

## Why Should I Wait For the Lord? - 2

(2 Ki. 7:1-20)

This sermon, the fourth in our series on God, Elisha, and Israel, was preached last Feb. 6, 2011 at GGCF, Escario St., Cebu City.

### Introduction

Last Sunday, we learned three negative reasons why we should wait for the Lord in hard times. One reason is that if we don't wait on the Lord, we resort to doing desperate things that we'll regret later on. The second reason is that if we don't wait for the Lord, we'll resort to deceitful finger-pointing, blame somebody else, including God. The third reason is that if we don't wait for the Lord, there will be divine judgment against our unbelief.

We now come to the three positive reasons why we should wait for the Lord.

### God's Test of Faith

The fourth reason why we should wait for the Lord in hard times is because God's Test is Always a Test of Faith (6:31). Charles Swindoll says: "*The wonderful thing about God's schoolroom . . . is that we get to grade our own papers. You see, He doesn't test us so He can learn how well we're doing. He tests us so we can discover how well we're doing.*" In the ministry of Elisha in Israel, God gave Israel a severe test, which is actually a spiritual test of faith.<sup>1</sup> That test included the siege of Samaria and a famine. God did not test Israel so He can know how they would perform in the test. God tested Israel so the people of Israel can know how they would perform in the test.

In the siege of Samaria, how would the desperate mother who offered to boil her son, grade herself? (READ 6:28) In the case of the desperate mother, she would get a failing grade (*hagbong*), for giving in to the temptation to commit murder and cannibalism. How about King Jehoram? (READ 6:31) In his deep frustration and dreadful desperation, he vowed to kill the prophet Elisha. Because he did not like the message of God about the siege and famine, he wanted to kill the messenger of God. If you find yourself blaming somebody else for your troubles, you might be blaming the God who sent it.

What else? (READ 6:33) King Jehoram knows that the crisis comes from the Lord. He knows that the Lord will deliver them in His perfect time. He knows that he should therefore trust the Lord. He knows that he should wait on the Lord. But what did he say? He asked, "*Why should I wait for the LORD?*" How would King Jehoram grade himself? Instead of trusting God, he wanted a shortcut. Instead of waiting on God, he complained with bitterness.

How about the King's captain—his right hand man? How do you think the King's captain would grade himself? (READ 7:2) He said that even if the Lord should make windows of heaven, there would still be famine in Samaria. This is pure and simple unbelief. How about Elisha? How would Elisha grade himself? He preached the Word, though his hearers did not like it. He told the truth fearlessly, even to the most powerful man in the land. He spoke with conviction, even though his hearers lacked it. He called for people to exercise faith in Yahweh, even though many have lost it. These are some of the marks of a man of God.

I wonder how pastors today would grade themselves against Elisha. Do you hear pastors who preach the Word even though their listeners would not listen? Do you see pastors telling the truth fearlessly, even before powerful people who might not like it? Do you know of pastors who speak out of biblical conviction, and not out of political survival? Do you hear of pastors who call for people to exercise faith in the midst of despair? These are some of the marks of a man of God.

If you find yourself asking this question, "Why should I wait for the Lord?," remember the mother, King Jehoram, and his captain. Every difficulty, every frustration, every trouble, is really a test—a spiritual test of our faith. God does not test us to know how well we'll handle it. He tests us to that we can know how we'll face it.

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<sup>1</sup> Today in the Word, June 22, 1998. Cited February 1, 2011. Online: <http://www.todayintheword.org/GenMoody/default.asp?SectionID=ABECA3F4F74545090BB3C5F613C9CE7&month=6&day=22&year=1998&submit=Search>

Sometimes, we tend to surrender or find shortcuts. Are you about to surrender? Don't surrender! Instead of finding shortcuts, learn to trust God for the long term.

*“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness”* (James 1:2-3, ESV). Remember that God allows trials, not to shatter you, but to shape your faith, and to make you steadfast. He allows troubles not to grind you, but to grow your faith. So why should you wait for the Lord in hard times? Because every trouble is God's test of faith, to teach us.

### God's True Word

The fifth reason why you should wait for the Lord is because God's Word is always true and trustworthy. We see the reliability of God's Word in what happened next. (READ 7:3)

There's a good question there in v. 3—*“Why are we sitting here until we die?”* Do you know that God has brought you into this world for a divine purpose? You were not born into this world just get old and then die. You have a higher purpose—a divine purpose. That purpose is to glorify God and find your joy in Him forever. So why are you sitting there doing nothing for the Lord? Are you going to sit there and do nothing until you die? If you start living today for God, then you will fulfill God's plan to praise His glorious grace.

That's what we have here in our text. These four lepers are nobodies. They are the social outcasts and rejects of society. But God used them nonetheless, to deliver Israel, but also for a higher purpose—to teach Israel of His grace for her.

Maybe you're thinking that you can do nothing great for God. If God can use these four rejects, then God can use you!

(READ 7:4) If they enter the city, they die there. But if they go to the enemy camp, they might die there. But they might also live there. They are risk-takers; and we should also be risk-takers by faith. I'd like us to take the risk of buying a church lot in a year. I'd like us to take the risk of building a Christian school.

So they left the city before dark, crossed no man's land, and entered the Syrian camp, only to find nobody there (v. 5). What happened? (READ v. 6) The LORD caused the Syrians to hear the sound of a great army and the sound of chariots and horses. It was high quality “sensoround” sound, far better than the best Dolby or Pioneer stereo today. It was a miracle of hearing. When the Syrians heard the sound, they thought that Israel has hired the Hittites and the Egyptians to attack them.

So they ran for their lives, leaving behind their tents, their horses and donkeys, their clothes, and their food (v. 7). They left so hurriedly that they did not change their clothes. They left so hurriedly that they did not ride their horses. They left so hurriedly that they did not bring their food.

(READ vv. 8-9) They concluded that they are not doing it right. It is not right because it's a day of good news—that the Syrians have left and food is plenty, but nobody knows that. It is not right because they are now eating while the rest of the Samaritans are starving. Therefore, they should not remain silent, or else, punishment will overtake them.

The word punishment is from the Hebrew, *avon*, which means, not only sin, but also punishment for sin. (BDB; Holladay). These lepers did not go to a theological school, but they are certainly theologically correct. You cannot separate sin from its penalty. Where there's sin, there's always punishment for sin. So if you play with sin, you will suffer the penalty of sin.

The lepers said that punishment will “overtake” them. The word, “overtake” (Heb. *matsa*) is an interesting word. It means, “find” (BDB; Holladay), but it also means, “reach.” The lepers are saying that punishment will find them and reach them, if they keep quiet about the good news. Moses said in Num. 32:23, *“Be sure your sin will find you out”* (ESV).

Rep. Ronald Singson was caught carrying 0.24 ounces (6.67 gms) of cocaine in Hong Kong in July, 2010. His father, Gov. Chavit Singson, claimed that his son was set up by other people. I thought—how can other people just slip 6.67 gms. of cocaine in his baggage? I began to suspect that Ronald is a drug addict.

Recently, Cong. Singson “admitted before the Hong Kong court that he went on a cocaine-and-gambling binge after attending an Usher concert in Manila he helped stage on July 9, frustrated by an argument with his girlfriend. He likewise said that he decided to join a friend attending a poker tournament in Macau while carrying the illegal drugs, causing him to be arrested while transiting through Hong Kong.” (Cited Feb. 3, 2010. Online: <http://ph.news.yahoo.com/gma/20110203/tph-lawyer-seeks-singson-s-expulsion-fro-d6cd5cf.html>)

Brethren, if you're playing with sin today, the Bible says, your sin will find you sooner or later. It will reach you sooner or later. And you will then suffer the punishment of sin. That's what the lepers are saying here; and they are right.

So these lepers went back to Samaria and told the gatekeepers. The gatekeepers told the king.

Look with me at how King Jehoram reacted. (READ 7:12) First, he forgets God's Word (Elisha's prophecy) Second, he focuses on his fears. He's afraid that the abandoned camp is just a Syrian ploy. This is how a man, who lacks faith in God, reacts.

Do you focus on His promises, and not on your fears? A man of doubt will forget God's Word and focus on his fears. But a man of faith will keep God's Word in mind and stand on His promises.

Well, the king's servant told the king that they could send five soldiers to check it out. The five checked it out and returned with the good news. When the people heard it, they rushed out of the gates and ran towards the Syrian camp (vv. 13-15).

Let's read vv. 16-20. Notice that the author of 2 Kings repeats Elisha's prophecy for the second time around. v. 16, "*according to the word of the LORD*"; v. 17, "*as the man of God had said*"; v. 18, "*for when the man of God had said*"; v. 19, "*and he had said.*" What is the author of 2 Kings telling us here? He's telling us that God's Word is true and trustworthy. He's telling us that Israel can therefore trust Yahweh.

And so why should you wait for the Lord any longer? Because God's Word is true and trustworthy. If you trust Him and wait for Him, He will carry you through.

### **God's Timely Grace**

God's Word is not only true and trustworthy. We learn that God is always on time. Exactly twenty-four hours from the time Elisha prophesied the deliverance of Israel, food became plenty and food prices went down.

It is not because the people of Samaria deserved God's help. Because of her disobedience, she deserved God's judgment. It is not because Israel had a godly king. King Jehoram was an unbelieving, faithless king. Yahweh saved Israel that day, because of His grace.

It is a sovereign grace. The four lepers acted according to God's sovereign grace. It is also a timely grace. God's grace came at the right time, God's time, for Israel. Yahweh sent a mighty salvation that day, so that the Israelites might praise him for his amazing grace.

God's grace also came for us sinners at the right time through Jesus Christ. Gal. 4:4-5 says, "*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law*" (ESV). Rom. 5:6 says, "*For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly*" (ESV).

Nowhere do we see this marvelous grace demonstrated than at the cross of Calvary. There, Jesus bore the punishment of our sin. There, God is willing to forgive your sin, if you come to Jesus today.

So why should you wait for the Lord any longer in hard times? Because hard times are the best times to experience God's grace. Hard times are the right times to praise God's grace. Hard times are the best times to see the power of His grace!

God told Paul, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness*" (2 Cor. 12:9, ESV). Peter wrote, "*And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*" (1 Pet. 5:10, ESV).

### **Conclusion**

Why therefore should you wait for the Lord in hard times? First, because every trial is God's test of faith, to teach us. Second, because God's Word is true and trustworthy, so that we can trust God in hard times. Third, because God glorifies His grace in hard times.

What happens when you wait for the Lord in hard times? "*But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.*" (NKJV)