

Sermon Mark S. Aites  
**THE FOUR LEPERS**

**TEXT: 2 KINGS 6-7**

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. Our study opens with an interesting incident, and one of the most unusual miracles of the Bible.
2. We learn as we open chapter six that the sons of the prophets were sufficient in number to require more room for a place for them to stay and learn.
3. In **vs 4** they cut down some trees to begin the building project.
4. **6:5-7** *But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed.*  
**6:6** *And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim.*  
**6:7** *Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it.*
5. This event is important in that reaffirmed that God was working through Elisha.
  - 1) All of us realize that iron is heavy, and in no way can it float if it falls into the water.
  - 2) This is one of the more difficult miracles to explain away since the text specifically says that the axe head was made of iron; as most implements were in building and in battle.
6. Having reminded us of God's power working through the prophet, our writer then begins to inform us in **vs 8** that Syria was making war with Israel again.
7. But Israel had a definite advantage, but one which the king of Syria was naive about.
8. **6:9** *And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down.*
  - 1) The king of Syria was troubled that Israel appeared to know his plans, so he called his people together to search for a traitor (**vs 11**).
  - 2) But he was informed that in fact it was Elisha.
9. The king was committed to taking Elisha prisoner, and Elisha's servant was frightened.
10. But to confirm again that God's power was present, another wonderful thing happened:  
**6:16-18** *And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.*  
**6:17** *And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.*  
**6:18** *And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.*
11. Boy, so often we think we are outnumbered and alone, as Elisha's servant felt. But God was there, and with great force.
12. Elisha had the Syrians led into Samaria, right to the king of Israel, where when the king saw them, he wanted to know if he should kill them?
13. **6:22** *Elisha said: And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.*
14. The text then notes that these Syrians no longer went into Israel. This caused Ben-hadad to act, and brings us to our first point:

**DISCUSSION:**

## **I. THE CITY IS BESIEGED.**

- A. **6:24-25** *And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria.*  
**6:25** *And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver.*
- B. It is hard for us in the country of plenty, to even begin to envision what a severe famine would be like.
1. We are the country of fast food restaurants.
  2. We have such an over abundance of food that it is such a shame to see the quantity of food wasted in this country while others in this world are starving.
  3. Imagine for a moment, what you would do if your supply of groceries was cut off.
  4. You are down to your last meal, and you know that your friends and neighbors have nothing to share since they are in the same position you are.
  5. Then envision in your mind how you will survive as the days and weeks pass by?
  6. Imagine the hunger and desperation being so great, that a person would pay 80 shekels of silver, roughly \$50 for the head of a donkey to eat?
  7. Or paying roughly \$3 for a pint of dove droppings.
  8. In your mind you are thinking how gross, how disgusting; but to these people it was down to a matter of life and death.
- C. To really give the picture of desperation, read on: **6:26-29** *And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my Lord, O king.*  
**6:27** *And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress?*  
**6:28** *And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow.*  
**6:29** *So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.*
1. Again it is hard to envision such hunger, that a woman would give up a child to survive.
  2. We tend to think of her lack of love; and yet we must remember, that in desperation, people can be driven to lengths which is hard for us to understand.
  3. It is troubling to read of such an arrangement, and equally troubling to read of the deceit and selfishness that came upon the people.
- D. You begin to wonder when you read this why God would allow such a calamity to happen.
1. But we must remember that God's people had been departing from His will and His way.
  2. Idolatry was still found in the people's midst; sin was in the camp.
  3. The Bible does warn what would happen if they would forsake God.  
**Deut. 28:53-57** *And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee:*  
**28:54** *So that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye*

*shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave:*

**28:55** *So that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates.*

**28:56** *The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter,*

**28:57** *And toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates.*

- E. The king was so upset when he heard of what happened between these women and the eating of the one's son, that he vowed to have Elisha killed.
1. The king sent a messenger to take care of Elisha, but Elisha already knew he was coming, and prevented him from entering, as he knew that the king was going to come after the servant.
  2. **6:33** *And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil is of the LORD; what should I wait for the LORD any longer?*
- F. Elisha responds: **7:1-2** *Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.*
- 7:2** *Then a Lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.*
1. Elisha was announcing to the king the end of the starvation.
  2. A seah of flour or about 7 quarts, or third of a bushel of flour at that point was unthinkable.
  3. Even 2/3 of a bushel of barley, about 13 quarts, would have been beyond belief at that point.
  4. The officer's expression of unbelief was also a further prediction of what was to come, as he would not enjoy the benefits of the end of the starvation.

## **II. THE FOUR LEPERS.**

- A. **7:3-4** *And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?*
- 7:4** *If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.*
- B. Leprosy was such a dreaded disease, and one that was feared.
1. We know that the law made special provisions concerning it (**Lev. 13-14**).
  2. These men were at the entrance of the gate because they were to be separated from the other people.

3. Actually, their situation was made worse in that they were placed between the walls of the city that was famished or starving, and the Syrian army that surrounded the city.
- C. In their minds the situation looked hopeless.
1. If they went into the city, there was famine and death, and they themselves quite probably would die.
  2. If they went out to surrender to the Syrians, they probably would be killed, especially since they were leprous.
- D. By way of application, we should key in on the words of **vs 3**: *Why sit we here until we die?*
1. Churches that don't seek and save the lost need to ask that question.
  2. Failure to carry out the Great Commission is a sure way to ensure the death of a local church.
  3. Congregations where most of the folks are older, and who are not evangelizing, disappear from a community.
  4. It is a matter of choice, and one that we should take to heart even hear at this congregation.
  5. The alternative to evangelism, is a dead church.
- D. **7:5-8** *And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there.*
- 7:6** *For the LORD had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.*
- 7:7** *Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life.*
- 7:8** *And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it.*
- E. How blessed they were because God had intervened, making the Syrians think that other armies were coming to the aid of northern Israel.
1. It was such a surprise that all of the men of the army fled without packing anything, thinking that if they did not flee at once they would be facing a slaughter.
  2. All of those provisions, were now left behind.
  3. Can you imagine the surprise that these men must have felt, to walk into the camp of the army that had been holding Samaria hostage?
  4. And when they got there, to find that the army had fled?
  5. And better yet, after such a long period of starvation, to stumble on to all the food and drink that they could consume?
  6. Such a drastic difference, going from a stomach which probably had shrunk because of the lack of food, to now having an over abundance of food.
  7. The joy of the moment was overwhelming, but they were forgetting something.
- F. **7:9-11** *Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon*

*us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.*

**7:10** *So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were.*

**7:11** *And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's house within.*

1. What seems obvious, is that these lepers began to have problems with their own conscience.
  2. Here they were enjoying a meal, and people in the city were not sharing in it, and were still starving.
  3. They realized that they were being selfish, and that if they remained silent, they might be punished for their unwillingness to share.
- G. There is such a good correlation that can be made here to our day and time in the matter of saving souls.
1. Those of us who are Christians, have been blessed with *all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3)*.
  2. We have been blessed with forgiveness and salvation from our sins, and rescued from an eternity in hell.
  3. But the problem is we are enjoying the abundant life, while others continue to be lost.
  4. They are starving from a lack of spiritual food, and we remain silent.
  5. Like the lepers, we should say, *We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.*

### **III. A LACK OF FAITH.**

- A. **7:12** *And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now shew you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we be hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city.*
- B. What a shame it is when a leader of God's people has such a lack of faith.
1. The king seemed sure that the Syrians were still there; that they were hiding just waiting for an opportunity to catch them as they left the city.
  2. It was the lack of communication with God and failure to repent that helped put them in this situation.
  3. Even at this point in our story, the king is still relying upon human reasoning.
- C. **7:13-15** *And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city, (behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it: behold, I say, they are even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed:) and let us send and see.*
- 7:14** *They took therefore two chariot horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see.*
- 7:15** *And they went after them unto Jordan: and, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned, and told the king.*
1. At least someone had enough faith and courage to have things checked out.
  2. Lo and behold the Syrians had left in such a haste that even the road was littered with garments and weapons.

- D. Again I see a correlation to today in the matter of the church and evangelism.
1. There are those even in leadership positions of the Lord's church that take a defeatist attitude toward saving lost souls.
  2. "Nobody will listen, everybody already has their own religion; people are too deep in sin, it is a waste of time," and so the human reasoning goes on.
  3. I will never forget such pessimism when the students from the school of preaching knocked doors in Paris, KY.
  4. I stayed with a man who seemed sure that people would no longer listen.
  5. The church was overwhelmed from the Bible studies set up.
  6. How strange, in a town where supposedly no one would listen.
  7. How easy it is in our human reasoning to convince ourselves that people are set in their ways and no longer will listen.
- E. What the church needs are those with enough faith and courage to launch out and see if souls can be won.
1. I have every confidence that things are not as bad as people perceive them to be.
  2. Even when Elijah thought that no one else in Israel cared about the state of affairs, he learned that 7,000 had not yet bowed their knee to baal.
  3. Why do I have such confidence that things are not that insurmountable; it is because of my faith in the Word of the Living God.
  4. **Rom. 1:16-17** *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*  
**1:17** *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*
  5. This is one of the primary reasons why people are not seeking the lost, is because they don't have confidence in the Word of God!
  6. **Isa. 55:11** *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*
  7. How about it brethren, do we believe that?
- F. **7:16** *And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.*
1. In the very first verse of this chapter the prophet assured the king that this would be the case.
  2. If the king had faith in the word of God, spoken by the Lord's prophet, he would have not given in to human reasoning.
  3. When God speaks, men need to learn that it will happen exactly as God has spoken it!
- G. **7:17-20** *And the king appointed the Lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him.*  
**7:18** *And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria:*  
**7:19** *And that Lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if the LORD*

*should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.*

**7:20** *And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died.*

1. The lack of faith which the king's officer had shown in **vs 2** came with the assurance that he would not enjoy the bounties of the food which God had provided.
  2. And so it was, exactly again as the prophet of God had spoken.
- H. The application in this is that we need to place greater faith in the words of God.
1. The church suffers because Christians struggle with being able to walk by faith, and not by sight (**2 Cor. 5:7**).
  2. There are too many today who struggle because they hear the human reasoning and rationalizations of people on the TV, the radio, in magazines, books, and articles.
  3. And tragically, our children are being fed human reasoning in the schools, to a large degree, with thankfully some exceptions in differing places.
  4. But the church can be of help if we would work diligently to instill a greater faith in God's word in our children.
  5. If we don't work at this, we are going to have a generation of Christians to come who will struggle with faith in God's Word.
  6. That is not a legacy that I believe any of us would want to leave for our children.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

1. The lepers teach us the importance of getting our perspective in regard to saving souls.
2. Paul tells us that *the things written aforetime were written for our learning* (**Rom. 15:4**).
3. This is certainly a story that we can learn from.
4. Jesus wants us to be soul winners.
5. But the choice is ours.
6. I hope the question which the lepers asked will be on your minds this week: *Why sit we here until we die?*