automatons or take away part of our free choice in the eternal future is because we have already seen what this choice leads to.

And this is the kind of worst expression that cures anybody. Somewhere in the eternal future, in the kingdom of the Father, city built, four square, angels all around, river of life, trees, fruits every season, everything is wonderful. We're moving upward and onward and outward.

Somebody says, boy, you know, we're always having to do it God's way. Wouldn't it be great if I could just do it my way just once? And over the wall, you see the smoke ascending from the ever-burning lake of fire, and you think back with your perfect memory to these days, what we are like in our depravity and in our iniquity and in our sin and our defilement and our corruption, what we're capable of because of sin and because of the distance, even as believers, between ourselves and God. And we think, you know, been there, done that, never doing that again.

God doesn't have to lock down everybody's thinking in the future because we've all, angelic and human, seen what sin and evil can do. And this extreme expression, everybody turns around and goes to his own land. That's what we're going to do.

We're going to leave this life. We're going to turn around and go to our own land. Our citizenship is in heaven.

We are going to a place where this kind of stuff will never happen again. We want to be ready. We want to be prepared.

We want to be leaning forward and looking forward, drinking deep of the water of life that God brings us in these miraculous ways and ready to do his will. Notice these armies do what God told them to do. How fun do you think it was to pick up all of these stones out of the cities and carry them a mile and a half out to a field and dump it there? That's what God told them to do, and they did it.

There's just this brief resurgence, a brief appreciation, and it is enough for God to bless their whole effort. And it all comes back to one guy, Jehoshaphat, and one faithful prophet, Elisha, old baldhead. And this is what God can do, and God is appealing to his people.

He's appealing to the people in the north. He's appealing to the people in the south. He's even appealing to the descendants of Esau, who do have a blessing under Isaac.

Come to me, return to me. If you come to me, I will bless you. I will restore you.

I will favor you. I will grant you prosperity. But it has to be on God's terms and not on our own.

So that's the third and final point. That does finish the chapter. We'll pick up in Chapter 4 next time.

We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word and how faithful and gracious you are to us to allow us this opportunity to learn, to grow, to be promoted up and out of this life and this flesh and this fallen world and into future realms where we will see your justice and your righteousness break forth as the Lord Jesus prayed, thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We look forward to that day.

We look forward to being active and useful in that day. And we pray that our study this evening and our thinking about it in the days ahead will help to prepare us for that coming time and that coming service. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.