

## A Tale of Three Hearts – 2 (2 Kings 4:11-25)

This sermon, the seventh in our sermon series, “God, Israel, and Elisha,” was preached to GGCF, Escario St., Cebu City, last March 20, 2011.

### A Consecrated Heart Gains the Cooperation of God

Last Sunday, we learned an important lesson—the quality of our lives depends on the quality of our heart relationship with God. God looks at our hearts and deals with each of us accordingly. Yet there is the element of divine grace. Even though our heart relationship with God oftentimes fall short of His standard, He deals with us graciously.

We learned how God deals with three kinds of hearts. The first heart is a divided heart—the heart of Jehoram. A divided heart earns the condemnation of God. The second heart is a sensitive heart—the heart of Jehoshaphat. A sensitive heart gets the attention of God.

There is the third heart, the consecrated heart—the heart of Elisha. To consecrate your heart is to offer and set apart your heart to God. A consecrated heart is a heart that is wholeheartedly, totally, and unreservedly consecrated for God. This kind of heart gains the cooperation of God.

As we look into Elisha’s wholehearted commitment to Yahweh, I’d like you also look into your heart. Which kind of heart do you have today? Do you have a divided heart, a sensitive, but not consecrated heart, or a heart that loves God absolutely? I hope and pray that you will consecrate your heart to God today.

We learn several qualities of a consecrated person.

First, a consecrated person is someone people go to constantly when they want to know God’s answers. (READ v. 11) When Jehoshaphat asked for somebody who will tell them God’s Word, a servant remembered Elisha immediately. Jehoshaphat said that the word of the Lord is with Elisha (v. 12). We are not told how Jehoshaphat came to this conclusion. Perhaps the servant told him about Elisha. In any case, Elisha is known to be a man of God’s Word. He is known to speak the word of the Lord. He is known to know the will of God.

There were true prophets in the time of Elisha. There were false prophets of Baal also in the time of Elisha. But Elisha had the reputation to speak the word of the Lord.

There were many intelligent men in the time of Elisha. There were many religious men in the time of Elisha. But when people wanted to know the wisdom of the Lord, they looked for Elisha.

That, brothers and sisters, is the mark of a heart that is consecrated to know the answers from the word of the Lord. What do people look for in a pastor or speaker today? They would want somebody who holds a masters degree in theology or a PhD in theology. They may want somebody who graduated from Bible school. They would want somebody who speaks English well.

But God operates in a heart that is immersed in the word of God. God works with a heart that is committed to know His word. God cooperates with a heart that is governed by His word.

If people would need somebody who knew God’s answers, you will have to develop a reputation of knowing God’s Word. You must have the discipline to live by God’s Word. Then you will be known as somebody people can go to when they want to know God’s answers from God’s Word.

Second, a consecrated person is someone who is known to have a servant attitude consistently. (READ v. 11) The expression, “poured water,” pictures Elisha as holding a container of water, while Elijah washed his hands.<sup>1</sup> This means Elisha was known to serve to Elijah’s needs.

But Elisha comes from a rich family (READ 1 Ki. 19:19). Elisha’s family was rich enough to hire servants to handle twelve pairs of oxen behind twelve plows on a field.<sup>2</sup> Elisha left behind his riches to become a servant of Elijah.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Pierce Matheney and Roy Honeycutt, *1-2 Kings* (vol. 3; BBC; ed. Clifton J. Allen; Nashville: Broadman, 1970), 146-296.

<sup>2</sup> Russell Dilday, *1,2 Kings* (PCS 9; ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 209.

That tells me something about the consecrated life of Elisha. He was willing to leave a comfortable life behind and serve God. When God calls you to leave a life of comfort for a life of uncomfortable ministry, will you say, Yes, to God? How about when God calls your children into the ministry?

Why would the King's servant remember Elisha as a "waiter"? Because Elisha was known to have a servant attitude. People who knew him knew him as a servant of Elijah.

Brethren, that is the mark of a consecrated heart. A consecrated heart is a humble heart, a servant heart.

Do you want to be known as the one who serves water; the one who cleans the house; the one who carries the bags?

Elisha was known as the one who poured water to Elijah's hands. Not so many people would want to be known like that. Many pastors would like to be known as the one who leads the biggest church; the one who preaches the best sermon; or the one who writes the best-selling books. But not so many pastors would want to be known as the one who serves another pastor.

Does your mega-church pastor want to be known as somebody who sweeps the floor of your mega-church building, cleans the comfort rooms, or serves food to your janitor and security guard? Have you heard of a mega-church pastor who is known to serve his people? (It is more likely that your mega-church pastor does not even know the names of 90% of the people who come to his church every Sunday!)

But you see, the greatest in the kingdom are those who serve others. Heaven will be full of surprises someday soon, when the well-known ministers of this world shall be overshadowed by divine praises for the lesser known servants of the kingdom. God shall lift up those unknown servants of the kingdom and give them their full rewards.

I remember when I was in fourth year high school. One day, Sam Alparaque suggested to me that I could go and study at Bible school at Doane Baptist Seminary in Iloilo City for free or subsidized tuition, room, and board. But he said that I should also work in school, clean the floors, clean the comfort rooms, or wash the dishes.

I remember how I reacted negatively. I don't want to clean the floors, wash the dishes, or clean the comfort rooms, just to study there. Why should I do that?

Then through the years, I realized that a servant attitude is an important training for a consecrated ministry. For if you are willing to do the unwanted jobs today, then you will be willing to do anything for the Lord tomorrow.

Elisha was a rich boy from a rich family. But he was willing enough to serve Elijah for more than ten years. Because he was willing to do the humble things for his earthly master, he was willing to do anything for his heavenly master.

That is a mark of a consecrated heart. God is willing to work with that kind of heart.

Third, a consecrated person is someone whose allegiance is to the Lord totally and not to powerful people. (READ v. 13) Elisha is saying, "*What do we have in common? You worship other gods. I worship Yahweh. You consult other gods. You don't consult Yahweh. Now you come to me to ask Yahweh's guidance. What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and mother.*" In effect, Elisha was saying rhetorically, "*What has Yahweh got to do with you, when you don't worship and consult Him?*"

If Jehoram worships other gods, then he should go to their prophets for guidance. Yahweh therefore has nothing to do with Jehoram. That's why Elisha asked, "*What have I, as the prophet of Yahweh, to do with you?*"

What has Yahweh to do with you? The answer is nothing. Yahweh has nothing to do with people who don't trust Him.

This is an important lesson for us today. How many times do we ignore God when we do something, and then when all else fails, we ask God for help? What has God to do with you now in your problems, when you did not even consult Him before the problems came? If we consult God only after we run out of solutions, we treat Him like the operator of 911.

Notice that Elisha is more loyal to the principles of God's Word than to powerful people. You see, Elisha took God seriously. He follows God's Word diligently. He is committed to the glory of God absolutely. For Elisha, it does not matter who stands before him. He stands before the presence of God. As a true prophet of God, he is accountable to God first of all. Therefore, he faced the rich and powerful fearlessly, regardless of the

result; because the glory of God consumed him. This is something every pastor should think about, esp. when they face rich and powerful people in church.

This then is a mark of a consecrated heart. The glory of God consumes the consecrated heart.

Like a true syncretist, Jehoram answered Elisha that he is now coming to Yahweh, because they are there by Yahweh's plan. (READ v. 13) In effect, Jehoram accused God that God brought them there to be killed.

Elisha replied that God will not help Jehoram because of Jehoram's divided heart. (READ v. 14) Elisha is saying that God will not answer his prayers. But for the sake of Jehoshaphat, God will help them. We learn something about the prayers of the saints here. Are you the only believer in your family? Do you know that God blesses your family because of you? Do you know that God listens to your prayers more than He listens to the prayers of unbelievers? That's what we learn here. God shall deliver Israel, not because of the prayers of Jehoram, but because of the prayers of Jehoshaphat.

This means that God answers a heart that seeks God. But God rejects the prayer of a heart that rejects God.

A consecrated heart takes God seriously. You will be loyal to God and not to powerful people. You will stand on the principles of God's Word.

Fourth, a consecrated person is someone who is sensitive to the Lord and speaks His Word clearly. (READ v. 15) The word, "musician" (Heb. *nagan*) is a verb (Piel), which means, "touch (strings), play a stringed instrument." (BDB) The musician here is a player of a stringed instrument. Elisha uses the music of a harp to receive the word of the Lord.

In the OT, music accompanied the prophesying of the word. 1 Chron. 25:1, "*David and the chiefs of the service also set apart for the service the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who prophesied with lyres, with harps, and with cymbals.*" (ESV) The ministry of music is as essential as the ministry of preaching.

But note that the music and musicians are set apart for God. They are consecrated to the worship of the Lord. Let me ask our worship team, "Are you set apart for God?"

Our music ministry is not just for anybody who likes to play. It is for anybody who is set apart for the music of God. The music also is not any music or worldly music. The music should only be music that worships God. The music of Scripture is music that glorifies God, that is filled with His Word, and that seeks His leading.

It is consecrated music—music that is set apart for God. It is also soothing music—music that turns your thoughts from outer distractions, toward inner thoughts of God and His Word.<sup>3</sup>

While Elisha listened to the consecrated music of the harp, the hand of Yahweh came upon him. The hand of Yahweh is the power of God.<sup>4</sup> The power of God was upon Elisha, as he received the revelation of the word of God. Then Elisha prophesied.

Brethren, a consecrated heart is sensitive to the Spirit of God. It listens to the word of God.

Are you sensitive to the Spirit? Do you listen to His Word?

Also, a consecrated heart speaks clearly the word of the Lord. (READ vv. 16-17) The word, "pools" (Heb. *geb*), means ditches or trenches (BDB). The writer repeats it two times, emphasizing the many trenches that will be filled by the waters that God will send. They shall not hear the sound of wind or see the drops of rain. It will occur far away so that the Moabites will not see it also. But at the exact time, they shall see the waters coming like a flash flood from the mountains that shall fill pools and pools in the dry valley. Then the thirsty army and their animals shall drink of it.

The LORD shall cause the defeat of the Moabites. Israel shall besiege every fortified city. They shall cut every good tree and block all springs of water. They shall make the land infertile, by putting stones on it (vv. 18-20).

And so, Elisha prophesied clearly and plainly the miracle of the waters and the victory of Israel. A consecrated person is someone who listens to God's Word perceptively and proclaims God's Word clearly.

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<sup>3</sup> Dilday, *1,2 Kings*, 262.

<sup>4</sup> T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings* (vol. 13; WBC; ed. John D. W. Watts; Waco: Word, 1985), 36.

Fifth, a consecrated person is someone who believes in the power and sovereignty of God absolutely. When Elisha prophesied it, he proclaimed it by faith. He believed in the power of God absolutely. He believed also in the sovereignty of God completely. He knew that what God says will happen, will happen as what God says.

(READ v. 20) It happened exactly as Elisha predicted it, proving his prophetic ministry before Israel. When the Moabites woke up early in the morning, they saw the pools of water, but it looked as red as blood. They never suspected that it was water. They thought that it was dry land, since they heard of no storm and saw no rain the night before. They thought that the armies of the three kings must have turned on each other and killed each other. So the Moabites went out to plunder the camp.

But when they got to the camp, the Israelites rose up and struck the Moabites (vv. 20-24). Thus, the LORD gave the Moabites into the hand of the Israelites. The Israelites overthrew the cities of Moab. They blocked all the wells. They cut all the trees. They put stones on all the land (v. 25).

Thus, the LORD confirmed His prophet, Elisha, and how the LORD shall yet save Israel, despite her idolatrous Kings. This miracle therefore is due to God's grace, in answer to the prayer of Jehoshaphat, but not the prayer of Jehoram.

Do you believe in the power and sovereignty of God without reservation? Jesus said if you have faith, you can say to this mountain, be thrown into the sea, and it shall be done. Whatever you ask for in prayer therefore, believe you have received it, and it shall be yours! (Matt. 22:22).

### **Conclusion**

In closing, let us read v. 18. The NIV reads, "*This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD.*" The three armies were facing the impossible. They ran out of water. They couldn't move forward or backward or they die along the way. But the impossible thing for them was an easy thing for God.

What are you facing today that seems unchangeable? God can change the unchangeable and do the impossible for you. It was an easy thing for the LORD to create the universe. It was an easy thing for the LORD to take care of three million Israelites in the desert for forty years. It was an easy thing for the LORD to give victory to Israel over all the nations, even though she was "outnumbered and outgunned."<sup>5</sup>

But God works with a consecrated heart—a heart of a servant whose allegiance is to God totally, who listens and trusts Him completely, and who expects great things from God absolutely.

Will you consecrate your heart to God right now?

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Wall, Jr., "It's An Easy Thing in the Eyes of the Lord." Cited: March 19, 2011. Online: <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/its-an-easy-thing-in-the-eyes-of-the-lord-charles-wall-jr-sermon-on-encouragement-125172.asp?Page=1>