

GOD’S CURE TO HEAL BAD WATER
II Kings 2: 19-22 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

God cares about everything in our lives because He cares for us. He cares about what kind of a place we live in, He even cares about the water we drink, and any contaminants that might be in our water. Sometimes we think God could care less about our circumstances, our finances, our marriages, our families, or our jobs. We are wrong. God is concerned about what we see, what we think, what we say, what we read, and He is very concerned about what we do on social media. We are no different from the people in Jericho in Elisha’s day. The situation of our city of Rock Springs and of Sweetwater County is pleasant, just as it was in Jericho. In the mountains around us here, they are covered with beds of Indian Paintbrush, more than I’ve ever see before in Sweetwater County or anywhere else. We don’t have it better here in Rock Springs, Wyoming than other places, but those who spread lies about Sweetwater County, calling us the armpit of America, are spreading lies. Don’t believe our situation here in Rock Springs, Wyoming is not pleasant, good, and a marvelous place to live. But be sure of it-- spiritually speaking, there is some bad water in our area, not just some hard water or some ammonia in our physically treated water that comes in from the Green River. There is sin in this area that tries to blind us to the area’s pleasant natural beauty.

Meth addiction, alcoholism, suicide, sexual immorality, sexual perversity, road rage with high anger issues, and “**sports-aholism**” has led thousands to forget about worshipping God. We could well say, “the land is pleasant, but the water is bad, and the land is barren and unfruitful. In 1977, in two Sixty Minute Specials on television, Dan Rather dubbed Rock Springs, Wyoming as “Sin City, USA,” because of the gambling, alcoholism, open prostitution, and many unexplained deaths involved in what were called mafia doings. I have claimed Romans 5: 20 over our Sin City. “But where sin abounds, grace does much more abound.” The sons of the prophets found their new mentor Elisha in Jericho, when they got back from their fruitless search for the body of Elijah, whom God took to heaven in a whirlwind. There are symbolic meanings in this message, but I want to examine also what the water problem literally was, in pleasant Jericho, and what Elisha literally did about it, when he threw salt from a new bowl into the spring of water and God healed the water. What lessons would God have us learn as we examine Elisha’s healing of the waters in Jericho, after miraculously crossing the Jordan?

GOD CARES ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF BOTH PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY BAD WATER ON EACH OF US. (I.) Notice verse 19. “Now the men of the city (Jericho) said to Elisha, “Behold the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees, but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful/barren.” Interestingly, this city of Jericho that was the first pagan city that the Israelites conquered in Canaan, now they had a Bible School and Seminary—a School of the

Prophets along with Bethel. Not only now did the prophet Elisha enjoy the loyalty of the sons of the prophets, but the leaders of Jericho respected him and they sought his help. The water at Jericho was bad, distasteful and awful to drink. The year now was 896 BC. Yet there was a reason for the bad water. Back in 1451 BC, Joshua made a great warning—555 years earlier. Joshua spoke these words after the walls of Jericho fell down in Joshua 6: 26. Joshua said, “Cursed before the Lord is the man who sets out to rebuild this city of Jericho. He’ll pay for the laying of the new foundation with the death of his first-born son, and he will pay for the setting up of the city gates at the cost of his youngest son.” Now back in 918 BC, 533 years after God pronounced that curse on the rebuilding of Jericho, I Kings 16: 34 tells us that a man named Heil from Bethel, in spite of the well-known curse of Joshua, presumed to defy the curse on the rebuilding of the city. When the foundation of the city was laid, Heil’s first-born son, Abiram died, and when the city gates were set up, it cost Heil his youngest son, Segub. Those who ignore the Word of the Lord suffer deeply. Heil hardened his heart against God’s curse of rebuilding the city. He committed a defiant, presumptuous sin that cost him and his wife dearly. So, for 22 years, Jericho now was a viable city, but though the curse happened, a school of the prophets was now in Jericho, and people repopulated the city. It became a prosperous town known for its bad water.

Do you know the effects of bad water on people physically? Think of India where today a local governmental leader in Tamil Nadu told the newspaper, India Today, this past week, "Most of the Chennai population today depend on water tankers, municipal supply and private supply for drinking water. A tank of private water costs more than one gram of gold. Now gold is cheaper in Chennai than water. This is the truth." From another site, I read, “Consumption of polluted water is the major cause of ill health in India. Polluted water causes some of their most deadly diseases like cholera, dysentery, diarrhea, tuberculosis, and jaundice. 80 % of stomach diseases in India are caused by polluted water.” When the people of Jericho told Elisha their water was bad, the Hebrew word they used was **ra**—which in this case meant harmful/poison/or full of bad effects. Their next phrase that they spoke defined “the land is unfruitful.” The Hebrew word they used is very specific. The word is **shakol**. It has one basic meaning—to miscarry, or to suffer a spontaneous abortion. If it is talking about cattle, the meaning is to cast a calf. Sometimes miscarry is translated to rob, to bereave or to deprive of children, and to render childless. Now that’s a bad water problem. They literally said, “The land/and water produce miscarriages in people and animals. Does God care about bad water, and especially about women by the millions who miscarry their children? There are 4.4 million confirmed pregnancies in the U.S. every year. 900,000 to 1 million of those end in pregnancy losses every year. More than 500,000 pregnancies each year end in miscarriage (occurring during the first 20 weeks). Does God care about the tragedy of mom’s losing their babies? Did the Lord care about all the miscarriages in Jericho in 896 BC? Yes, He cares. God

knows even when a sparrow falls to the ground. (Matthew 10:29) Jesus said in Luke 12: 7, “You are more valuable than many sparrows.”

Symbolically, what an exact replica Jericho is of our country. Living in America is glorious, people are weeping and crying to get into America. Living here is pleasant, but the water is bad, and now I’m not talking about the water that comes out of the tap. I’m talking about the spiritual water millions are drinking. Much of the pleasurable things in America are polluted and are causing death. God created music, but much music in America is filthy and vulgar. The water is bad. Movies are being made by the hundreds, but many of them are contaminated with horror, terror, sexual immorality and cursing. The water is bad. America is a good place to find a spouse, but courting and dating is polluted with impurity, lust, pornography and fornication. The water is bad. The internet and social media with all its possibility for good, is mainly unfruitful and barren. Social media is causing miscarried dreams from coming to fruition. Millions are drinking from broken cisterns that hold no good water. The poison is killing thousands. The spiritual water is bad, and it is filling our workplaces, our families, our schools, our government, and into our churches. Does God care. Oh yes, He cares. Secondly,

GOD CHOOSES TO USE UNEXPLAINABLE MEANS TO PURIFY BOTH PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY BAD WATER. (II.)

Notice verse 20. “He (Elisha) said, “Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it.” So, they brought it to him.” Hydrogeologists claim that bad water cannot be purified after a dish of salt is poured out from a new bowl or dish. There is only one stream of water near Jericho, and today, it is called Ain es Sultan. The water flows a small distance of 3 kilometers from the base of the Mt. of Temptation on into Jericho. This spring supplied then and still supplies now the water for the whole city. Salt has powers of preserving from corruption, but be sure, it was not the salt that purified the water of Jericho. Salt was simply the earthly foundation—the substratum God provided Elisha to use, to focus the people of Jericho on God’s power to heal. God uses strange methods for his purifying work both physically and spiritually. Don’t ignore the fact that God uses familiar earthly things to ignite our faith, or earthly symbols of healing as a catalyst to faith. Think of the practice we have as a church from James 5: 13-16 to anoint with oil in the Name of the Lord as we pray in faith for healing. Is it the oil that heals? No, but God uses earthly symbols to ignite our faith. When Hezekiah was sick and about to die, God extended his life for 15 years, and he asked Isaiah to take a cake or a lump of figs and apply them as a plaster on King Hezekiah’s boil—Isaiah 38: 21, and II Kings 20:7. Were the figs the healer? No, but God used the figs to ignite the faith of Hezekiah as God healed him. Do you remember Jesus healing the blind man in John 9: 6. To heal his blindness, Jesus spit on the ground, and made mud of the clay and spittle and applied it to the blind man’s eyes. Then the man was asked to go wash in the pool of Siloam. Was the spit, the clay, the mud, or the pool what cured this man? Why

does God use earthly things and even use things we do for others to heal them? Why did God use miracles from Paul's hands, so from his body, so from his body, handkerchiefs, aprons, sweat bands, were brought to the sick and God healed them—Acts 19: 11-12. Was it Paul's sweaty clothes that healed people? Never, but God uses earthly things He prescribes to ignite faith and healing. People tried to get to Peter and came by multitudes to see if they could even get with the distance of his morning or evening shadow, and they were healed, every one—Acts 5: 15-16. Was it Peter's miraculous shadow that healed? No, it was the power of the Name of Jesus in Peter's life, but his shadow was a catalyst to faith and healing.

Remember on the Exodus when poisonous serpents bit the people and they died. God told Aaron to make a fiery bronze serpent and set it on a pole, and when someone was bitten by the poisonous snakes, they could look and live. (Numbers 21:9) Was it the fancy bronze work of Aaron in making a metal serpent that healed bitten people? No, never. It was in obeying God and Moses that healing came. In this case, it wasn't the salt that purified the water, but God used the salt as a visible and physical catalyst to faith. After putting the salt in the water, the spring of water was cured of what in it was causing miscarriages. Never confuse the channel of healing God uses with God himself. So, what was in the water that caused miscarriage? I do not know, but medical science today has dozens of sites that warn about arsenic causing miscarriages in the first 14 weeks. People debunk the Bible, but heavy metals in water do cause miscarriage. Here are a few cites—“Heavy Metals in Miscarriages and Stillbirths—Arsenic, Cadmium and Lead,” “Arsenic, A Pregnancy Danger Lurking In Your Tap Water,” “Arsenic Exposure and Risk of Spontaneous Abortion or Miscarriage,” or “Here's How Much Arsenic Is Safe During Pregnancy.” (Check Consumer Report for April, 2019—11 Popular Brands of Bottled Water were banned because they had dangerous amounts of arsenic in them. Could this have been the problem in Jericho? Could have been. Should I care? Should you? As I was preparing this message, I made a few phone calls and told some people who have had recent miscarriages to have their water checked—usually only about \$15.00 charge.

Spiritually, the water is bad in America. It wasn't the salt itself, but the Lord that healed the water. His word declared it healed. So why the salt? God could have healed the water with just his word! But God chose to use the salt, accompanied with his word. Matthew 5:13 tells us we as believers are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. We as believers are the salt in Sweetwater County! The water is bad, but God has placed us in this polluted county to be part of His purifying process. None of us in ourselves can cure the bad water. God alone is the healer of the water, but He has chosen us to accompany his word with acts of obedience to His Word, and His promptings. Christian radio is salt in the bad water. The world laughs and scoffs at God's Word about discipline.

Yet, Proverbs 22: 15 tells us “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, the rod of discipline will remove it far from him. Is it God or the rod? God uses the rod, but it’s obedience to His channel of blessing the family. God stretches the normal limits of the rod’s effectiveness in Proverbs 19:18, saying, “Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death.” God could use a rod in Moses’ hand or a rod of loving discipline in a parent’s hand, but like the salt in the spring, it’s God, not the rod, the salt, the muddy spittle, the bronze serpent, or the sweat rag that heals, but God.

GOD CURES BOTH PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY BAD WATER AND EXPECTS US TO CREDIT/GLORIFY HIM, THOUGH HE USES US.

(III.) Notice verse 21. “Then he (Elisha) went to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, “Thus says the Lord, I have healed this water; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it.” Elisha was doing God’s work by purifying the water and stopping miscarriages. A modern-day hydrogeologist will use more technical methods, but both the prophet and the hydrogeologist are doing the work of God in the world. Hydrogeology is a branch of geology that concerns water flowing underground or on the surface of the earth. Elisha’s use of salt doesn’t explain all the chemistry in the water being cured or healed. Salt was commonly used as a preservative or disinfectant and was regarded by the Jews as having a spiritual significance. The Jews knew Leviticus 2: 13 well. We read, “You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings, you shall offer salt.” The salt was an earthly catalyst, and a signal to the citizens of Jericho that God was present in their midst. In a similar fashion, Jesus told his disciples that they were salt agents in the world. We’re here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors on this earth. If we lose our saltiness, how will people taste godliness and desire God and see we’ve been with Jesus? Give Elisha a straight A on this first miracle after crossing the Jordan River. Elisha quoted the Lord who prompted him in this miracle. He went to the spring of water- v. 21, and threw salt in it and said, “Thus says the Lord: I have healed this water; from now on, neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it.”

The question is, “Who gets the credit for the miracles God does as we obey Him? In Numbers 17: 5, God said, “The rod of the man I choose will sprout,” and Aaron’s rod budded. Why did God tell Moses to throw his rod on the ground so it would become a hissing poisonous snake? Why did God tell Moses to pick the snake up by the tail? Exodus 4: 5 tells us the reason, “That they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has appeared to you.” When the people grumbled and tested the Lord by saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?” God told Moses to strike the rock at Horeb, and water gushed out to quench the thirst of millions of people and animals. God must have the credit and get the glory. When God gave the untrained former

Israeli slaves victory over the seasoned army of the Amalekites as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands, it wasn't those 3 men's victory, but the victory God gave Joshua on the battlefield that day was to written down as a memorial in a book and Moses was to build an altar and call it, "The Lord is my Banner."-Exodus 17: 8-16.

GOD CALLS FOR LASTING HEALING FOR BOTH PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY BAD WATER. (IV.) Notice verse 22. "So, the water has been

healed to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke." When God uses something He ordains, it is a healing that lasts. In the early days after Pentecost, God gave Peter a vision 3 times of a sheet lowered to earth by 4 corners to the ground. Peter was told to rise, kill and eat. But Peter said, in Acts 10:9-29, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean. (Like Peter, do we argue with God's dreams, visions, and His Holy Spirit promptings?) Three times, God said, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unclean." That's how the Gospel came to the Gentiles, starting at the home of Cornelius. Beloved, don't ignore a unique leading of the Lord, and especially a leading God repeatedly gives. Pastor Larry read about Moses throwing a branch or a tree into the bitter waters of Marah, and the waters became sweet on the Exodus—Exodus 15: 25. Don't tie God's hands with your doubts and your own understanding. What if Elisha had said, "God, salt won't heal this miscarrying water." No, he just obeyed. Proverbs 3: 5-6 states, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths." Physically speaking, is the Word of God true? Is the water at Jericho, that once cursed city, is it still pure? It is! The water of Jericho continues to be a source of clean water for its inhabitants. The Jericho Natural Mineral Water Co. continues to produce bottled water from natural springs at the foot of the Mount of Temptation near historic Jericho. That spring has an estimated 4500 liters of water bubbling up from under the ground each minute. This water is for sale in the West Bank and in Jordan, it is certified by the International Bottled Water Association.

Already, Friday afternoon, I received a message from a family that they are buying a counter-top water distiller to remove arsenic and fluoride, both known to contribute to miscarriages. Praise the Lord!

Spiritually, can God do a work from a clean dish, a clean bowl—a new cleansed born-again creature in Christ, a partaker of His new covenant? Can God use you and me to heal His land? He can, if, like Elisha, we will give God the credit and glory. Whenever we do anything, we know God is prompting us to do, that is from the LORD, that we should do, we need to give Him the glory and credit—It's the Lord! Because we have obeyed God and He has used our words, our prayers, our hands, our feet, and our lives, that does not make what happened any less a miracle. The use of natural means doesn't mean it isn't God, it just recognizes that God's miracles almost always have us doing something, something that may not make sense to us as a natural man or woman. But as people of God, born of the

Spirit, we see physical things God calls, for in a spiritual light. God used VBS-2019 to win 36 children to Jesus! He used 50 plus workers, but salvation is of the Lord! It's the Lord! God will still do miracles if we will obey Him. Let's pray!