

Kings and Prophets 14-03-21a

This is Friday, the 21st of March, 2014. We're in the book of second Kings. We're in chapter five and we're picking up tonight in verse 20 with Gazi chasing the Syrian general Naaman in search of booty.

So, we'll follow our usual practice and take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, and then we'll begin. Father, thank you for preserving us and blessing us, providing for our needs through this past week. We thank you for the opportunity now to spend time together, endeavoring to improve our understanding of your plan and purpose and our appreciation for you and for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for the ministry of your Holy Spirit that makes these things accessible to us. He enables us to remember them and to find their meaning and their applicability. We pray that as we examine this portion of your word, that God, the Holy Spirit will bless us with insight and understanding both of the text and of its pertinence in our own lives.

We pray it in Jesus name, amen. You're familiar with the story. Naaman, the Syrian general, has come on the advice of his wife's maidservant to Israel, to the king, bearing a great amount of loot along with him, hoping to be cured of his leprosy.

He's a very successful general and one of the leading men of Syria. He is a confidant of the king of Syria. So when he comes, Elisha tells him, dip yourself in the Jordan seven times.

We saw that this is something of a journey to go to the Jordan and accomplish this task. He does it, he returns. And in verse 15, he returned to the man of God, he and all his aides and came and stood before him.

This is quite a retinue. This is a kind of a caravan. You've seen these camel caravans.

This is donkeys probably laden with all kinds of goods. I think if you check back at his arrival, he brought an enormous amount in verse five, 10 talents of silver, 6,000 shekels of gold, 10 changes of clothing, and along with his aides and his baggage for a trip in the style that befits someone of his prominence, this is a pretty good little group, little caravan. And so the whole caravan goes to Samaria and meets with the king, basically sends this letter to the king.

The king says, he's just picking a fight with me. But they send him to the man of God. And he, verse 14, went and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan according to the saying of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

There is, as we saw last time, an anticipation, a foreshadowing of the healing and new life for the Gentiles through the word of the man of God. The law and the prophets will be the Bible for the first generation church. And when the Lord Jesus Christ comes and preaches peace to those who are afar off and to those who are near, and we've seen in our Ephesians study the uniting

of all things in Christ, and those who are afar off have been brought near, the two have been made one.

There is now the broken down wall that formerly separated Jews and Gentiles. Well, this is an anticipation. When you see the Gentiles in the Old Testament coming to Israel and finding healing and blessing and restoration, it is not because of God's covenant with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai.

It is because of God's covenant promise to Abraham that in him and through him, all nations of the earth would be blessed. And this is a preview of coming attractions. So Naaman is grateful, as you can imagine.

So he returned to the man of God in verse 15. He and all his aides came and stood before him and said, Indeed, now I know no God in all the earth except in Israel. Now, therefore, please take a gift from your servant.

But Elisha says, As the Lord lives before whom I stand, I will receive nothing. He urged him to take it, and he would not. What does this call to mind? Has there been any previous occasions where some service was performed, some gratitude is involved, and someone wants to give a gift, and the person refuses it? Do you think about Abraham and the sacking of Sodom and then Virens? And if you remember, this is the Melchizedek episode.

Let's turn back there just real quickly to Abraham's adventure fighting the five kings. This is back in Genesis chapter 14. In the days of Amraphel, the king of Shinar, Ariok, king of Elazar, Keter, Leomer, king of Elam, and Tidal.

We've been through all this in detail. There's some translation deals I'm not going to go into. But these five kings came down and sacked the south.

And in verse 11, they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah. All their provisions went their way. They took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

One who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew. He dwelt by the cherubim trees of Mamre, the Amorite brother of Eshcol, brother of Aner, and they were allies with Abraham. Abram heard this.

He divided his forces. Verse 15, went back, pursued them, defeated them. And in verse 16, brought back all the goods, also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.

Verse 17, king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh after his return from the defeated Keter, Leomer. Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was the priest of God Most High.

Blessed have been said. Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth.

Blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.

And it's no accident that this saying of Melchizedek precedes this next little section, because this victory was provided by God. Abram knows it. Abram acknowledges it.

And Abram gives to Melchizedek a tithe of all. So the king of Sodom said, Abram, give me the persons and take the goods for yourself. Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth.

Notice that Abram's words are identical. Identical. His reference to God is exactly the same as that of Melchizedek.

Now, why is this? Well, I have suggested why in our Genesis study. I think Melchizedek is presented this way for prophetic purposes. This is a point that is going to be brought out in the book of Hebrews, that by leaving him without antecedents and without any connections, he foreshadows the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, if you go back and do the math, the patriarchal priesthood is in effect in these days. Your oldest paternal ancestor is the family priest. Who is the oldest living ancestor in the line of Shem, which Abram descends from? Shem.

Shem is still alive. And why would Abram refer to God as God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth? Because that's how he learned it from Isaac. Where did Isaac learn it from? I'm sorry, where did Abraham learn it from? He learned it from his father, who learned it from his father, who learned it from Shem.

It's a family teaching. It is a Shemite phrase. Abram is going to teach it to Isaac, who is going to teach it to Jacob, and it's going to be passed down.

Everybody will know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was originally the God of Adam and Seth and Methuselah and Enoch and Noah and all the way down the line. But what an interesting connection. You think about the flood and you could imagine that if Abram got the chance to visit with his ancestor, you saw the earth before the flood.

What was that like? Tell me about the 14 months on the ark. Would you not want to spend a day with one of the eight souls that were saved through the provision of God across that great judgment? At any rate, I have raised my hand to the Lord God most high, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will take nothing. This was a vow that Abram made, apparently, when he set out.

For back in verse 14, when Abram heard that his brother was taken, he armed his 318 trained servants who were born in his own house and went in pursuit. And this puts you in mind of the later victory in Judges where Gideon's large forces are whittled down and he ends up with 300 men. He's got the lamps and the pitchers and you have that whole episode down by the creek, which ones kneel and drink and which ones go down and lap like a dog.

And you end up with these 300 and the Lord can save by many or by few. Abram's got 318 servants and he goes and attacks the armies of these five kings and prevails. And he divided his forces.

He's got 100 and so many on one side and 100 and so many on the other and brought back all the goods. But evidently, he explains to the king of Sodom, I raised my hand to the Lord God of heaven and that I will take nothing from a thread to a sandal strap and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich, except only what the young men have eaten and the portion of the men who went with me. Oner, Eshkol and Mamre, let them take their portion.

So there is the refusal to profit personally from the work of God in deliverance. And it is a precedent that is set here by Abram. I will not take so much as a shoestring, which in these days would have been a thong, a strap off of a sandal.

They didn't have eyelets and the kind of shoes we have today. But this would have been, I won't take a sandal strap, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich. And this would do two or three things all at once.

It would diminish the glory of God in providing the deliverance. It would give leverage to the King of Sodom to say, well, yeah, you're rich, but you wouldn't have got there without that booty that I gave you when you delivered. This would give a leverage to the King of Sodom to use against Abram later.

And he says, I don't want you to ever say I have made Abram rich. I saw a sort of a portrayal of an argument between a man that became fantastically wealthy and his wife when they were going to separate and divorce and split the stuff. And he says, well, I became incredibly well off.

So why should you get half? And she says, well, it's because I was there to support you when you were getting this thing off the ground. And if it wasn't for me, you wouldn't be rich. And of course, he built this hugely successful empire.

But she says, well, your start came from me, so I deserve a cut of all of your multiplication. And this is the kind of thing that the king could have claimed. But the precedent is there.

And you have this idea. And Elisha has learned that his provision doesn't come through intermediaries that are not of God's selection. The ravens come for Elijah.

You have this precedent that has been set that God will provide for the prophet in Israel. I send you to a widow. She will take care of you.

And that it isn't going to be making merchandise of the truth of God, which works itself out in the deliverance of God. Naaman has come to realize that there is no God in all the earth except the God of Israel. And this is the real gift.

This is the real healing and the real deliverance that he receives. It goes way beyond relief from his leprosy. He now has eternal life.

And this isn't something that is bartered or brokered. You know, Billy Graham doesn't pass the plate at a crusade. If there are unsaved people, it's like, well, give me money and I'll give you the gospel.

This is prohibited in the New Testament. Those who make merchandise of the word of God. And Elisha recognizes that the physical healing is just the means to an end.

It is a sign to affirm to Naaman that the God of Israel is the actual God of heaven and earth. Just as Abram makes that point to the king of Sodom. By the way, it isn't a great leap of imagination to realize that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities that take place when Lot is delivered is a judgment because they had access to the truth.

It was manifest to them when Abram provided the deliverance. It was further communicated to them through the presence of Lot, who was an ongoing reminder that there is a God of Abram, the possessor of heaven and earth, the God that Melchizedek witnessed to, the God that Abram witnessed to, the God that Lot. In the mouths of two or three witnesses, the thing is established.

Melchizedek, Abram, and Lot have all given witness to these cities prior to their destruction. There is a God and their rejection and their heinous immorality was judged. Remember when we saw the conquest of the land under Joshua.

The law had been written on the cliffs years before. There was a witness in the land and there was a rejection. There is always grace before judgment.

Noah is called a preacher of righteousness. We don't know exactly what that means, but evidently there was a witness before the flood and the righteousness of God was preached in some fashion, was proclaimed in some fashion by Noah. And because there are only eight souls who make it across, that's an indication that that message was rejected.

Here, it is important that the nature of God's grace not be compromised by, even though this, you could say, you know, Naaman, I just want you to understand that, you know, I appreciate this gift and I'm glad to accept it, but just be aware, Elisha doesn't even entertain it. And there is a two-edged sword here. One is to not compromise the good news of the grace of God.

In the Old Testament, it is incipient. It is believing that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. The reward goes to the seeker.

Naaman comes as a seeker. God rewards him for his willingness to seek with healing and with salvation and with a kind of entrance into the Old Testament fold. God rewards those who seek Him.

And the man of God represents God. And you do not come with your silver and your changes of clothes and your talents of gold and say, well, God, I really appreciate that. Let me give back.

That isn't the way it works. Elisha understands this and Elisha ensures that that principle is preserved. So as the Lord lives before my stand, I will receive nothing.

He urged him to take it, but he refused. Oh, come on. Let me give you this gold.

You know, how many people can hold up under this kind of pressure? Let me give you these hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of gifts and goods. I will not take it. Here's somebody that comes down and gets saved and they're rich and they say, oh, ministry that helped me get saved.

Let me write you a check. I'm grateful and I want to help. You know, this will help your work.

And you could rationalize and say, well, you know, how many more people can get saved if I take this money? And Elisha says, no, he refused. He would not take it because it is important that this principle be communicated. So Naaman says, then if not, please let your servant be given.

Soil from Israel and you think, you know, would have been realized if he could have gotten it from the hills of Judea instead of the northern kingdom where, you know, altars have been broken down and king's arms have been withered and restored because of the apostasy. But the principle is this is the land of promise. This is the land of Israel.

This is where God's people dwell. And since I cannot remain here to dwell and to worship, let me take the earth back with me. Let me take a piece of Israel.

Of course, people have been doing that ever since you go to these, you know, allegedly holy sites in Israel and the stone has all been chipped away. They had to, they had to build a, you know, brick replacement for the, where they thought the Lord was buried in the garden tomb because pilgrims kept chipping it away. There was nothing left.

Uh, it's been defaced and, you know, people want a souvenir, uh, as though, you know, there's something miraculous about it. Let me be given two mule loads of earth for your servant will no longer offer either burnt offering or sacrifice to other gods, only to the Lord. And so in this thing, may the Lord pardon your servant.

But he is given the earth from Israel and he's given a, what the Catholics would call a special dispensation to worship outside the land. He will build an altar on these two mule loads of earth. That's what the earth is for.

The, the altar will be built on Israeli Israelite land of God soil to lift it up off of the Syrian earth and separate it and make it distinct. Somewhere today in Damascus, there's a little patch of soil that was taken there by Naaman millennia ago, two and a half millennia ago and plus, and if

geologists could ever find it, they would say, you know what, this is, this dirt doesn't belong here. It was brought there.

Uh, but he, Naaman receives, it is a gift of God, not of works. Lest any man should boast. So Elisha says, go in peace, take the dirt, take the permission to worship God in your own land.

Naaman receives everything. Everything is of God. Everything is of grace.

Everything flows in the direction from God to Naaman. He recognizes this and he's grateful. And verse 20, but Gehazi, beautiful story, beautiful picture, beautiful communication, but Gehazi.

And at the top of my New King James, there's a little topic note at the very top of this page that says, does yours say what mine says? It's two G words in a row, Gehazi's greed. And this is a topic we'll, uh, get into in detail after the break. But while we've got a couple of minutes here, let me give you some quick points.

Greed slash covetousness isn't environmental. It isn't. Well, the reason he's so fixated on possessions is because he grew up poor.

People say, well, I'm, I really feel the need to surround myself with, with things because there was a time when I didn't have them. And, and it's, it's the, you know, if I had been raised with more prosperity, I wouldn't have this fixation on wealth. No, no less an authority than the Lord Jesus Christ himself has said in Mark chapter seven, verse 22, thefts, covetousness, deceit, lewdness, and some other things.

All these evil things come from within and defile a man covetousness comes from within. And because it comes from within, we are accountable. We are responsible for it.

You can't blame your upbringing. You can't blame your parents for not providing enough or not, you know, making you a happier child. You can't blame the great depression.

You can't blame the economic downturn. You can't blame long lines in the gas pumps in the eighties or whatever it is. You can't blame environment.

Covetousness comes from within. Lord Jesus Christ, Mark seven, 22 and 23, and it drives people to pursuit of gain covetousness is a motivation. It is a thought and intent of the heart, and it results in the action of the pursuit of stuff.

This is, it goes as far back as Ezekiel 33, 31, where it's talking about leadership. They come to you as people do. They sit before you as my people.

They hear your words, but they do not do them with their mouth. They show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain, their hearts motivated by covetousness pursue gain. And these are people who profess to be the people of God.

They profess to be interested in the word of God. This is the scary part. You go back up a little bit in Ezekiel 33 and starting verse 30, son of man, the children of your people.

And this, by the way, was in the scroll of Ezekiel and the Lord Jesus Christ knew this by heart. He is the son of man, capital S, and he knew as he heard and saw people coming to him and saying grandiose things of appreciation, sitting all day and listening to him teach. As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses, and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.

They recognize that you're a messenger of God, that you're communicating the word and they're talking to each other and say, Hey, come on, come with me. Let's go hear this guy teach. So they come to you as people do.

They sit before you as my people, God says, and they hear your words, but they do not do them. James is going to talk about this. Hearers of the word and not doers with their mouth.

They show much love. Oh, isn't that great? I appreciate that so much. This guy has got the words of God and I'm hearing the word.

I love the word. I want to be a follower of God. I am his people.

He is the shepherd. I am the sheep. Indeed, with their mouth, they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain.

Indeed, you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument. You are American idol. You are the voice.

You are the next big thing. They love you. They want your CDs.

They hear your words, but they do not do them. And when this comes to pass and surely it will come, then they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you lead from that into the whole irresponsible shepherd's section, the leadership going astray in the next chapter in Ezekiel.

But what is it that keeps them from truly appreciating the word of God coming from the son of man? What is it that is the obstacle? They pursue their own gain. This is covetousness. This is greed.

This all sounds great, but you know, I really want this over here. I want, and this isn't just necessarily monetary or material gain. This is advantage.

This is, even in the talking to the neighbors, come and hear the word that comes from the Lord, there is a gain there. I am the one that found it. Let me show it to you.

There is a, there is a pride. There is a, a need for approbation and approval. You know,

everybody wants to be the one to pull the curtain back and show somebody stuff.

Oh, let me tweet you. Let me text you. I saw an accident on the freeway.

You heard it from me first. This is what is part of the motivation for gossip. Did you know that so-and-so, they want to be the one to tell, they want to be the one to impart, want to be the one to, to be the source because it attaches a kind of importance and it, it, it hooks into the same flaw, the same part of the corrupt human nature that wants to acquire.

Acquisitiveness, you know, people aren't greedy. Robinson Crusoe, stranded on the desert island, isn't greedy. He doesn't want to, to pile coconuts up in abundance.

Why? There's nobody to impress. I want enough for my needs, but I'm not just going to pile them up and, and, you know, strut around. There's nobody to see it.

Covetousness, people want to acquire because of the effect it has on others. People don't acquire and sock it all away. And nobody knows because they just, you know, typically greed goes along with, I want to impress you with what I have accumulated.

So this is gain. Their hearts pursue their own gain. Peter talks about this in second Peter chapter two.

When he is describing these who are in your midst, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of things they do not understand. This is second Peter 2, 12. They will utterly perish in their own corruption.

They will receive the wages of unrighteousness. As those who counted pleasure to carouse in the daytime, they are spots and blemishes carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices.

All of this, they covet pleasure. They covet influence. They covet approbation.

This is why they entice unstable souls because they want a following. They want a posse. They want groupies.

They want those who will give them adulation and follow them around and be part of their little clique. And they want company in this. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, accursed children.

Why are they called accursed children? Because they are, in fact, children. They are children of God. They are children of light, but they bring a curse on themselves.

They have forsaken the right way and gone astray. You can't forsake a thing you were never in. They were in the right way and have forsaken.

It doesn't say they refused to come to the right way. It doesn't say they refused to become a child of God. They are a child of God and they started out in the right way and they are accursed children who have forsaken the right way.

And gone astray following the way of Balaam, the son of Baor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. Loved the wages, the profit that you can only get when you are unrighteous. If Elisha were to accept these well-intentioned gifts from Naaman, I just want to express my gratitude.

Well, Elisha says, I'll give it to charity. I'll mail it off to the sons of the prophets down in Jericho. Let them live off it a while.

He says, no. And Naaman tries to persuade him. He said, look, you know, think what you could do with this.

You can give it to the poor, give it to your favorite charity. You know, you don't have to give thin stew to sons of the prophets who want to chop gourds into it anymore. You can really put on a banquet the next time you have visitors.

Use it for the benefit of others. Elisha says, I will not accept one particle from you. Not a thing.

He adamantly refuses. This is several things. It shows that Elisha is spiritually mature and has self-control and doesn't let the natural covetousness that is in all of our hearts work its way out and start this rationalization loop.

People who freely let that run rampant have a heart trained in covetous practices, according to 2 Peter 2, verse 14. Paul tells us in two different places, Ephesians 5, 5 and Colossians 3, 5, that covetousness is idolatry. Covetousness is idolatry.

And we saw this in the Ezekiel passage. They talk about hearing the Word of God from the Son of Man, but they're seeking their own gain. And what happens? Same thing as what it says in Romans chapter 1, they exchange the glory of God for something else.

I can get gain out of this. Personal gain of some kind. Influence.

Whatever it may be. Well, we're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to continue.

You know, in 1 Timothy 6, verse 10, Paul, writing to his son in the faith, says, The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness. We typically stop after quoting 1 Timothy 6, 10a, the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. And then that's all you hear.

Well, the love of money is the root of all evil, or just money is the root of all evil, which is even worse. But the rest of the verse says, On account of this, some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Pierced themselves

through with many sorrows.

And we're going to see that when we return to Gehazi. But let's pause here and take our break.