

## Sunday School Lesson....March 15, 2020

### Putting Our Trust in God to the Test

*John 6:68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." NKJV*

Some of the stories in 1 and 11 Kings in the Old Testament are fascinating to read because of their relevance to the world we live in. Who would have thought a couple of weeks ago that entire nations would be paralyzed because of a virus? ---Yes, a virus that could potentially do great harm to so many, but at the same time needs to be put in perspective by comparison to others times in history.

Before going into a biblical story, I repeat here something I wrote in an e-mail to the choir yesterday. In the early 1930's there was a malaria epidemic in the rural south.

My parents' first child, Louise, died from this on October 10, 1932, at age three. My mother was barely aware of her passing because she herself was delirious with fever from malaria, and she was also pregnant with my next sister--Lorene. My mother recovered, but Lorene apparently inherited birth defects because of the malaria, and dealt with severe arthritis and other health issues all her life.

While this was going on, my father's oldest brother and his wife lost an infant son—also to malaria. Another of his brothers and his wife also lost an infant son. Another brother and his wife lost an infant daughter. My father's sister lost two small children as well as her husband. So--within the family there were seven deaths within a very short period. Remember as well, that the 1930's was the time of the Great Depression. Life was tough.

My parents, my uncles and aunts, however, all got past the tragedies and lived long lives, and raised many sons and daughters. They had to trust God—because they had no one else to go to.

We cannot live in fear, otherwise everything we've banked our lives on in trusting Christ is worthless.

I came across this today in reading Warren Wiersbe's commentary:

*"A woman told evangelist D. L. Moody that she had found a wonderful promise that gave her peace when she was troubled, and she quoted Ps 56:3, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.' Moody said he had a better promise for her, and he quoted Isa 12:2, 'Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid.'"*

(Bible Exposition Commentary)

Now, here's some background information on the story in 1 Kings. After the death of King Solomon, Israel split into two nations. The northern kingdom of Israel had its capital in Samaria. The southern kingdom of Judah had its capital in Jerusalem. The history of Israel was one of almost constant rebellion against the Lord, while Judah was generally more faithful. Despite all, the Lord still used His prophets to help the people in both nations. Elijah, and Elisha after him—both operated in the northern kingdom.

King Joram of Israel had a love-hate working relationship with Elisha. Still, whenever the nation was in trouble, he knew where to turn. An arch enemy of Israel was King Ben-hadad of Aram. There was a long history of enmity between the Israelites and the Arameans. We pick up the story:

*2 Kings 6:24 Some time later....King Ben-hadad of Aram mustered his entire army and besieged Samaria.*

*25 As a result, there was a great famine in the city. The siege lasted so long that a donkey's head sold for eighty pieces of silver, and a cup of dove's dung sold for five pieces of silver.*

*26 One day as the king of Israel was walking along the wall of the city, a woman called to him, "Please help me, my lord the king!"*

*27 He answered, "If the Lord doesn't help you, what can I do? I have neither food from the threshing floor nor wine from the press to give you."*

*28 But then the king asked, "What is the matter?" She replied, "This woman said to me: 'Come on, let's eat your son today, then we will eat my son tomorrow.'*

*29 So we cooked my son and ate him. Then the next day I said to her, 'Kill your son so we can eat him,' but she has hidden her son."*

*30 When the king heard this, he tore his clothes in despair. And as the king walked along the wall, the people could see that he was wearing burlap under his robe next to his skin.*

*31 "May God strike me and even kill me if I don't separate Elisha's head from his shoulders this very day," the king vowed. NLT*

Times were so tough that people resorted to cannibalism. Yet, apparently Elisha had advised the king to wait and trust the Lord. The king was tired of waiting for God to do anything, and he took out his anger on Elisha. Elisha stood firm, but had a fresh word for the king.

*2 Kings 7:1 Elisha replied, "Listen to this message from the Lord! This is what the Lord says: By this time tomorrow in the markets of Samaria, five quarts of choice flour will cost only one piece of silver, and ten quarts of barley grain will cost only one piece of silver."*

*2 The officer assisting the king said to the man of God, "That couldn't happen even if the Lord opened the windows of heaven!" But Elisha replied, "You will see it happen with your own eyes, but you won't be able to eat any of it!" NLT*

This was a bold statement on Elisha's part. Nothing short of a total miracle would save the city under siege. Sometimes we doubt that God Himself is capable of fixing the situations we are in. Do we really believe He can deliver us from the absurdity of all the world is dealing with right now?

**Note:** Even though we believe we are living in the last of the last days, and we are watching for the return of the Lord, we still have live from day to day. He could come anytime, or it might be many more years. It's a paradox. We have to be prepared both ways. If it's not His time yet to come, then we pray for miracles to make life on earth better, and we pray that we will reach our generation. A demonstration of God's power is so mightily needed.

The officer assisting King Joram was a doubter—and would pay dearly for his unbelief—but apparently the king trusted the word of the prophet. Now, the heart of the story comes next:

*2 Kings 7:3 Now there were four men with leprosy sitting at the entrance of the city gates. "Why should we sit here waiting to die?" they asked each other.*

*4 "We will starve if we stay here, but with the famine in the city, we will starve if we go back there. So we might as well go out and surrender to the Aramean army. If they let us live, so much the better. But if they kill us, we would have died anyway."*

*5 So at twilight they set out for the camp of the Arameans. But when they came to the edge of the camp, no one was there!*

*6 For the Lord had caused the Aramean army to hear the clatter of speeding chariots and the galloping of horses and the sounds of a great army approaching. "The king of Israel has hired the Hittites and Egyptians to attack us!" they cried to one another.*

*7 So they panicked and ran into the night, abandoning their tents, horses, donkeys, and everything else, as they fled for their lives.*

*8 When the lepers arrived at the edge of the camp, they went into one tent after another, eating and drinking wine; and they carried off silver and gold and clothing and hid it.*

*9 Finally, they said to each other, "This is not right. This is a day of good news, and we aren't sharing it with anyone! If we wait until morning, some calamity will certainly fall upon us. Come on, let's go back and tell the people at the palace."*

*10 So they went back to the city and told the gatekeepers what had happened. "We went out to the Aramean camp," they said, "and no one was there! The horses and donkeys were tethered and the tents were all in order, but there wasn't a single person around!"*

*11 Then the gatekeepers shouted the news to the people in the palace.*

There were a number of miracles here all wrapped into one. First of all, the Lord had caused a fear to come over the invading army. It could have been a wind, a noise, or something otherwise unexplainable—but the Lord did it!!! He sent Israel's enemy on a rout.

The day of miracles is not over!!! We can and should pray for the Lord to miraculously stop the virus from spreading. We don't know how He might do it. The warm weather of spring often puts a halt to the flu. People are able to get out into the sunshine and fresh air. Be it however, "Lord, bring a miracle!! Kill this virus! Let the world see a demonstration of Your mighty power!"

Secondly, the lepers were unselfish. Notice that they weren't healed of their long-term illness, but that didn't matter! They had food, and they weren't going to hoard it to themselves! They thought of others first!

*2 Kings 7:10 So they went back to the city and told the gatekeepers what had happened. "We went out to the Aramean camp," they said, "and no one was there! The horses and donkeys were tethered and the tents were all in order, but there wasn't a single person around!"*

*11 Then the gatekeepers shouted the news to the people in the palace.*

The gatekeepers likely knew the four lepers well, and also knew they would have no reason to lie. Word was quickly taken to the king, who didn't believe it at first, but finally was convinced after sending scouts to check the situation out.

Thus, everything changed in a day. The turn-around time for the Lord sometimes is long, but sometimes it's very short. There are things we have prayed about for years—and the answers finally come. There are others prayers—which get immediate response. The point is to trust the Lord throughout the matter.

Now is no time for us to sputter in our trust of the Lord to sustain us. By the way, the assistant to the king who believed a miracle was impossible—didn't live to receive any benefit from the good fortune:

*2 Kings 7:17 So everything happened exactly as the man of God had predicted when the king came to his house.*

*18 The man of God had said to the king, "By this time tomorrow in the markets of Samaria, five quarts of choice flour will cost one piece of silver, and ten quarts of barley grain will cost one piece of silver."*

*19 The king's officer had replied, "That couldn't happen even if the Lord opened the windows of heaven!" And the man of God had said, "You will see it happen with your own eyes, but you won't be able to eat any of it!"*

*20 And so it was, for the people trampled him to death at the gate! NLT*

None of us knows how the next days and weeks will play out. However, we must be faithful to trust the Lord through the crisis. The doubting officer above could only complain. He didn't have an answer to the problem.

For us, it is as Peter said when life as a disciple of Jesus suddenly got very difficult. Jesus made hard-to-understand statements about His blood.

*John 6:53 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.*

*54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*

*55 For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. NLT*

Suddenly, almost everyone turned on Jesus, but these were people who hadn't invested their whole beings into the Lord. Jesus asked the disciples if they were going to leave Him as well. Peter's response is wonderful:

*John 6:68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*

*69 Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." NKJV*

That Jesus is all He says of Himself is where we place our trust, and where we bank our lives—especially in difficult days.