

Glen Park Gospel Church
Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

Rev Chris Trinham

Elisha

No 8

Death in the Pot

Second Kings 4:38-44

There is at large in our society a teaching called 'The Prosperity Doctrine' It teaches that it is God's will for all His people to be rich in this world's goods and to not be so endowed must be the result of sin or unbelief. This teaching is unscriptural and unfair, leading people into greed, grievous error, frustration, despair, division, unhappiness and poverty. It is not new. Paul wrote to Timothy of his day saying, "men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain ...".¹ Sometimes God takes us through droughts and sometimes through floods. He does allow His children to die in the fires, to experience bankruptcy, illness, war and persecution even to death. As Paul says, nothing can separate us from the love of God, and in all these trials and experiences we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

However, today's study tells us that there is a blessing which issues out of Godliness and Paul goes on to say, 'But godliness is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.'¹ Life is a paradox, but truth is never a mean between two errors. Paul explains. Having the necessities of life, let us be content and leave the rest to our Lord to order and provide. He who feeds the sparrows will likewise feed us.

First, the drought was real, as real as any we have experienced. It lasted seven years 2 Kings 8:1. The drought impacted the prophets as well as the idolatrous leaders, worshippers of Baal.

They did as best they could. One of them, scoured for greens to add to the stew, and found some gourds, similar to our paddy melons². They watched ignorantly as he sliced them into the stew v39. It was their bitterness that alerted them, and they turned to Elisha in their trouble.

We ignorantly add many poisons to our diets, nutritionally, morally and spiritually. Sometimes we add toxins to our lives knowingly, against the instruction of the word of God See Philipians 4:8.

Elisha's answer was a handful of meal. There is no known antidote to the toxins of the melon in meal. To understand *meal* we must understand 'death' v40 which is the antonym of 'life', the consequence of sin; and its penalty was borne by Christ upon the cross Isaiah 53:9. 'Meal,' also translated 'flour', is from a word meaning 'to grind' It is a picture of the suffering of Jesus upon the cross on our behalf "... the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief . . ." Isa 53:9 (crush: 'to bruise, to crumple, and is also translated as break, break in

pieces and destroy.) The bread upon the table is broken for us as a token of His suffering. Elisha's answer to barrenness was salt 2 Kings 2:21, a symbol for the fulness of the Holy Spirit. His answer to sin in ignorance is forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus. Isaiah 53:10&11.

Second, God adequately provided for the needs of His servants. The maxim is 'Where God guides, there God provides.' If God is not providing for our needs, and we have dealt with known sin, honoured Him, sincerely sought to obey Him, and then His provision is not forthcoming, we ought to verify that we are in the place where He wants us to be. The Lord will either lead us on, or lead us back. Notice then:

God provides by answering believing prayer. It is not specifically stated in our text. It may be assumed because we are told that Elisha was on talking terms with the Lord. We may also believe that he shared this exercise with the students at the college.

God always provides in accord with His word. Note: 'Thus says the Lord' v43 and, 'According to the word of the Lord' v44. This was our lesson in study No. 07, and it is repeated here, and in countless places through the Bible, because it is a rule of Christian living.

There is in God's written word a promise for every need. As we read the Bible expect God to speak from its pages. If we need re-assurance, we may ask Him to repeat the instruction. Gideon did. Then trust Him to do what He says He will do.

God always provides in a time of need. Often His provision comes at the last possible moment, some times when we have given up hope, like poor Jairus, whose daughter had died.

God supplied from an unexpected source, Baal-shalisha³, as is often, but not always the case with God's providential supply. We have been blessed in Christ from before the world was created, says Paul in Ephesians⁴. God foreknows our need and has already provided for it when the world was created and the course of nations and the lives of men were ordained.

Such pre-ordination by God does not preclude the absolute freedom of man to decide his own fate and the often detrimental implications of such decisions upon society. Despite what man can do, God is still God. He has not lost control, nor is He out of resources, even in a drought. Therefore we look for God's answer in our social environment, but we will often be surprised by just what He does do!

Peter paid his temple tax with a coin lodged in the mouth of a fish which Jesus sent him to catch. Jesus told him it was there, and that it would be in the first caught. What a teacher Peter had!

God most often provides through ordinary every day means. Here a

baker brought the obligatory offerings of others. Sometimes he sends bread in the beak of a raven, but most often through some human channel. The missionary is not unspiritual to build a support team. It is but a channel. God may supply by laying our need on the hearts of others. We can be some person's 'other'. This is also a blessing, just knowing that we are responding appropriately to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

God always provides sufficient for the need. The disciples gathered twelve baskets of fragments left after feeding the multitude. The oil flow ceased when there was not a pot left. Sometimes, we need to come back for a second touch,⁵ but even the blind man came away seeing clearly.

Little is much with God. It was five barley loaves that the lad brought in his lunch⁶ and barley bread was then the food of the poor. But with the Lord it was more than sufficient. There is no record in 2 Kings that there was a miraculous increase. But there is a statement that God's provision was adequate.

Finally, let's set our hearts on heavenly things. Keep seeking the things above where Christ is. Let's set our mind on things above and not on things that are on the earth. Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these other things will be added to us⁷.

Bible quotations in this study are from the NASB, unless otherwise acknowledged. 1. 1 Timothy 6-11; 2. A wild vine identified as *eucomeres aggregates* or a similar gourd, fragile when ripe, bitter to taste and a violent colic purgative. It reminds us of our Paddy Melon melon *cucumis myriocarpus* which was brought from South Africa by Afghans as food for their camels. It is toxic to other livestock and humans and a potent emetic. 3. Probably Shalisha not far from Gilgal, It means *three lands*, as there are three waddies meeting there. 4. Ephesians 1:3&4. 5. Mark 8:22-26. 6. John 6:9. Barley bread was the fare of the poorer classes or the food of last resort in a time of drought. Ezekiel 4:9-17 gives us a word picture of these conditions. 7. Colossians 3:1&2, Matthew 6:33. Acknowledgment: Then headings in part two of this study have been adapted from a bible study prepared by the late FW Dixon, Lansdowne Baptist Church 22 March 1960.

Welcome Glen Park Gospel Church
Lower Road, Eltham North
Sundays 10.30 am

These notes may be reproduced in part or in full when distributed without cost, with the words 'Used by Permission, Glen Park Gospel Church.' included.