

“Weeping over God’s Judgment”
2 Kings 8:1-6
(Preached at Trinity, April 3, 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. As we’ve witnessed consistently in 2 Kings, the author takes us from one account to another quickly. In **Verses 1-7** we are briefly reintroduced to the Shunammite woman. The author reminds us that God is still caring for this elect woman. She is warned of the approaching famine and then restored to her former condition.
2. Now the author quickly turns his focus to Ben-hadad, the king of Syria. We are not given the reason why Elisha is in Damascus. Since Elisha is Elijah’s successor, perhaps he has traveled to Damascus by Divine appointment fulfilling God’s charge given to Elijah when he was upon the mountain of God.
1 Kings 19:15 NAU - "The LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram;"
3. Ben-hadad had been smitten with a serious illness, or as some presume, he may have been wounded in battle. The word for “sick” is the same used to describe the injuries suffered by Ahaziah when he fell through the lattice of his upper chamber. Whatever the affliction it was so serious that his recovery was in question. He sent Hazael to Elisha to enquire if he would recover. It is interesting that this pagan king seeks out God’s prophet.
2 Kings 8:8 NAU - "Take a gift in your hand and go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD by him, saying, 'Will I recover from this sickness?'"
4. In a strange response Elisha tells him, “Go tell the king he will recover, but he will actually die.”
2 Kings 8:10 NAU - "Go, say to him, 'You will surely recover,' but the LORD has shown me that he will certainly die."
It wasn’t deception. Ben-hadad’s illness was not fatal. He would have recovered from the illness, but was assassinated by Hazael. Hazael would then rise to the throne of Syria.
5. Elisha wept before Hazael because he knew the terrible suffering he would inflict upon Israel. But he also knew it was from the hand of God upon a rebellious people. Israel was deserving of God’s judgment but it brought great sorrow in the heart of Elisha.
6. I want to direct your attention briefly tonight upon the great sorrow of sin. Sin brings sorrow on many fronts.

I. Sin has brought untold sorrow upon humanity.

A. All of the suffering in this life is ultimately the consequence of sin.

1. Our Confessions and Catechisms speak of the misery of sin

16. Q. Into what state did the fall bring mankind?

A. The fall brought mankind into a state of sin and misery

18. Q. What is the misery of that state whereinto man fell?

A. All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God,¹ are under His wrath and curse,² and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.

LBC 16:3 – “. . . being now conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subjects of death, and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free.

2. Suffering is the manifestation of God’s judgment. It is just for us to suffer. Suffering in this life is a foreshadow of eternity in hell.

3. Death is also the manifestation of God’s judgment upon sin. Tears have flooded the lives of human beings grieving when death strikes.

4. Israel was stiff-necked and rebellious. God was progressively bringing judgment upon Israel. He brought sickness, drought and famine, the devastation of a long siege, all designed to bring them to repentance. None of it brought God pleasure.

B. God is grieved over the sinfulness of man

1. I am speaking anthropopathically

2. When God looked upon the world in Noah’s day it was a grievous sight.

Genesis 6:5-6 NAU - "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart."

3. It brings God no pleasure to inflict His judgment upon sinful human beings.

Ezekiel 18:31-32 NAU - "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? ³² "For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord GOD. "Therefore, repent and live."

Ezekiel 33:11 NAU - "As I live!" declares the Lord GOD, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?"

4. We can also see this as Jesus wept over Jerusalem

Matthew 23:37-38 NAU - "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. ³⁸ "Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!"

5. Andrew Bonar said that the fire and brimstone of God's judgment is mingled with His tears.¹
6. And the opening verses in this chapter reminds us that even in the midst of God's fiery judgment, He is mindful of His righteous ones. In the midst of the famine God's cared for the Shunammite woman.

II. It should grieve the righteous to look upon the suffering of humanity

- A. This is at the heart of this passage
1. Elisha knew Israel had turned away from God and had fallen into idolatry.
 2. As God's prophet he understood clearly that Israel was under God's righteous judgment.
 3. Elisha was one in a long line of prophets God sent to announce His judgment. But the prophets took no pleasure in the announcements of doom.
 4. The thought of the suffering of Israel under the hand of Hazael brought Elijah great sorrow.
2 Kings 8:11-12 NAU - "He fixed his gaze steadily *on him* until he was ashamed, and the man of God wept. ¹² Hazael said, "Why does my lord weep?" Then he answered, "Because I know the evil that you will do to the sons of Israel: their strongholds you will set on fire, and their young men you will kill with the sword, and their little ones you will dash in pieces, and their women with child you will rip up."
- B. Hazael would be God's instrument of judgment.
1. Elisha declared that Ben-hadad would recover. It is true. his sickness would not have lead to his death. He died at the hand of Hazael. This was God's purpose.
2 Kings 13:3 NAU - "So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He gave them continually into the hand of Hazael king of Aram, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael."
 2. This would not absolve Hazael of his treachery. He murdered the king and then unleashed untold suffering upon Israel.
 In his hypocrisy, he pretended to know his own heart.
2 Kings 8:13 NAU - "But what is your servant, *who is but* a dog, that he should do this great thing?"
 3. While it was God's purpose to use Hazael, the man was operating according to the evil desires of his heart. He was ambitious, murderous and cruel. He too would come under God's judgment.
 4. The thought of these things brought Elisha to tears. God's prophet had the heart of a pastor.

¹ Stated by Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Kings: The Power and the Fury*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 135.

III. How does this speak to our use of the Gospel?

- A. There are two reasons we are to spread the Gospel.
1. First and foremost because God commands it. The Great Commission is for all.
Matthew 28:18-20 NAU - "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
 2. We should be driven to preach the Gospel because every human being is under God's judgment.
- B. The thought of people entering the gates of hell should terrify us
1. We see the sin that has crushed our world. We see it in our politics. We see it as people rip each other apart on social media. We see the crime, the murders, the misery inflicted upon this world.
 2. We could take the attitude, "They're going to get what they deserve." Or we could look upon them with pity the way God looks upon them.
 3. We have the ultimate cure for their disease. What kind of monster would come upon a cure for a worldwide pandemic taking untold lives and hide it from them?
 What is the cure? Is there any other way of salvation except through the Lord Jesus Christ? Is there any other way to be delivered from God's wrath and judgment.
 4. While benevolence has its place. While it is good to feed the poor and care for the hurting, our chief work must always be seeking the salvation of souls. Well-fed sinners will still die and go to hell.
 5. And its good to preach God's demand for righteousness and obedience, but never apart from the Gospel. Good moral people without Christ will still die and go to hell.
 6. The church must not get bogged down in politics. Lost Republicans and lost Democrats will both swim side-by-side in the Lake of Fire.
 We need to grieve for them both.
 7. While social justice may have its place, God's justice knows no color. There will be people of every color in hell.
 All need the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 We need to look upon them all with pity and tears.

Conclusion:

1. We get a peek into the heart of Elisha. As God's prophet he was charged with speaking God's Word. Elisha was involved far and wide, in both Israel and the Gentile nations. He was approached by kings and generals.
2. Speaking the truth often brought him face to face with the sins of God's people. Elijah faced this, "I alone am left." Elisha also faced it but we find a tender heart towards God's rebellious people. Israel was under God's judgment and it broke Elisha's heart to see it unfold.
3. Can we look upon God's judgment unfolding and not be stirred by the terror of it? And if we are convinced of the eternal permanence of God's judgment upon sin will we not look upon life with a greater urgency?