

IT MAY BE BAD BUT (TRUST IN) GOD REVISITED (2 PETER 3)

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[2 Peter 3:1-13 (God's Promise Is Not Slack)] Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds **by way of reminder**), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets [an example of which we'll look at today], and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." For this they **willfully forget**: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word [Logos: as He, the Word, upholds all things by the Word of His power! (**Hebrews 1:3**)], are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, **do not forget** this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is **longsuffering toward us**, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to **repentance** [metanoeo]. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in **holy conduct** and **godliness**, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. [those who have believed on Christ Jesus & have received Him and His righteousness (**John 1:12-13**)]

[2 Peter 3:14-18 (Be Steadfast)] Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, **be diligent** [spoudazo: diligent, make every effort, be eager] **to be found by Him in peace**, without spot and blameless; and consider that the **longsuffering of our Lord is salvation** [we are remaining in and living in and according to the fruit of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (**Galatians 5:22-23**) Peter expounds upon that in chapter 1. The "**longsuffering of our Lord is salvation**":] as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also **fall from your own steadfastness**, being led away with the error of the wicked; but **grow**

in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

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["It's bad", one may say. "It's real bad! This world is beyond repair. There's no hope left for us in this crazy world. It's time to just blow it all up and start over." But as we just read, that is according to God's perfect time, not ours. And as the apostles all said, of what Jesus preached, "By your patience possess your souls." (Luke 21:19) "Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God." (Matthew 5:9) Yet throughout the ages, in the history of mankind, other people have said and experienced the same things or worse. 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 "Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5) 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, then 40, then 30, then 20, 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 (Genesis 18), God destroyed Sodom as well as Gomorrah. Wow! There weren't even ten people worth saving in that whole city. The following story that we'll be looking at today is another one of those times where 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?" With Abraham, he interceded for Sodom, and Noah, a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), was told to built an ark to save his family. We can look at the characters in the narrative of 2 Kings 6 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 we continue to put our trust in God. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Prov. 3:5-6) That never changes, as it is a promise from the Word of God!]

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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. [Side note: Jesus was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver! (Matthew 26:15) and Joseph was sold into slavery for 20 shekels of silver (Gen. 37:28)] 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."

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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 according to God's 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.¹ Whatever the case may be, it was 1/4 of a kab, which is said to be about one cup. Now the shekel weighed around 11 grams. The silver dollar minted in the U.S. weighs around 26 grams². So doing the math, 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 and it was really bad!

1 <https://www.gotquestions.org/dove-droppings-five-shekels-silver.html>

2 <https://www.govmint.com/learn/post/how-much-do-morgan-silver-dollars-weigh>

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. Contrast that woman of Samaria with the woman at the well who had an encounter with Christ Jesus and believed on Him and told the whole city to come see the one who claims to be the Christ. Many then of that city believed also in Him! Now Jehoram was one of the sons of the evil King Ahab, as Elisha refers to him as the son of a murderer for Ahab's wife Jezebel had Naboth killed because he wouldn't sell Ahab his vineyard. Ahab gladly took that vineyard after his death. 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 (sin). What we will see with King Jehoram is three tragic flaws in his character. Like father, like son, so to speak. 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?" 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), and their own children. That was his first tragic character flaw. He was only concerned with his own welfare- **1. SELFISHNESS.**

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 evil King Ahab and didn't bring calamity upon Israel in his lifetime. (**1 Kings 21:27-28**) 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 (good luck charm?). That was Jehoram's second tragic character flaw. **2. 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 of God, 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. **3. REBELLION.** 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 or maybe still thinks 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 reminding ourselves that God is sovereign over all the earth but also, 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 in **2 Kings 7:3-20** 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 was the one who had scoffed at Elisha's prophecy 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. (**2 Kings 9:24**) The tragedy of Jehoram was in his selfishness, pride, and rebellion. **Yet the Lord God brought about a revival through four lepers!** Jehoram would not humble himself before the Lord even though people were reduced to eating donkey heads and their own children, or afterwards when there was a seven year famine. Jehoram also doubled down in his rebellion against God by seeking to kill His prophet Elisha. Although his character flaws were tragic and eventually fatal, they also affected many others.

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 for their own preservation. 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? We could safely surmise 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. Elisha was a prophet of God and had certainly not rebelled against or disobeyed God and 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 waiting on God.

We can certainly be thankful that we aren't having to eat donkey heads or dove droppings or our own children but is there a situation in your life that you have no control over. Of course, we all do. But first things first, as we know, we can't go before God in our own righteousness, in being right before God, in pleasing God, in having His favor upon us. Christ alone is our answer to making us right with God. He is the only way to the Father. As Jesus said, "I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6) It is then that we can find the help we need in our time of trouble. And it isn't always just about us individually and our own personal problems. Just as Elisha and the elders stuck together during Israel's trouble, so should we. We are told, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting [parakalountes] one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:23-25) Not "paroxuno" (para-oxys), provoking one another. (Acts 17:16) Then, in Psalm 121:1-2, it says, "where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." James 4:10 says, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." Combining those two gives us Proverbs 16:19-20, "Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud. He who heeds the word wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he." It may be bad, but Trust in God!