

Sermon Mark S. Aites
A LACK OF FAITH

TEXT: 2 KINGS 13

INTRODUCTION:

1. Our Old Testament story tonight focuses upon **2 Kings 13**, approximately 856 B.C.
2. We learn that Jehu had a son named Jehoahaz, who reigned in Samaria for some 17 years (**13:1**).
 - 1) Remember that Samaria was the chief city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
 - 2) This event was still during the days of the divided kingdom with Israel to the North, and Judah to the South.
3. If you recall in your studies, Jehu was anointed king by one of the sons of the prophets, and set out to utterly destroy the house of Ahab and Jezebel.
 - 1) He pursued that goal zealously.
 - 2) But now the attention is upon his son.
4. His son proved a disappointment: **2 Kings 13:2** *And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. He did not depart from them.*
5. And with that choice to do evil, **vs 3** shows us the consequence for the sins of Jehoahaz and the northern kingdom of Israel:
Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel, and He delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-Hadad the son of Hazael, all their days.
6. So often people fail to realize that there are consequences with sin.
 - 1) **Num. 32:23** *be sure your sins will find you out.*
 - 2) *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap (Gal. 6:7).*
7. Reminiscent then of the days of the Judges, Jehoahaz pleaded with God for deliverance, and God *gave Israel a deliverer, so that they escaped from under the hand of the Syrians; and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents as before.*
6 *Nevertheless they did not depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin, but walked in them; and the wooden image also remained in Samaria (2 Kings 13:5-6).*
8. Note how there were pleas for deliverance, but an unwillingness to repent of their sins.
9. God continued to allow things to deteriorate, even reducing the army of Jehoahaz to *only fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers (vs 7).*
10. The same thing is so prevalent in our own time: people wanting salvation, but refusing to repent of their sins; and even when they cry for deliverance, they have no intention of changing their lives.
11. Jehoahaz then had a son named Jehoash, who reigned in Israel for 16 years (**vs 10**).
12. Regretfully, like his father, *...he did evil in the sight of the Lord. He did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, but walked in them (vs 11).*
13. In **vs 12-13**, it speaks of his war with Amaziah of Judah
14. But our attention now diverts again to the north, and to the means whereby Israel could be delivered from the heavy hand of Syria.

DISCUSSION:

I. A FAITH THAT FALTERED.

- A. **2 Kings 13:14** *Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, "O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!"*
1. Although they did not have the medical advancements which we do today, it was obvious that whatever malady the prophet had, it would shortly take his life.
 2. This was a reason for the king to panic; the loss of a genuine prophet of God, one who was a mouthpiece from God both in prayer and in receiving would have been an enormous loss.
- B. **2 Kings 13:15-18** *And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and some arrows." So he took himself a bow and some arrows.*
- 16** *Then he said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on the bow." So he put his hand on it, and Elisha put his hands on the king's hands.*
- 17** *And he said, "Open the east window"; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot"; and he shot. And he said, "The arrow of the Lord's deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for you must strike the Syrians at Aphek till you have destroyed them."*
- 18** *Then he said, "Take the arrows"; so he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground"; so he struck three times, and stopped.*
1. What this king needed was reassurance, and God chose to give it through Elisha by allowing the king himself to determine the measure of help that God would give him.
 2. Of interest, the item to determine God's help was a bow and some arrows.
 3. Without actually explaining it, it was apparently evident that by placing his hands on the bow, with Elisha then putting his hands upon the king's, that in this manner, the prophet would make known something to the king.
 4. We note that **vs 17** tells us what is at stake in the shooting of the arrows, as twice the prophet uses the word deliverance.
 5. It was deliverance that Jehoash longed for, and was afraid he would lose with the death of Elisha.
 6. The prophet made it clear that under his leadership, Israel had to strike the Syrians at Aphek until they were destroyed.
 7. He was told in **vs 18** to *take the arrows*, in other words all that were there with the bow, and using the bow, to shoot these arrows into the ground.
 8. Jehoash did, but after shooting only 3 times, he stopped.
 9. **2 Kings 13:19** *And the man of God was angry with him, and said, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times."*
 10. We look at the story and say the words, "If only he would have struck the ground at least 5 times he would have successfully dispatched his arch enemy."
 11. But with his failure in this regard, the threat of Syria would not be completely over.
- C. **2 Kings 13:20-21** *Then Elisha died, and they buried him. And the raiding bands from Moab invaded the land in the spring of the year.*
- 21** *So it was, as they were burying a man, that suddenly they spied a band of raiders; and they put the man in the tomb of Elisha; and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet.*
1. The mentioning of this miracle does not appear to just to be a historical record.

2. It seems more likely that it occurred to give further assurance to Jehoash that God would keep His word, and that indeed Israel would strike Syria 3 times.
- D. **vs 22-23** makes it clear that Israel was indeed troubled by Syria all of the days of Jehoash's father's reign; even so, God spared them remembering His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
1. But in the days of Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, he successfully recaptured cities that Hazael king of Syria had taken while his father reigned as king.
 2. And there is the commentary at the end of the chapter, important to the earlier reference concerning the bow and the shooting of but 3 arrows.
Three times Joash defeated him and recaptured the cities of Israel.

II. O FOR A FAITH...

- A. I have learned to really love that hymn: *O for a faith that will not shrink, tho pressed by every foe, that will not tremble on the brink, of any earthy woe.*
1. And that beautiful prayer in the song, in that last verse: *Lord, give us such a faith as this; and then whate'er may come, we'll taste even here the hallowed bliss of an eternal home.*
 2. *Faith is the victory, O glorious victory that overcomes the world.*
 3. O how we sing about faith, but how great is that faith?
 4. **Rom. 8:31** *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*
8:35-39 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*
36 *As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*
37 *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*
38 *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*
39 *Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- B. We hear the power and conviction in the word of God; we sing of it in our songs; but where is it when it comes down to everyday living?
- C. Jehoash had a prophet of the living God in his presence; in the days when miracles were still taking place.
1. That prophet gave him the encouragement that he sought by allowing him to choose the measure of defeat that Syria would face at his hands.
 2. But he stopped short of what would have been complete victory? Why?
 3. Impatience, a lack of faith; perhaps even a combination of the two?
 4. We look at that event and say that king should have shown a greater faith in God; he should have shown more patience and shot ALL of the arrows into the ground.
 5. But be careful; you may need to look in the mirror before making such a judgment.
- D. How often do we find ourselves struggling with impatience? Consider some Old Testament accounts:
1. We learn of Moses in **Num 20**, who listened to the daily dissatisfaction of the children of Israel; who continued to press him complaining and murmuring against God.

- 1) He was told to speak to the rock that water might come forth to care for the people's needs; but instead in his impatience, took his rod and struck the rock twice.
- 2) His action forfeited him the privilege of entering the promised land.
2. We note the account of Naaman in **2 Kings 5**, who was distressed with the words of the prophet that he should go to the Jordan River to be cleansed of his leprosy.
 - 1) It was Naaman himself who said: *"Indeed, I said to myself, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.'*
12 *"Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage (2 Kings 5:11-12).*
 - 2) Only when Naaman listened to reason, did his impatience subside, and he heeded the words of the prophet and was cleansed of his leprosy.
- E. Impatience is a tremendous problem in our time, due in large part to being an instant society.
 1. We have our microwave ovens, and lightning fast computer speeds.
 2. If one needed an example in impatience, he only needs to get behind the wheel of a car as people are going to or coming home from work.
- F. Too often we want and expect blessings without exercising the patience that may be required before those blessings come to pass.
 1. God does hear our prayers, but He may not answer them on our time table.
 2. **Lam. 3:26** *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.*
- G. Impatience is closely linked with a lack of faith.
 1. Jehoash wanted his victory, but struggled with his faith; both from fear of the absence of the prophet, and his unwillingness to shoot all of the arrows into the ground.
 2. So often we struggle with our faith.
 3. In **Mark 4** we read of the occasion where Jesus got into a boat to cross over the sea.
 4. But all was not well: **Mark 4:37-40** *And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling.*
38 *But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"*
39 *Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.*
40 *But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"*
 5. We sing the song: *Master the tempest is raging* that speaks of the events of that account.
 6. In their midst was indeed the Master of the ocean and earth and skies.
 7. The disciples were convinced that they were about to die.
 - 1) Now these were not just individuals who had taken a boat ride for the first time.
 - 2) There were experienced fishermen on board; and no doubt they faced difficulties with waves before.
 - 3) But this was different: like Jehoash facing the onslaught of the Syrian army, they

- were facing the waves which to them was bringing disaster.
8. But Jesus rebuked the wind and told the sea to be still, and it went from moments from death to a sea of calm.
 9. And we note that he chastised the disciples: *"Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"*
- H. Granted we see this in our own personal lives, that we struggle with things which each one of us face; but concern also needs to be expressed as members of the same body of Christ.
1. How often do we see this problem relative to the subject of evangelism?
 2. I have heard the excuses for years:
 - 1) In campaigns - people are set in their ways, they won't listen.
 - 2) When I moved to the mts. of Colorado: "people have come here to get away from the city, they don't want to be bothered."
 - 3) In the mts. of Tennessee: "these are religious people and they fight change."
 3. While aspects of these statements are true, it presents to the church a defeatist attitude.
 4. When Jesus gave the great commission:
 - 1) **Matt. 28:19-20** *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*
 - 2) **Mark 16:15-16** *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*
 5. What if one of the disciples had spoke up and said: "Lord, well you know that those Jews have no intention of changing; they are steeped in their religion. And as for those Gentiles, they are pagans, and surely have no interest in following the true God."
 6. Thankfully, they did not take that attitude, but preached the Gospel, and those converted helped to spread the message throughout the known world.
 7. Paul later wrote: **Col. 1:23** *23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.*
- I. The concern for our time comes in the matter of talking of evangelism, and making some efforts in that matter, but not sticking with it.
1. We all need to be reminded that the salvation of lost souls is a constant and needful matter.
 2. Jesus said, *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work (John 9:4).*
 3. We cannot afford to stop short as Jehoshaphat did.
 4. When you look at your own life, you can say to yourself, "Someone cared enough for me to tell me the truth of the Gospel." Why then can't we do the same for someone else?
 5. Think of the words of the song "Master the tempest is raging," but apply them as

though the lost were speaking to us:

Carest thou not that we perish? How cans't thou lie asleep, when each moment so madly is threatning, a grave in the angry deep.

- 1) But for them, that grave in the angry deep is far worse than to die at sea.
 - 2) As Jesus described hell as a place *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:44).*
- J. I can't help wondering if our efforts at soul winning are not like the attitude of Jehoash.
1. We want the victory, but perhaps are not willing to put the time and effort into it that it requires.
 2. And maybe *time* is the operative word in that thought.
 3. **Eph. 5:15-16** *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*
 4. **Col. 4:5** *Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.*
 5. The word *redeem* means "to buy up, or buy back; to rescue from loss."
 6. Every one of us have time constraints, and often very busy schedules; but we cannot allow the things of this life to derail us from the mission of the church.
- K. The point is, we must get passed a lack of faith, and then take action *being doers of the word and not hearers only (James 1:22).*
- L. And let's add here another thought concerning a lack of faith, and a need that Jehoash had -- and that was for vision.
1. Jehoash lacked vision in that he was not willing to see what God was offering him. He was not open to the realization of a total once and for all defeat of Syria.
 2. And apply the principle to the church. Too often the church does not grow because it does not have the vision of what could be done when Christians in faithful obedience to the Great Commission rise up and seek the lost.
 3. Thank God when church leadership sees the potential of what can be accomplished in a given work.
 4. I have always been amazed at the lack of vision:
 - 1) Congregations of the church offering the invitation to those who want to obey the Gospel with a dry baptistry, or one that is so filthy that it is an embarrassment when someone does respond.
 - 2) Congregations encouraging evangelism without looking ahead at the possible need of building expansion.
 5. One of the primary reasons that churches don't grow is that the membership and leadership don't believe it is possible.
 - 1) It is said that there are congregations of the church that when the invitation is offered don't expect a response.
 - 2) That when they are challenged to carry out the Great Commission to save souls, don't expect the membership to seek and save the lost.
 - 3) The churches are crying out for faith.
 6. One of the most touching stories in the Gospel Account was that of **Matt. 8** and a centurion.
 - 1) Jesus said in **Matt. 8:8** *"Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.*
 - 2) Jesus remarked of this man in **vs 10**: *"Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"*

7. I fear that we have not found such great faith in the church.
 - 1) I fear we have spent more time in keeping house than looking for lost souls.
 - 2) Jesus said: *"Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! (John 4:35).*

CONCLUSION:

1. I want to encourage you to allot time to reach out to the lost.
2. If you cannot, because of schedule, work it out during one of those time periods, then please try to find time during the week when you can.
3. If you can't get out, use your phone, drop someone a short letter, or send them a card.
4. God can and will bless us, if we will pray about it, and then do what we can in compliance with His will.
5. And let's strive for that faith that will cause us to do His will with courage, boldness, and conviction.
6. Song: "O For A Faith"
A faith that shines more bright and clear, when tempests rage without that when in danger knows no fear, in darkness feels no doubt. Lord give us such a faith as this; and then, whate'er may come, we'll taste e'en hear the hallowed bliss, or an eternal home.
7. Are you strong in the faith? or does your faith waver.
8. Do you find yourself more preoccupied with the things of this world than the salvation of lost souls.
 - 1) I encourage you to think of your priorities.
 - 2) And think of the souls around you that are lost and in need of your helping hand.
 - 3) Have the faith to reach out and use the word of God which, we must believe, is the power of God unto salvation (**Rom. 1:16-18**).
9. But first, you need to get your own life right with God.