

“Deliverance Promised”
2 Kings 6:24—7:2
(Preached at Trinity, March 6, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Verse 24** begins a new story that should have been the beginning of **Chapter 7** because the story is continued there. It is one of those cases where the chapter/verse break is awkward.
2. The story records a siege of Syria (the Arameans) upon Israel that resulted in wide-spread famine. We don't know how much time has elapsed since the previous account but it would appear that the Arameans had quickly forgotten the kindness of Israel in allowing them to go away in peace.
We should note that the army in the previous section was a small regiment sent to arrest Elisha. The army in **Verse 24** is the entire Syrian army – “gathered all his army”
3. The author describes the severity of their condition. A donkey's head sold for eighty shekels. According to **1 Kings 10:29** Solomon sold live horses for 150 shekels. Imagine paying over half that amount for a dead donkey's head that had little meat on it and little nutrition, not to mention how bad it would have tasted. Perhaps not incomparable to eating bird dung that was selling for five shekels. And eating a donkey was forbidden according to the Jewish dietary law, but Israel had ceased caring about God's Law.
4. The situation became so bad that they were resorting to cannibalism.
 - A. Sieges sometimes brought people to unimaginable deeds. The Roman siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD also resulted in an act of cannibalism. It occurred during the Passover when multitudes had come to Jerusalem. Food supplies were quickly depleted and starvation ensued bringing many to desperation. Most of us have read of the infamous Donner party stranded in the Sierras over winter who ate the corpses of those who died.
 - B. How desperate would you have to be to eat your own child? It testifies to a people given over to a reprobate heart. There is nothing we are not capable of save God's grace. As the siege progressed two ladies entered into an agreement. We'll eat my child today and yours tomorrow. The second lady reneged on the agreement and hid her son.
5. The woman appealed to the king to deal with the injustice and force the other lady to give up her son. When the king heard it he tore his clothes in disgust and grief.
 - A. Not that long in the distant past Israel had abundance of food. The king could throw rich banquets to feed an entire army.
2 Kings 6:23 NAU - "So he prepared a great feast for them; and when they had eaten and drunk he sent them away, and they went to their master."
But now, there was nothing but donkey heads and bird dung. Prosperity can be a very fleeting thing.

- B. It is ironic, when the king tore his kingly clothes, the people saw that he had on sackcloth underneath. Sackcloth was a symbol of mourning and intense grief. But his grief was not his offense against God. There is no prayer offered up to God. There is no seeking God's prophet. It was merely sorrow that he was suffering.
- C. Instead of humbling himself before God, he became even more angry. He charged Elisha for their calamity. How often have Christians been blamed for the calamity of a nation? Elisha was blamed because he was God's prophet – the king was blaming God.
6. We are not told specifically, but the identity of the king is most likely Jehoram, the son of Ahab.
2 Kings 3:1-2 NAU - "Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. ² He did evil in the sight of the LORD"
 It was the Jehoram that continued to lead Israel deeper into sin. It was Jehoram who failed his people as a leader. He failed to maintain sufficient intelligence that would have alerted him of the advancing Aramean army. He failed to properly prepare his city in the event of a siege. Good leaders kept stockpiles of provisions.
 If the king was looking to someone to blame all he had to do is look at a mirror. Instead, he turned his anger against Elisha.
 We can make comparisons with the ineptitude of some of our own leaders today.
Proverbs 29:2 NAU - "When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, But when a wicked man rules, people groan."
7. What we find next is Elisha's amazing prophecy of God's promised deliverance.
- I. This siege was not without design
- A. The siege was Divine retribution
1. From the Aramean perspective, they had political and military plans for Israel. This siege was a strategic plan. And they thought the idea was all their own.
 2. In reality, it was more than a Syrian plan. It was Divine judgment. God had promised this judgment if Israel continued in their infidelity.
Leviticus 26:27-29 NAU - "Yet if in spite of this you do not obey Me, but act with hostility against Me, ²⁸ then I will act with wrathful hostility against you, and I, even I, will punish you seven times for your sins. ²⁹ 'Further, you will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters you will eat."
 3. God's wrath and judgment were kindled. It was God's just judgment. He would have been just to allow them all to perish in the famine as their skin dried to their bones.
- B. The king's actions were typical of Israel's kings.
1. There is no hint of the king of Israel bearing any personal responsibility nor was there any suggestion that Israel might be to blame. All blame was directed towards Elisha.
 2. It's possible that Elisha had admonished the king to repent, thus the sackcloth he was wearing. Perhaps the king was told to wait upon the Lord. But the king was tired of waiting. He was now taking the matter in his own hands.

3. The king declared that Elisha must die, and he sent a messenger to Elisha. Just as Elisha knew the plans of the Syrian king, he also knew the plans of the king of Israel. He commanded the elders to bar the door against the messenger. He would speak to the king directly who was not far behind.
4. The grammar of **Verse 33** is confusing but it is the king who shouts, "this evil is from the LORD; why should I wait for the LORD any longer?" The king had come to the end of his patience. Lacking faith to trust in God he determined to execute Elisha.
5. It is a sign of wickedness and faithlessness to refuse God's Providence. The command of Scripture is to wait upon the Lord.
Psalms 27:14 NAU - "Wait for the LORD; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the LORD."
Psalms 37:7 NAU - "Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him"
Psalms 130:5 NAU - "I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, And in His word do I hope."
Isaiah 40:31 NAU - "Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary."

II. God's judgment upon Israel was a type and mirror of God's judgment upon all mankind.

- A. Paul wrote about it in his epistle to the Romans
Romans 1:18 NAU - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,"
 1. Fallen humanity is storing up God's wrath as a farmer fills his silos with the harvest.
Romans 2:5 NAU - "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,"
 2. God sends forth His preachers to pronounce His righteous judgment and they call upon all to repent. But most look upon them with contempt.
- B. This is what we see in this passage
 1. Israel has fallen into great corruption. Idolatry filled the land. God sent forth His prophets, but they were mocked and abused.
2 Chronicles 36:15-16 NAU - "The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent *word* to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; ¹⁶ but they *continually* mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy."
 2. Israel's king hated Elisha for speaking God's Word. He blamed Elisha for Israel's travail.

III. In the midst of judgment God promised mercy

A. God promised deliverance

2 Kings 7:1 NAU - "Then Elisha said, "Listen to the word of the LORD; thus says the LORD, 'Tomorrow about this time a measure of fine flour will be *sold* for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria."

1. The king had come to execute Elisha. Elisha doesn't plead for his life, nor does he pronounce doom upon the king. Instead, he announces a stunning act of God's mercy. It was all of God. "listen to the Word of the LORD." Not one sword was wielded by Israel. It was God who turned the Syrians against themselves resulting in immediate deliverance. Fear gripped them when no one was pursuing them.

Proverbs 28:1 NAU - "The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, But the righteous are bold as a lion."

2. It seemed too amazing to be believed.

2 Kings 7:2 NAU - "The royal officer on whose hand the king was leaning answered the man of God and said, "Behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, could this thing be?"
3. Elisha was declaring that in one day God would send food in abundance. He was not believed.
4. Faith is trusting in the incredible. It isn't blind credulity. It is trusting in the promises of God.
 - a. Elisha is speaking as God's messenger. He is speaking a word that must be believed.
 - b. The royal officer refused to believe. It was unbelievable. Even if the army stopped their siege and retreated it would take months to recover from the devastation of the famine. Elisha is declaring it would happen in a day.
 - c. The officer would not believe, and Elisha declared that he would perish in his unbelief. Believing Elisha's words were not an option. He was speaking God's Word which was weighty.

B. The Gospel is God's promise of deliverance.

1. God declares that those who trust His Son will have eternal life.

John 3:16 NAU - "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."
2. Most will not have it. Either they deny the reality of God's judgment and their need of deliverance, or they declare that the promise of eternal life isn't worthy their time.
3. Like the Royal officer, they will perish in their sin.

Mark 16:15-16 NAU - "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶ "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned."

John 3:36 NAU - "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

- a. Elisha declared he would see it but would not partake of it. And this too by the Word of God.
- b. The lost will see Christ coming in His glory but will not be partakers of the benefits. They will only know His judgment.
- 4. We need to understand the Gospel is not presented as optional. We are commanded to believe.
 - a. Unbelief is great wickedness. The Father loves the Son. The Father gave that which was most precious to Him in order to redeem lost men. He expects all men to bow before His Son. He commands it.
 - b. Martyn Lloyd-Jones – “Why should you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it in order to be delivered or to be helped? Not at all! God commands you. Nothing less! He calls for obedience. He commandeth all men everywhere to repent. It is a command of God that you and I should repent and believe the Gospel. Nothing less!”¹
 - c. Matthew Henry: “Unbelief is a sin by which men greatly dishonour and displease God, and deprive themselves of the favours he designed for them.”²

Conclusion:

1. We have here a vivid picture of the Gospel. All men are under God’s just condemnation. We all deserve the most unthinkable fiery judgment, and it is a judgment that will surely come. There will be weeping and the grinding of teeth.
2. But God has promised deliverance through the Lord Jesus Christ. All who trust in Him will be saved. Are you resting upon Him?

¹ Lloyd-Jones, D. M., *Romans: The Gospel of God, An Exposition of Romans 1*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), page 140.

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 532.