

**It May Be Bad,
But God**

(Sermon #3)

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It's bad you may say. It's real bad. "Jesus, just take me home already! This world is beyond repair. This country is in such a horrible mess that we just need for Jesus to come and take us out of here!" "There's no hope for us left in this crazy world. It's time to just blow it all up and start over." Have you said any of that? I have. Yet throughout the ages in the history of mankind, other people have said the same thing. Imagine in the time of Noah when it was so bad that God decided to flood the earth and have everyone except Noah's family to perish. The whole earth was corrupt before God and filled with violence. "All flesh had corrupted their way on the earth." (Genesis 6:12) Now that's bad! In the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham asked God if He would destroy the city of Sodom if there were yet 50 righteous people in it. God said He would not. Abraham then asked about 45 people, 40 people, 30 people, 20 people, then finally 10 people. God said He would not destroy Sodom if there were 10 righteous people there. Well, as we know from reading the story God destroyed Sodom as well as Gomorrah. Wow! There weren't even ten people worth saving in that whole city. The story we'll be looking at today is another one of those times where it could be said that it was really bad. The question that we can ask ourselves with this message is, "ok it's bad, what am I supposed to do about it?" We can look at the characters in this story and see how each of them dealt with their bad situation, and then look at how we can apply that to our situation today and what we can find in any circumstance at any time that it may be bad, but God. We'll be reading from 2 Kings 6:24-7:2.

Read 2 Kings 6:24-7:2

"And it happened after this that Ben-Hadad king of Syria gathered all his army, and went up and besieged Samaria. And there was a great famine in Samaria; and indeed they besieged it until a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and one-fourth of a kab of dove droppings for five shekels of silver. Then, as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, saying, "Help, my lord, O king!" And he said, "If the Lord does not help you, where can I find help for you? From the threshing floor or from the winepress?" Then the king said to her, "What is troubling you?" And she answered, "This woman said to me, 'Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.' So we boiled my son, and ate him. And I said to her on the next day, 'Give your son, that we may eat him'; but she has hidden her son." Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he tore his clothes; and as he passed by on the wall, the people looked, and there underneath he had sackcloth on his body. Then he said, "God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on him today!" But Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. And the king sent a man ahead of him, but before the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, "Do you see how this son of a

murderer has sent someone to take away my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door. Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?" And while he was still talking with them, there was the messenger, coming down to him; and then the king said, "Surely this calamity is from the Lord; why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" Then Elisha said, "Hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord: 'Tomorrow about this time a seah of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.' " So an officer on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God and said, "Look, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, could this thing be?" And he said, "In fact, you shall see it with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it."

Samaria was like the capitol of Israel and it was where the king lived. We are first told in the story that Samaria was besieged by the Syrian army. That means that their city was surrounded by the Syrians so that supplies were not going out or coming in. While the city of Samaria was a fortress with a huge wall surrounding it they were not able to get food supplies, such as grains or meat in from the farms outside the city. A donkey's head was selling for eighty shekels of silver. It was an unclean animal by Jewish law and the head would have hardly any meat on it. Just think, people were eating their donkeys, which was their main form of transportation and for carrying loads. But of course, they weren't able to go anywhere so, they ate the donkeys. The dove droppings were selling for five shekels of silver. It is possible that they weren't really dove droppings but pulse which is the seeds of a legume such as peas or beans. Whatever the case it was 1/4 of a kab which is said to be about one cup. In looking up what a shekel was I found that Joseph was sold into slavery for 20 shekels of silver. And in this story people were buying a donkey's head for eighty shekels of silver. The silver dollar minted in the U.S. weighs around 26 grams and the shekel weighed around 11 grams. So for about 33 silver dollars you could have bought a donkey's head. The silver dollar weighs a little less than a troy ounce and a troy ounce of silver today goes for \$25. So for \$825 in silver dollars you could have bought a donkey's head to eat back then. Mmmm, tempting isn't it. The point being though, times were tough. It was really bad.

The first characters we read about in this story is of King Jehoram, also referred to elsewhere as Joram and a woman of the city of Samaria. Jehoram is one of the sons of King Ahab, as Elisha refers to him as the son of a murderer for Ahab had Naboth killed because he wouldn't sell him his vineyard. Jehoram's father, Ahab was described in 1 Kings 16:30 of doing evil in the sight of the Lord more than all those before him. His mother was Jezebel who was also wicked to the core. Sadly what we find with Jehoram is that he didn't learn from his father's mistakes. What we will see with King Jehoram is three

tragic flaws in his character. And like father, like son. A chip off the old block.

When the woman cries to the king for help, Jehoram replies, "If the Lord does not help you, where can I find help for you? From the threshing floor or from the winepress?" It sounds like he knows where to get help, that is, from the Lord. Yet despite being the king of Israel he would not seek the Lord on behalf of Israel. If he couldn't do anything about it then he wouldn't do anything about it even if it meant that the people would be eating donkey's heads and dove droppings (whatever that was). That was his first tragic character flaw. He was only concerned with his own welfare.

Then the woman tells Jehoram that she and another woman had eaten her child the day before and were to eat the other woman's child that day but the other woman would not give up her child. Then Jehoram tears his clothes as was custom when a king would hear of shocking news and underneath his clothes was sackcloth. Sackcloth was worn when someone was humbling themselves before the Lord in hope for God's mercy. They would also throw dust on their head. Yet, Jehoram wore the sackcloth underneath his clothes so that he would not appear to anyone to be humbling himself. This is the one part of the story that Jehoram should have followed his father's example. Ahab had humbled himself in sackcloth and ashes and God saw it and had mercy on Ahab and didn't bring calamity upon Israel in his lifetime. Even though Ahab was described as being more evil than all of his predecessors, God showed him mercy when he humbled himself. For what reason was Jehoram wearing sackcloth under his clothes then? It certainly wasn't to humble himself before the Lord. That was Jehoram's second tragic character flaw. Pride. Though he acknowledged that God alone could help the people He would not humble himself. Jehoram's reply to the woman was that he was going to have the prophet Elisha killed. Once again, he only looked for what he could do in the present situation. So in selfish ambition and arrogance Jehoram sought to have Elisha killed. That will show God who's boss, right?

Then Jehoram sent a messenger to Elisha and Jehoram followed soon after. As the king approached the residence of Elisha, King Jehoram says, "Surely this calamity is from the Lord; why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" Jehoram was ready to take matters in his own hands. Not only was Jehoram selfish and prideful but he was rebellious toward God. How he thought he would solve the problem by killing Elisha, a prophet of God, is as baffling as it is that he thought that wearing sackcloth under his clothes would bring about the mercies of God. Also, Jehoram was ultimately blaming God for all of he and Israel's troubles. Although he acknowledged God for being the only help, he seemed to have the attitude that he himself would be the best help for Israel or at least for himself. Just as Satan is the father of all lies and somehow thought that he could overthrow

God, Jehoram thought that he could somehow overthrow God in His plans by killing Elisha the prophet.

We can learn of Jehoram's bad example by not only recognizing that God is sovereign over all the earth and that just looking out for ourselves, taking matters in our own hands, and rebelling against God is not the right way to go. God indeed has a plan for us no matter how bad it may be or appear to be.

Despite Jehoram's willful selfishness, pride, and rebellion, God still had mercy on Israel for a brief period of time. The story continues that four lepers decided to throw caution to the wind by surrendering to the Syrian army and see what they could get in the way of mercy since there was no food in Samaria. They find an abandoned camp full of food and wealth, because the Lord had the Syrians hear chariots and horses so the Syrians went after them in pursuit, leaving their camp unprotected. Then the lepers told the folks of Samaria, for fear of judgment on themselves for not sharing the good news, and there was then food and rejoicing in the city of Samaria, except for the king's right hand man who was trampled at the gate by the people who were rushing out to the Syrian camp for the spoils. He had scoffed at Elisha's prophesy that there would be food the following day and had basically questioned God. Shortly after all of this there ended up being a seven year famine and then after that Jehoram died with an arrow through his heart.

Jehoram didn't care enough for anyone but himself, to do what he knew needed to be done as the King of Israel, for the welfare of the people. Jehoram would not humble himself before the Lord during the time in this story where people were eating donkey heads and their own children or afterwards when there was a seven year famine. If he couldn't fix the problem and get the glory then it wasn't going to be done. Jehoram then rebelled against God by seeking to kill His prophet Elisha. Each one of these character flaws were tragic and fatal, not only for himself but for all of the people of his kingdom.

The woman of Samaria is the next person we can look at in this story. She had agreed with another woman to eat her child, which they did, and then to eat the other woman's child the following day. I don't suppose a lot has to be said about what was wrong with that decision. She and the other woman only had selfish intentions in their actions. That woman thought that her preservation of life was more important than the child's life. The story doesn't say that everyone in town was eating their babies. But she did. Clearly though, it seemed to be prevalent in that town that everyone was just looking after their own interests. Nowhere in the story is it mentioning the townsfolk humbling themselves before God and seeking His mercy. They just took matters into their own hands and did what they wanted to do to persevere. If those women had just sought the Lord, and waited on the Lord, they would have found that God indeed did have a plan for

their welfare when the lepers found the abandoned camp of the Syrians.

The last persons that we can look at in this story is of Elisha and the elders who were all gathered together in Elisha's home. What do you suppose they were doing, eating a donkey's head or someone's baby? Well, we can read in the story that God had mercy on the people of Samaria when the lepers reported back the good news of the found food of the Syrians. We could safely surmise then that Elisha and the elders were gathered together and were praying to God for His mercy and help. They hadn't taken matters into their own hands, they hadn't decided to rebel against God because of their circumstances, they had humbled themselves before God and prayed for His mercy. Perhaps it could be said that I'm reading into the story further than was intended. Perhaps. Nevertheless, Elisha was a prophet of God and it is not mentioned that he had rebelled against or disobeyed God. Also, when people went to a prophet, they were seeking out the Word of the Lord. It is then indisputable then what the elders were doing in Elisha's home. They were seeking God.

We can certainly be thankful that we aren't having to eat donkey heads and our own children but is there a situation in your life that you have no control over. There is certainly one thing that none of us can do anything about on our own and that is reconciling us with God. We can't go before God in our own righteousness, in being right before God, in pleasing God, in having His favor upon us. Jehoram knew that the answer was in God but he chose to do things his way. That didn't work out well for him and it won't work for us either. Jesus Christ alone is our answer to making us right before God, to reconcile us before God. He is the only way to the Father. It is then that we can the help we need in time of trouble. In Psalm 121 it says, "where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." He is to be our Lord, He is to be our Shepherd, He is to be our help in time of need, He is to be our sustainer, and helper. I think that we all know that there's some things that we can't do anything about except to go to our heavenly Father that we have access to by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 7:7-8 it says, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Notice though He is talking to those whose Father is in heaven. If you haven't accepted Christ as your Savior if you haven't received His Spirit in you then you are not His and that Scripture

does not apply to you. That means that the first thing we must have is the forgiveness of our sins through the Lord Jesus Christ. God's Word also says, "that if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness." (I John 1:9) But, if you're asking for mercy are you giving others mercy? If you're asking forgiveness are you forgiving others? Jehoram was not willing to humble himself before God for Him to be his Savior and Lord, but only wanted to do things his way and on his terms for his own glory. Let us follow the example of Elisha and the elders and seek His help in our time of need. Praise God that it hasn't gotten as bad as in the days of Noah where all flesh had corrupted their way or in the days of King Jehoram and Elisha the prophet where people were eating donkey heads and their own babies. But as it says in **Matthew 24:37-39** "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." Yet we have our Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ so let us always do what it says in James 4:10 says, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." Amen. To God be the glory. It may be bad, but God!