

"Double Portion"**Introduction**

Not one of us has arrived where we are in the faith singlehandedly. Many faithful saints have sacrificed and endured great opposition in order to pass on their faith to us. In Zion Assembly, we are privileged to be the recipients of a spiritually rich Holiness-Pentecostal faith. Our spiritual forefathers restored the teachings of Christ and the apostles, preaching doctrines like: sanctification, holiness, baptism with the Holy Ghost, and speaking in tongues. Today, we all should desire and seek to obtain the same spiritual experiences as those who have paved the way for us in the faith.

Key Verse

"And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me" (2 Kg. 2:9).

Lesson Summary

Elijah was distinguished in the Scriptures as a mighty prophet of God. He was God's ambassador declaring the Word of the Lord, and his words struck fear into the hearts of his adversaries (2 Kg. 1:1-18). In obedience to the Lord, Elijah anointed his successor, Elisha, because God was going to take him up to heaven. Elisha served Elijah as his assistant and learned everything he could about his future responsibilities (3:11). On the day of Elijah's departure, Elisha did not leave his side. Although Elijah tried three times to persuade him to remain behind as he continued on his journey, Elisha persisted to stay close, and this paid off in the end (2:1-6). When they finally reached the Jordan riverbank, Elijah took his mantle and struck the waters, parting the river, and they crossed over on dry ground (vv. 7-8). Elisha knew God was about to take Elijah; and clearly, he needed and expected something from the Lord. After all, how could anyone begin to think he could take the place of such a great man of God? Elisha knew his master's life and ministry; no doubt, he felt the gravity of stepping into his shoes. Moreover, seeing Elisha's persistence and anticipation, Elijah said, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee" (2:9). The request was simple and to the point; yet it was profound: "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me" (v. 9). Elijah called this request "a hard thing," but not impossible. Receiving depended on Elisha's persistence. If he remained with Elijah and saw his translation, then Elisha would receive the double portion of God's Spirit that he desired (v. 10). He knew he could not fulfill his prophetic responsibilities without having the same Spirit that rested on Elijah. He desired more of the same Spirit. Because he deeply desired the promise of the Spirit and persisted to stay by Elijah's side in order to receive it, Elisha obtained his double portion (vv. 11-12). The fulfillment of the promise was evidenced by the mantle that fell from Elijah, and by Elisha's miraculous parting of the Jordan with the mantle. Like Elijah, the Spirit now rested on Elisha, using him mightily as a prophet in Israel (vv. 13-15). Today, under the New Covenant, the Spirit of God is not limited to only a few who are anointed for specific purposes like priest, prophet, and king (Ac. 2:16-18). Instead, the Word of God promises the Holy Spirit to those who ask the Father for this gift (Lu. 11:13). Jesus promised, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (Jn 14:16-17). The fullness of Christ's promise is the baptism with the Holy Ghost inaugurated on the Day of Pentecost (Ac. 1:4-5). The saints "were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (2:4). They could not see the Spirit himself, but they saw and heard the manifestations of the Spirit and experienced the results of his infilling (vv. 1-4). Jesus promised to send the Spirit from the Father – he made the promise – but it was up to the saints to desire, seek, and obtain the promise of the Father. Following the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, Peter extended the same promise of the Spirit to every believer: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (vv. 38-39). Praise the Lord! God is still calling today.

Scripture Study

Elisha's double portion – 2 Kg. 2:1-15

Holy Ghost baptism – Lu. 11:13; Jn. 14:16-17; Ac. 2:1-4, 16-18, 38-39

Conclusion

Jesus promised the baptism with the Holy Ghost. In fact, Jesus is our Holy Ghost baptizer (Lu. 3:16). The apostles continued to proclaim the Holy Ghost baptism in the New Testament era. At the turn of the 20th century, our spiritual forefathers restored this doctrine in the church. God's promise is still good today! But it's up to us to desire, seek, and obtain the same spiritual experiences as those who have paved the way for us in the faith.

“Healing Waters”

Introduction

As Christians, and as members in Zion Assembly, we are representatives of Christ and his church. We never know when someone will come to us needing God’s help. Sometimes, situations will arise requiring us to act in Christ’s stead. God will actually lead us into such circumstances in order to accomplish his divine purpose through us. In today’s lesson, we see how Elisha fulfilled God’s will in healing the waters at Jericho.

Key Verse

“So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake” (2 Kg. 2:22).

Lesson Summary

Elisha saw Elijah taken up into heaven by a whirlwind. Just as Elijah promised, Elisha received a double portion of the same Spirit that rested upon him. Taking the mantle that fell from Elijah, Elisha went back to the Jordan River and parted the waters calling on the Lord God. Fifty sons of the prophets at Jericho saw him cross over the Jordan on dry ground. Elisha remained in Jericho while search was being made for the body of Elijah. While there, the men of the city came to him with a serious problem (2 Kgs. 2:9-19). “And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of the city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is nought, and the ground barren” (v. 19). In bringing their need to Elisha, these men obviously understood that he was fulfilling Elijah’s room as God’s leading prophet in Israel (1 Kg. 19:16; 2 Kg. 2:15-16). Hundreds of years earlier, the city of Jericho was an impenetrable fortress in the land of Canaan. However, under Joshua’s leadership, the children of Israel completely destroyed the inhabitants of the city, burning it to the ground and leaving it uninhabitable (Jos. 6:21-27). The city was eventually rebuilt during the reign of wicked Ahab, king of Israel (1 Kg. 16:34; Jos. 6:26). Although people were again living in Jericho, the water supply was bad, and crops weren’t growing (2 Kg. 2:19). So the men of Jericho appealed to Elisha for God’s help. Again, we know the city was judged by God, and even cursed, when it was utterly destroyed by the children of Israel. Now, generations later, the water supply contained “death” (v. 21). Perhaps, the water contamination actually stemmed from Jericho’s destruction hundreds of years earlier. Who really knows? Regardless, the situation served as an opportunity for God to demonstrate his mighty power (c.f. Jn. 9:1-3). Clearly, this problem was greater than man’s ability; they had no solution. So they turned to the prophet of the Lord hoping for a divine answer. Then Elisha healed the waters. But what would have happened if the men of the city had not asked Elisha to intervene? James wrote, “... ye have not, because ye ask not” (Ja. 4:2). Jesus said, “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (Jn. 16:24). Receiving from the Lord begins with asking. In fact, faith in God will prompt us to ask; and when we ask anything believing, we can expect to receive according to God’s will (Mt. 21:22; 1 Jn. 5:13-15). When Elisha healed the waters, he took a cruse (container) of salt and poured it into the water source, declaring God’s healing of the waters and the land (2 Kg. 2:20-22). [For discussion: What was the significance of his using a “new” cruse, if any? Why did he pour the salt into the spring itself?] The Scriptures declare: “So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake” (v. 22). Of course, the healing power was not in the salt itself, although salt has purifying and healing virtues. Rather, the salt, as a purifying agent, was only symbolic of God’s healing. For this reason, Elisha said, “Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters” (v. 21). The healing was not in the salt; the healing was not in Elisha. Both then and now, the Lord is our healer. Elisha was not speaking his own words according to his own will, but he was speaking the Word of the Lord for the healing of Jericho’s waters.

Scripture Study

Jericho’s problem – 2 Kg. 2:9-19; Jos. 6:21-27; 1 Kg. 16:34

Elisha’s solution – 2 Kg. 2:20-22; Ja. 4:2; Jn. 16:24; Mt. 21:22; 1 Jn. 5:13-15

Conclusion

There is power in God’s Word. Elisha spoke the Word of the Lord by the Spirit of the Lord, and the water source was healed “according to the saying of Elisha which he spake” (2 Kg. 2:22). God’s Word reveals his will for our lives. When people come to us asking for divine help and healing, we need to know God’s Word so that we can declare his will by the inspiration and anointing of the Holy Ghost.

“Cursed Children”**Introduction**

Today, we are witnessing blatant disrespect for civil servants, public school teachers, government officials, and spiritual leaders. At times, the problem seems to permeate society at large, even infiltrating the fellowship of the church. The attitude behind the disrespect reeks with the spirit of rebellion. We are warned in the Scriptures against such resistance and lawlessness (2 Pe. 2:9-10; Ro. 13:1-2). In today’s lesson, we will consider Elisha’s example as the proof that God requires us to respect those over us in the Lord.

Key Verse

“Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour” (Ro. 13:7).

Lesson Summary

In 2 Kings 2:23-25, we read what appears to be a rather disturbing story about the prophet Elisha. As he was traveling to Bethel, little children came from the city and jeered at him, saying, “Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head” (v. 23). In response, Elisha cursed them in the name of the Lord; and then two female bears came out of the forest and attacked them. No further explanation is given in the Bible. Our understanding of the story’s significance is completely left to our interpretation. No doubt, this is one of the most unusual stories in the Old Testament. But it is included in the events of Elisha’s life for our learning today. At first glance, Elisha’s reaction may seem harsh to some. Why didn’t the prophet just shake off the children’s comments as nonsense and foolishness? Clearly, their insulting words indicated a more serious issue. We should take notice of the spiritually dismal situation in Israel. The kings of Israel were exceedingly wicked men who led the nation into idolatrous worship and wicked practices (1 Kg. 12:26-33; 13:33-34; 22:51-53; 2 Kg. 1:1-4; 3:1-3, 13-14). Therefore, at this point in Israel, the nation had lost a healthy sense of respect for God’s authority; and the evidence is a gang of children mocking God’s prophet. This situation was not merely one or two children making fun of a prophet; but at least forty-two children made a concerted effort to show contempt for Elisha, the man of God. Did they actually understand what they were doing? These children were being shaped and influenced by an idolatrous, disobedient people. Their crude words and actions demonstrated the rebellious nature of Israel’s society, particularly toward spiritual authority. Seemingly, these children imitated a prevailing negative attitude toward the man of God and all he represented, stemming from the adult influences which shaped their thinking. Children and youth often emulate the attitudes and ideas of parents and other influential adults in their lives. Because the children mocked him, Elisha cursed them. But this was not Elisha’s curse alone, for he spoke “in the name of the Lord.” His curse was prompted by the Spirit of God. Based on God’s immediate judgment, two bears mauled the children. Clearly, their mocking was not a light matter in God’s eyes. His judgment – righteous and holy – was severity in this case (Ps. 145:8-9, 17-20). These children were not merely making fun of a prophet, but they were openly displaying blatant disrespect for God’s authority when they mocked Elisha. In Romans 13:1-7, Paul wrote to the saints about respecting and submitting to “the higher powers” (i.e. governing authorities) because they are ordered by God. Although the governing authorities of this world are far from perfect, they nevertheless bring law and order to society, and should be respected. When people rebel against the ordained authority that God has set in place, they actually go against God and bring judgment upon themselves (Ro. 13:2). The apostle Peter likewise identified those who disrespect governing authority, particularly spiritual authority. These presumptuous, self-willed people will be judged for their rebellion against God (2 Pe. 2:9-12).

Scripture Study

Rebellion – 2 Kg. 2:23-25; 1 Kg. 12:26-33; 13:33-34; 22:51-53; 2 Kg. 1:1-4; 3:1-3, 13-14

Respecting authority – Ro. 13:1-7; 2 Pe. 2:9-12

Conclusion

Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans during the governance of the Roman Empire – an ungodly, immoral government showing hostility to Christians. Nevertheless, Paul urged the saints to be good citizens, pay their taxes, and show respect for governing authorities. How much more should we be faithful church members, paying our tithes, and giving honor and respect to our spiritual leaders in the church?

“Victory in Battle”

Introduction

God is all powerful; there is no problem too big for our God. Miracles are the result of God’s supernatural intervention in circumstances beyond our control. When we can do nothing to fix the situation and then God steps in to make it right, we experience a miracle. In today’s lesson, we will see how God brought great victory in the face of defeat. He is a miracle-working God!

Key Verse

“For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Lu. 1:37).

Lesson Summary

After wicked king Ahab’s death, his son Ahaziah reigned. He was just as wicked as his father. He ruled for only two years and died in the aftermath of a critical accident. Jehoram, his brother, then reigned over Israel. After Ahab’s death, king Mesha of Moab rebelled against Israel (2 Kg. 1:1). Essentially, Mesha served king Jehoram, annually providing him wool from his large flocks (3:4-5). King Jehoram refused to release his control over king Mesha. Obviously, he did not want to give up the financial gains. But also, the Moabites posed a formidable threat to his national security. King Jehoram needed to stop the rebellion, but he could not do it alone. He called upon Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to form an alliance against the Moabites, their mutual enemy (vv. 6-8). The king of Edom, being subservient to the king of Judah, also joined their alliance to fight against the Moabites (consider 8:20, 22). On their seven-day march toward Moab, they encountered a major problem: they were thirsty in the wilderness without water for their troops. Under these conditions, king Jehoram was convinced they were heading toward certain defeat (vv. 9-10). But Jehoshaphat believed they needed to seek the word of the Lord in order to receive an answer from God. Heeding Jehoshaphat’s counsel, the kings went to the prophet Elisha in order to hear the word of the Lord. Although the Lord did not respect Jehoram, he was willing to deliver them from their enemies for the sake of Judah and king Jehoshaphat (vv. 11-14). The situation looked bleak, but the Lord gave them the path to victory. When we come to an impossible situation and don’t know what to do, God has the answer we need. The Lord told them to do something strange – to dig ditches all over the valley. Before God moved on their behalf, the kings and their army had to demonstrate faith in God’s Word through their obedience. The Lord promised to give them water in a miraculous way without any wind or rain. Moreover, the Lord promised to give them victory over their enemies. The three kings did not understand how all of this was going to take place. All they understood was the promise of God. In faith, they obeyed the Word of the Lord, digging the ditches and then waiting on God to move (vv. 15-18). The Lord is looking for this same kind of faith today – a faith that obeys the Word of God and then trusts the Lord for the outcome. They had to wait until morning for their miracle (v. 20; Ps. 30:1-5). The next day the ditches were full of water. The army was refreshed, and their animals drank their fill. Now they were ready for battle. But God was not finished with this great miracle; he had something more in mind. The Moabites gathered themselves together to fight; and in the morning as the sunlight reflected on the water in the ditches, the Moabites thought it was the blood of their rivals. They immediately proceeded to the camp of Israel expecting to find slain bodies and to take the spoil, but they entered into a trap. The Israelite army attacked them, and they slew the Moabites as they retreated back to their own country. Although the Moabites tried, retaliating was pointless. They were defeated (2 Kg. 3:21-27). As God instructed them, the Israelite army “beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees” (vv. 19, 25).

Scripture Study

Overwhelming circumstances – 2 Kg. 3:4-14

Miraculous victory – 2 Kg. 3:15-27

Conclusion

God gave his people victory over their natural enemies. He performed a great miracle that turned the whole situation around. But even more than Israel’s natural well-being, God wanted them to believe and trust in him. He wanted them to have faith and experience the salvation of the Lord. Today, the Lord wants his church to be victorious over the wiles of the enemy (Ep. 6:10-11). He does not want us to be a defeated people. In fact, the Lord promises us victory over this world through faith in Jesus Christ, God’s Word (1 Jn. 5:4-5).

“Multiplied Oil”

Introduction

The Lord cares about every area of our lives. He is concerned about the things that concern us. For this reason, we are encouraged to cast all of our burdens on the Lord (1 Pe. 5:7). God should not be our last resort, but we should immediately go to him when we are overwhelmed by life's circumstances. In today's lesson, we will consider the cry of a desperate widow and how her great faith in God resulted in his miraculous provision.

Key Verse

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Ph. 4:19).

Lesson Summary

In 2 Kings 4:1, one of the sons of the prophets died and left behind his wife and two sons. He had served faithfully as a prophet (minister) in Israel under Elisha. But his widow found herself in a most desperate situation. Because she could not pay her creditor, her two sons were forced to become bondservants in order to pay the debt. So she cried to the prophet of God and appealed for help. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Mt. 7:7). Like her husband, she too feared the Lord. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps. 111:10; Pr. 9:10). Godly fear (i.e. deep respect for the Lord) and the faith that goes with such fear are the basis for receiving from the Lord (consider Psalm 34:1-9). Whereas, the fear of our circumstances undermines our faith, the fear of the Lord bolsters our faith and confidence in God's ability to supply our needs (e.g. Ac. 16:23-26). The widow came to the man of God for help; but what could he do about her problem? Elisha was limited; he could only do so much. However, God is unlimited. He is able to supply all of our needs (Ph. 4:19). He can step into overwhelming situations and do the humanly impossible (Lu. 18:27). We may not think we have much to offer God, but the Lord can use anything we commit to him, however meager it may be. The widow only had one pot of oil (2 Kg. 4:2). What good is a pot of oil when your sons are in jeopardy? This is where faith comes into play. Real faith believes that God is greater than our needs. Genuine faith believes that little is much with God (Mk. 8:1-9). Consider the woman's plight: 1) her husband was dead, 2) she was in debt, and 3) her sons were being taken away from her. When she explained her problems to the prophet, he told her to do something peculiar – to borrow empty vessels from her neighbors (2 Kg. 4:3-5). Initially, God increased her sense of emptiness by surrounding her with many empty vessels. Of course, the Lord had reasons for doing this: he had a plan, and empty vessels were a part of his plan. Moreover, God was testing and proving her faith (1 Pe. 1:7). Furthermore, when we come to the Lord empty and broken, and cry out to him in faith, he will minister to our needs (Ps. 34:17-19; Mt. 11:28; He. 4:16). At times, God even multiplies our emptiness in order to increase his fullness in our lives all the more. In other words, when we reach the end of ourselves and know that we can do nothing to resolve our situation, we understand that God, and God alone, is the one who satisfies our need (consider Ro. 3:23; 5:6; Ep. 2:8-9). Then he alone receives all the glory and honor. By faith the widow obeyed, and the results were bountiful (2 Kg. 4:6-7). Not only did she have enough to pay all her debts, but she used the remaining oil to support her family. Today, God's bounty is still more than enough. He is able to satisfy our needs beyond our greatest expectations (Ep. 3:20; Jn. 10:10).

Scripture Study

The fear of the Lord – 2 Kg. 4:1; Ps. 34:1-9; Ac. 16:23-26

God is able – 2 Kg. 4:2; Ph. 4:19; Lu. 18:27; Mk. 8:1-9

Faith in God – 2 Kg. 4:3-5; 1 Pe. 1:7; Ps. 34:17-19; Mt. 11:28; He. 4:16

God's bounty – 2 Kg. 4:6-7; Ep. 3:20; Jn. 10:10

Conclusion

Our God can do anything. He is more than able to supply all of our need. In fact, he can satisfy us in ways we have never considered. The apostle Paul explained that God “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Ep. 3:20). Therefore, we should never limit the power of God in our lives. Instead, we should believe and trust in God's ability, and consistently bring our needs to him because he is more than able to supply our needs in abundance. Nevertheless, let us keep in mind the admonition and warning of our Lord: “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Lu. 12:15).

"The Shunammite Woman"**Introduction**

Our motives – the true desires behind our words and actions – are of utmost importance to God. The Lord knows us completely. The psalmist David declared, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether" (Ps. 139:1-4). In today's lesson, we will consider a gracious woman's deeds and God's gracious reward in return. The Lord knows our motives in everything we do, and he will reward us accordingly.

Key Verse

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts" (Ps. 139:23).

Lesson Summary

2 Kings 4:8-17 tells the story of the Shunammite woman. On one of Elisha's journeys, he came to Shunem and was greeted by a woman who entreated him to eat with her. After this, he began stopping at her house to eat whenever he came near Shunem. The Bible simply describes her as "great," likely indicating her prominence as a respected woman in Shunem. Although the Bible mentions nothing of her age, her husband is called "old," and she has no children. She and her husband began to form a lasting relationship with the prophet Elisha. Exactly why she extended such friendship to him is unknown, but clearly her hospitality demonstrated her love for God and others (Mt. 22:37-39). No doubt, the Lord prompted her to reach out to Elisha and minister to his needs (Ro. 12:13). She fulfilled the pattern of the virtuous woman: "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness" (Pr. 31:26). In the beginning, she did not know Elisha was God's prophet, but in time she realized that he was truly a "holy man of God" (2 Kg. 4:9). Then she and her husband determined to bless the man of God by preparing a private guest room exclusively for his use. They supplied the room with a bed, table, stool, and candlestick (v. 10). On one occasion when Elisha was resting in his guest room, he considered all of the kindness this woman had shown him. He desired to show his gratitude to her in some way, offering to petition the king or the captain of the host on her behalf. But she desired nothing from him; she was quite content with her life (vv. 11-13). Still Elisha desired to bless her. But even more, the Lord recognized her gracious works and desired to reward her for her kindness toward the man of God. When Elisha persisted to bless her, his servant Gehazi made a suggestion: "Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old" (v. 14). In other words, "This couple has no children; they are beyond the age of having children; but they need a son, an heir." So Elisha sent for the woman and declared to her by the word of the Lord, "About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son" (v. 16). Of course, she reacted like any of us would react. In modern lingo, she said, "I can't believe it. It's too good to be true!" Nevertheless, she conceived and had a son just as Elisha declared. Who would have imagined that her acts of kindness would turn to bless her in this way? Clearly, she never thought feeding Elisha and providing him shelter would result in a son. She did none of this for personal gain. In fact, she wanted nothing in return. As Jesus taught, "And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again . . . lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest" (Lu. 6:34-35). She gave freely, not to gain favor or to be seen of men. Therefore, the Lord rewarded her openly because she gave with pure motives (Mt. 6:1-4; Lu. 6:38).

Scripture Study

The woman's kindness – 2 Kg. 4:8-10; Mt. 22:37-39; Ro. 12:13; Pr. 31:26

Elisha's gratitude – 2 Kg. 4:11-14

God's miraculous reward – 2 Kg. 4:15-17; Lu. 6:34-35; Mt. 6:1-4; Lu. 6:38

Conclusion

This gracious woman gave with right motives, and in return, God miraculously and liberally rewarded her beyond her expectations. Jesus said, "For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Lu. 6:38). The Lord knows us through and through. He knows our heart and thoughts. When we minister to the needs of others without thinking of ourselves, we can be sure God knows everything we do, and he will reward us accordingly, if not in this life then in the life to come.

"The Dead is Raised"**Introduction**

In our previous lesson, God gave the Shunammite woman a son to reward her kindness toward the prophet Elisha. She was a gracious woman who freely gave of herself without any hint of hidden motives. Because of her hospitality, the prophet desired to show his appreciation. But even more, the Lord desired to reward her for her great faithfulness. Now she and her husband would have a son to enjoy in the twilight years of their marriage. But when the child was older, the woman's faith was put to the test. In today's lesson, we will see her faith in action; and we will see God's faithfulness once more.

Key Verse

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, thou he were dead, yet shall he live" (Jn. 11:25).

Lesson Summary

In 2 Kings 4:18-37, we read about the miracle of restored life. One morning, the Shunammite's son went to the fields to see his father, but he wasn't feeling well. The workers were reaping the fields. He complained of a bad headache to his father. So he had one of the young men to take him back to his mother. She held him until noon, and then he died in her lap. She took his body and laid him on Elisha's bed in the special guest room, closing the door behind her. She had one thing in mind – getting to Elisha as soon as possible. So she urged her husband to give her a young man and a donkey in order to go to Elisha at Mt. Carmel. When he asked her why she was making a special trip, she did not tell him about the child but assured him that everything will be fine. Her servant speedily took her to see Elisha, who saw her coming in the distance. When Gehazi, Elisha's servant, came to meet her, she again affirmed that everything was fine. Clearly, she was a woman of great faith in God. She believed the same God who miraculously gave her a son could also restore his life. Of course, no matter how much faith she had, she was still a mother robbed of her son, experiencing all of the emotional grief of her loss. When she came to Elisha, she fell at his feet and grabbed him pleading for her son's life. Elisha sent Gehazi ahead of them and asked him to place his staff against the face of the child, but the child did not revive. When they arrived, Elisha went alone into his guest room where the lifeless child was laid upon his bed. Elisha closed the door behind him and began praying to the Lord for the child's life (c.f. Ac. 9:36-42). His method of praying was uncommon but effective. He laid on the child, placing his mouth on the child's mouth, his eyes on the child's eyes, and his hands on the child's hands, stretching himself upon the child. The child's body became warm. Elisha went back into the house and paced the floor, not worrying, but likely he prayed within himself as he waited upon the Lord. He went back to the room to pray and laid himself upon the child once more; the child revived, sneezing seven times and opening his eyes. What a miraculous restoration of life! The Shunammite's son was alive and well. As this story of Elisha demonstrates, when we pray, we are calling on the Lord who has all power in heaven and in earth, even power over life and death (Mt. 28:18). Jesus declared, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (Jn. 5:25-26). By his own resurrection from the dead, Jesus proved his power and authority over death (Ro. 6:9; Re. 1:18). He laid down his life, and he had the "power to take it again" (Jn. 10:17-18). Therefore, the power of life is in Jesus (Jn. 1:4). He said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, thou he were dead, yet shall he live" (Jn. 11:25). Because the Shunammite woman believed in God's resurrection power, the life of her precious boy was restored to her.

Scripture Study

The dead is raised – 2 Kg. 4:18-37

Power over life and death – Mt. 28:18; Jn. 5:25-26; Ro. 6:9; Re. 1:18; Jn. 10:17-18; 1:4; 11:25; Jn. 3:16; 17:2

Conclusion

No doubt, the greatest power of God we can experience is the power of salvation through Jesus Christ. He gives to us eternal life. Our natural bodies will surely pass away. The Shunammite's son lived out the rest of his life, and then he followed the natural course of mankind and died again. Natural life is not our goal in Christ, for we have everlasting life by faith in him (Jn. 3:16; 17:2). Therefore, at his coming, we will be raised in immortality (1 Co. 15:50-57).

“Healing the Pottage”

Introduction

As Christians, we believe God can do anything that does not conflict with his holy nature and perfect will. After all, he is our Creator, and nothing is beyond his power and ability to perform. But do we sometimes limit God by setting artificial parameters of what we think he will and will not do for us? Faith in God means that we believe **he will** help us in our time of need. But if we place God in a box, then we may limit the blessings we will receive from the Lord. In today’s lesson, the Lord worked in an “out of the box” sort of way. 2 Kings 4:38-41 tells about a peculiar kind of healing: the healing of the pottage.

Key Verse

“But he said, Then bring meal. And he cast it into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot” (2 Kg. 4:41).

Lesson Summary

At this particular time, the land was experiencing a significant famine. Israel had already been through 3 ½ years of drought during Elijah’s ministry (1 Kg. 17:1; Ja. 5:17). No doubt, the extended drought devastated the land for a time. After several years of recovery, they now experienced a food shortage during Elisha’s ministry. [Note: The Scriptures mention a famine of seven years in 2 Kings 8:1 – a famine ordered of the Lord.] Because the kings of Israel notoriously led the nation in rebellion against God, the Lord used hardships like drought and famine to judge and humble his people (2 Chr. 6:26-31; 7:12-14). Perhaps, because of the famine, Elisha traveled to Gilgal to be with the sons of the prophets for their encouragement. Nevertheless, regardless of the reason for this visit, he came together and met with them during the famine, and this occasion gave opportunity for divine intervention. God works in the context of human need. Time after time, he shows up in situations where we are powerless, and he receives glory by demonstrating his power in our lives (2 Chr. 16:7-9). Elisha asked his servant to prepare a great vat of pottage (i.e. soup, broth, or stew) for the prophets. Lacking adequate provisions for a meal – not even enough for a pottage – someone went into the fields looking for herbs and gathered up wild gourds which turned out to be poisonous. Unknowingly, the poisonous gourds were shredded and cooked in the pottage, and it was served to the sons of the prophets. As they ate the pottage, the men began to cry out, “O thou man of God, there is death in the pot” (2 Kg. 4:40). Elisha’s servant unwittingly served the sons of the prophets a deadly meal, so they immediately stopped eating. We should notice that Elisha did not pour out the pottage and then have his servant to prepare another meal. Why? No doubt, the prophets were hungry and ready to eat; but more significantly, food was scarce because of the famine. With a food shortage, why throw out the pottage when God can heal it? Then Elisha did something strange. He asked for someone to bring him meal (milled grain) and cast it into the pot. There was no power in the meal itself, but the addition of the meal to the pottage was the physical representation of God’s miraculously healing the pottage. In an instant, it was no longer deadly although the poisonous gourds were still in the pot. They then poured out fresh pottage, and the men finished eating their meal without any harm whatsoever. God had the power to heal the deadly pottage and to turn it into nourishment. In this way, he both provided for and protected them. Today, the Lord continues to provide for us (Mt. 6:31-33; Ps. 37:25; Ph. 4:19) and to protect us (Mk. 16:18; Ps. 28:7-9; He. 13:5-6).

Scripture Study

Dearth in the land – 2 Kg. 4:38-39; 1 Kg. 17:1; Ja. 5:17; 2 Chr. 6:26-31; 7:12-14

Death in the pot – 2 Kg. 4:39-40

Delicious Pottage – 2 Kg. 4:41; Mt. 6:31-33; Ps. 37:25; Ph. 4:19; Mk. 16:18; Ps. 28:7-9; He. 13:5-6

Conclusion

The sons of the prophets had to exercise great faith in eating the “poisonous pottage.” They obviously had great confidence in Elisha’s relationship with God. Moreover, believing in God’s power and faithfulness, they ate with calm assurance. No doubt, this miracle was significant in its timing. God demonstrated to the sons of the prophets that he would continue to take care of their needs during a difficult time of famine. Truly, the Lord is faithful; he does not forsake us; and he will continue to supply our needs. So let’s firmly place our faith in a faithful God.

"Multiplied Food"**Introduction**

Elisha's ministry was representative of Christ's earthly ministry, especially in terms of his supernatural exploits. Jesus, the Word of God, did such mighty works that the people marveled at his teachings: "And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes . . . And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him" (Mk. 1:22, 27). Similarly, God used Elisha in miraculous ways that transcended human reason, so that the people would know his words were not merely the words of a man. In today's lesson, God provided an abundance of food for the people according to the Word of the Lord by the prophet Elisha.

Key Verse

"So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord" (2 Kg. 4:44).

Lesson Summary

In 2 Kings 4:42-44, we read another remarkable example of the authority and power of God's Word demonstrated through the prophet Elisha. He declared the Word of the Lord, and God fulfilled it exactly as he had spoken. Let's first consider the context of the passage. Based on the preceding verses, famine was in the land (4:38). Accordingly, the story itself seems to suggest that food was still scarce and times were difficult for many people, particularly in the region near Gilgal. Moreover, reading this passage as an extension of the former event, we can reasonably assume the one hundred men to be the sons of the prophets. Therefore, Elisha was likely with the sons of the prophets at Gilgal when a man from Baalshalisa came with provisions of bread and grain. He brought the prophet the firstfruits of his harvest (Ex. 23:19; 34:26). God had blessed him in the midst of a famine. The "firstfruits" indicate this was an offering to honor God and one that was particularly sacrificial because of the famine in the land. This man willingly gave in faith believing that God would meet his own needs (Pr. 3:9-10). No doubt, the Lord sent him to the prophet at this particular time in order to supply the needs of his people. Elisha then told his servant to give the food to the people, but the servant said, "What, should I set this before an hundred men? (2 Kg. 4:43). He was not being obstinate, but he knew these provisions were insufficient to feed this crowd of hungry men. It just wasn't enough! The servant was only being sensible. But Elisha insisted that he serve the food to the people anyway, and he added, "for thus saith the Lord, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof" (v. 43). By the Spirit of God, Elisha declared the Word of the Lord. God was going to multiply the provisions and meet the needs of his people with leftovers remaining. This story is distinctly reminiscent of the times when Jesus fed the multitudes (Mt. 14:14-21; 15:30-39). By comparison, it pales in magnitude, but in substance, the feeding of the hundred is the same as Christ's feeding of the thousands. By the Word of God, the multitudes were fed through the multiplying (increase) of the meager provisions. "So he set it [*the food*] before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, **according to the word of the Lord**" (2 Kg. 4:44). How exactly did God stretch the provisions to feed so many? We have no scientific explanation for this; it surpasses natural reason (1 Co. 2:14). This is what constitutes a miracle. Indeed, all that transpired was spiritual; it happened by the Word of God. When God speaks, he speaks with authority and power (Lu. 4:31-32). His Word is everlasting; his words will never pass away (Mt. 24:35; 1 Pe. 1:25). Moreover, his Word will not return to him void but will go forth to accomplish God's will (Is. 55:10-11). Therefore, we can be sure that God will fulfill all his Word says he will do.

Scripture Study

God provided for his people – 2 Kg. 4:42; Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Pr. 3:9-10

God multiplied their provisions – 2 Kg. 4:43; Mt. 14:14-21; 15:30-39

God fulfilled his Word – 2 Kg. 4:44; 1 Co. 2:14; Lu. 4:31-32; Is. 55:10-11; Mt. 24:35; 1 Pe. 1:25

Conclusion

The nameless man in this story believed God's Word and honored the Lord by giving his firstfruits. Is there power in believing and obeying the Word of God? The Lord used the man's faithfulness to minister to the needs of others; and by his faithfulness, the Lord then worked through his faithful prophet to provide for the needs of his people; and these men, in turn, continued to serve the Lord in Israel. We see then how God is faithful to his Word.

“Healing the Leper”**Introduction**

The story of Naaman’s healing is a story of mercy, faith, and obedience. God showed mercy to Naaman, the enemy of his people. Naaman demonstrated faith in God’s ability to cure him. Humbling himself, he obeyed the Word of the Lord and was healed. Let’s consider the specific details of this miraculous healing.

Key Verse

“And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant” (2 Kg. 5:15).

Lesson Summary

Naaman was the general of the Syrian army: a man of honor and valor. He was highly favored in the eyes of his king because he led the Syrians to great victory. Today, such men are “highly decorated” soldiers, receiving medals to honor their bravery and service to their country. Indeed, Naaman was a true success story as a soldier and statesman. No doubt, he was one of the king’s chief advisors. But despite his military ability and accomplishments, he physically suffered with a terrible disease – leprosy (2 Kg. 5:1). According to the Mosaic Law, lepers in Israel were ostracized and separated from their people because of such diseases in their flesh (Le. 13:1-46). Fortunately for Naaman, one of his servants was a maiden taken captive from Israel (2 Kg. 5:2). She told Naaman’s wife about the prophet Elisha, saying, “Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy” (v. 3). When someone came and repeated her words to Naaman, the king of Syria then sent Naaman to the king of Israel to be cured, sending many gifts – “ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment” – as payment for his healing (vv. 4-5). Naaman came to the king of Israel with a letter from the king of Syria, which read, “Now when this letter is come unto thee behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy” (v. 6). But these actions struck fear in the heart of the king of Israel. When he read the letter from the king of Syria, he rent his clothes in despair thinking the king of Syria was plotting against him. At this time, the Syrians were the enemies of Israel, even their archrivals. The two nations engaged in an extended period of conflicts and warfare (1 Kg. 20:1, 21-22; 22:1-4, 31; 2 Kg. 5:7-8; 6:8, 24; 13:3, 22). Even if the king of Israel actually wanted to help them, how could he possibly guarantee Naaman’s healing? After all, miracles are the supernatural work of God, not the work of man’s will (2 Kg. 5:7). When the prophet Elisha heard of the king’s predicament and his despairing reaction, he then called for Naaman, saying, “Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel” (v. 8). Who could have imagined that Israel’s adversaries would come to Elisha seeking help from the God of Israel? This set of circumstances presented a great opportunity for God to demonstrate his power and the authority of his Word! When he came to Elisha for healing, Naaman’s expectations were wrong. As the top commander of the Syrian army, he thought Elisha would make an elaborate display of his healing (vv. 9-11). But the prophet did not make a fuss over Naaman; he did not even come to greet him, but rather he sent a messenger with the following instructions: “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean” (v. 10). At first, he felt insulted by the prophet because he wanted to be healed in a manner worthy of his position. He was focused on the external ritual and method of healing, but nothing more was required of Naaman except his faith and obedience to God’s Word. For the moment, his pride stood in the way of his cure. But with the encouragement of his servants, Naaman’s faith prevailed through his humility and obedience; and he was miraculously cured (vv. 11-15; Ja. 4:6, 10).

Scripture Study

Naaman, the leper – 2 Kg. 5:1-6; Le. 13:1-46

Archrivals – 1 Kg. 20:1, 21-22; 22:1-4, 31; 2 Kg. 5:7-8; 6:8, 24; 13:3, 22

Healing the leper – 2 Kg. 5:9-15; Ja. 4:6, 10

Conclusion

After Naaman was healed, he concluded that the God of Israel was the only true God in the whole world (v. 15). Indeed, this is the purpose of miraculous signs and wonders: to establish the power of God and the authority of God’s Word (Mk. 16:20). Now Naaman knew the Lord was almighty God, not only because the people of God said so, but because he experienced firsthand the life-changing impact of God’s Word.

"The Axe Head Swims"**Introduction**

In today's lesson, we see another's of Elisha's miracles that takes place in the routine of life. We often make future plans, but we certainly do not know the future. If we could see tomorrow, we would change many of our plans. Fortunately, God holds the future in his hands, and we can go forward by faith trusting him with the outcome of our lives.

Key Verse

"And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he showed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim" (2 Kg. 6:6).

Lesson Summary

As the chief prophet in Israel ministering in the room of Elijah, Elisha was the leader, mentor, and spiritual father of the sons of the prophets (1 Kg. 19:16; 2 Kg. 2:15; 4:38). They called him "master" (2 Kg. 6:5). In 2 Kings 6:1-7, the sons of the prophets were living with Elisha. Their communal lifestyle was somewhat comparable to the various monastic orders in Catholicism. Moreover, these prophets were consecrated servants of the Lord. When their dwelling became too small to house them adequately, the sons of the prophets desired to build a larger house. Consenting to their request, Elisha accompanied the sons of the prophets to Jordan in order to cut down trees along the riverbank for building a new structure. So they began working and felling trees. But as one of the prophets was cutting down a beam, the iron axe head flew off the handle and sank in the river (v. 5). In our technological age, particularly in an economically prosperous society, an axe head may not seem like a huge loss. If this happened to us today, we would likely make a quick trip to the nearest hardware store and replace the axe. Then we would go back to work and get the job done. No problem! But during Elisha's time, an axe head was a valuable tool indeed, and was difficult to replace. Moreover, the man had borrowed it from a friend, and therefore, he was responsible for the loss. Even if he knew where he could acquire one, he could not readily afford to replace it. For these reasons, he panicked and cried, saying, "Alas, master! for it was borrowed" (v. 5). Obviously, the son of the prophet was not prepared for this misfortune. Losing the axe head was one of those uncontrollable situations that leave us shocked and frustrated. We can almost hear him saying, "I can't believe it! Everything was going great, and now this!" What was he going to do? These kinds of unexpected problems immediately put our faith to the test; they teach us to be patient and calm, and to wait upon the Lord (Ja. 1:2-3; 1 Pe. 1:7; Is. 40:31). No doubt, God is able to supply our needs; but do we truly believe that he will intervene and meet them? Once more, Elisha demonstrated the Lord is always in control. God knew the exact moment when the axe head fell into the water. In fact, he saw it even before it happened. He sees all of the future events of our lives (Is. 46:10; Re. 22:13; Mk. 14:27-31, 50, 72). Certainly, the Lord could have prevented the prophet from losing the axe head, but instead, this mishap served a higher purpose. The Lord has the final say in every situation we face, no matter how big or urgent it may seem to us. Therefore, by faith we always need to take our cares and problems to the Lord, and then trust him with the outcome of our lives (1 Pe. 5:7; Mt. 11:28; Ps. 37:39; Pr. 3:5-6). When the man cried out to Elisha for help, the Lord already had the solution. After he showed Elisha where the axe head sank, Elisha did something strange: he cut down a branch and threw it into the water. Why did he do this? We really don't know, except that it had to do with Elisha's obedience to God's instructions. No doubt, this action placed visible emphasis on the miraculous work of God. A branch is naturally buoyant and floats in the water, but iron is dense and automatically sinks. Thus, the iron axe head miraculously swam, but only after the stick was cast into the water, and only as a direct result of God's supernatural intervention (2 Kg. 6:6-7).

Scripture Study

The axe head sinks – 2 Kg. 6:1-5

Faith in God – Ja. 1:2-3; 1 Pe. 1:7; Is. 40:31; 1 Pe. 5:7; Mt. 11:28; Ps. 37:39; Pr. 3:5-6

The axe head swims – 2 Kg. 6:6-7

Conclusion

What kind of faith in God is required for iron to swim? The axe head first sank to the bottom, but then by the power of God, it floated back to the top and swam. All the man had to do was reach into the water and pick it up. When he picked up the axe head, he literally took hold of the miracle of God. By faith in God, let's take hold of his miracle-working power (Mk. 5:35-36).

“Overcoming the Enemy”**Introduction**

In Psalm 118:5-6, the writer exclaimed, “I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?” (See also He. 13:5-6). As children of God, we should not walk in fear but in faith and confidence in the keeping power of God. The Lord is our strength and shield (Ps. 28:7). In today’s lesson, we will see God’s powerful protection in action.

Key Verse

“And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2 Kg. 6:17).

Lesson Summary

In 2 Kings 6:8-20, we read another example of God’s miraculous power and protection. Being their political enemies, the Syrians fought and plotted against Israel at this time. The Syrian king strategically placed his army for battle, but his plans were repeatedly foiled by none other than the prophet Elisha. Each time the Syrian king devised his wicked plans, Elisha exposed the threat to the king of Israel, and thus, he escaped the plots against him (vv. 8-10; Ps. 31:4; 59:1-3; 124:1-8; 1 Co. 10:13). The king of Israel was always one step ahead of the Syrians. The king of Syria could not understand how this was happening. Surely, one of his men must be a conspirator working to undermine him. He asked his servants, “Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel” (2 Kg. 6:11)? Someone must be leaking his secret plans to their enemies. Although none of his men were traitorous, one of his servants knew the source of the leaks. Ironically, it was the king of Syria himself! The servant explained, “. . . the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber” (v. 12). Indeed, “For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether” (Ps. 139:4). Every time the Syrian king planned his military strategy with his leaders, he ignored the fact that God was listening. The Lord even heard the meditations of his heart (v. 2; He. 4:12-13). So the Lord knew all of their secret plans, start to finish. God was then revealing the king’s military positions to the prophet Elisha, who, in turn, warned the king of Israel to escape the enemy’s camp (Da. 2:47). In effect, it was like the king of Israel was listening in on the enemy’s conversations – like their private meetings were “bugged.” Thus, through the Word of the Lord, the king of Israel received insight and understanding regarding the enemy’s tactics (Ps. 119:169-70). Since Elisha repeatedly knew his strategy, the king of Syria decided to apprehend the prophet, thinking this would give him the advantage over the king of Israel. But he clearly underestimated the power of God. During the night, the king sent an army to surround the city of Dothan in order to take Elisha by force. When Elisha’s servant awoke and saw the Syrian host around the city, he panicked. But Elisha was confident in God’s powerful protection because he knew the Lord was with them to keep and defend them (Ps. 27:1-6). After the spiritual eyes of his servant were opened, he saw the surrounding mountain filled with horses and chariots of fire. “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid . . . Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear” (vv. 1, 3). When we are faced with the opposition of the enemy, we should likewise look at the situation with spiritual eyes of understanding. We always need to gain God’s perspective and see God’s presence in the situation. Elisha then prayed, his enemies were struck with blindness, and he led his helpless captives from Dothan to the king of Israel in Samaria (2 Kg. 6:13-20). What a miraculous deliverance! In this way, the Lord saved Elisha (and the king of Israel) from the hand of the Syrian king.

Scripture Study

The enemy’s strategy revealed – 2 Kg. 6:8-12; Ps. 31:4; 59:1-3; 119:169-70; 124:1-8; 139:1-4; 1 Co. 10:13; He. 4:12-13; Da. 2:47

The Lord’s powerful protection – 2 Kg. 6:13-20; Ps. 27:1-6

Conclusion

Elisha was one prophet against an army. Clearly, the odds were against him. To the world, he was far outnumbered and already defeated. But the Lord was on his side because Elisha was on the Lord’s side (Ps. 124:1-2; Ex. 32:26). Praise the Lord! We are on God’s victorious side.

“Arrow of God’s Deliverance”**Introduction**

In today’s lesson, we fast-forward to the conclusion of Elisha’s life. He was a remarkable prophet whose miraculous exploits not only build up our faith in God’s ability but also challenge us to exercise faith in God’s Word. Do we have the same quality of faith as Elisha? He was sick, dying, and physically weak, yet the Word of the Lord was still working powerfully through him. Let’s consider the final story of Elisha.

Key Verse

“And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed” (2 Kg. 13:18).

Lesson Summary

When Elisha was on his deathbed, Joash was distraught and wept over him, saying, “O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof” (2 Kg. 13:14). Losing Elisha was like losing a strategic part of Israel’s military and defense (3:15-19; 6:8-10). But before Elisha’s death, the Lord had a final word of deliverance for Joash (13:15-17). According to Elisha’s instructions, Joash took a bow and arrows and placed his hands on the bow. The prophet then placed his hands upon the hands of the king, establishing the blessing and favor of the Lord. Next, Elisha told Joash to open the window facing the east and shoot, saying, “The arrow of the Lord’s deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them” (v. 17). After years of oppression by the Syrians, Joash could not have hoped for a better promise (v. 3). The Word of the Lord should have bolstered his faith and moved Joash to rejoice greatly in his future victory. God then put Joash’s faith to the test. The old prophet told the king to “smite upon the ground” with the arrows (v. 18). The king did so three times and quit; but Elisha was outraged and rebuked the king for not smiting the ground five or six times. Therefore, their victory over the Syrians would not be complete; they would only defeat them three times (vv. 19, 22, 24-25). God promised a great deliverance for his people, but it was conditional. The extent of their victory was contingent upon Joash’s faith and obedience to God’s Word. Unfortunately, Joash failed to demonstrate faith in God’s complete deliverance. The Lord saw the king’s heart (He. 4:12-13). He clearly lacked the faith to follow through with his actions and to receive all God desired to give him. Therefore, Joash received according to his faith (Mt. 9:29). He was compliant; he did exactly what the prophet said. Yet he was not altogether sincerely obedient; for God was looking for something more than going through the motions of obedience. His lack of passion for the Word of the Lord, only smiting the ground three times, demonstrated his lack of faith. So the Word of the Lord that should have brought ultimate victory provided only a partial deliverance for God’s people – not because the Word was insufficient in some way, but rather the king’s faith was deficient. For this very reason, when Jesus (i.e. the Word of God made flesh) visited his hometown of Nazareth, he did few mighty works because of their lack of faith. Jesus was more than able to meet their needs, but they did not receive from God because of their unbelief (Mt. 13:54-58). As Christians and members of Zion Assembly, in what sense do we smite the ground today? How do we exercise faith in God’s deliverance? Figuratively speaking, prayer is one of the primary ways we smite the ground. Through the spiritual discipline of prayer, we demonstrate our faith in God’s ability to deliver us. God has made many promises to us, and by prayer we establish our belief and confidence in his Word. Prayer is our means of attaining the promises of God by faith (Mt. 21:21-22). But we must not pray halfheartedly after the manner of Joash who smote the ground only three times and quit. Rather, we must persist in prayer until we get a breakthrough (Lu. 18:1-8). The apostle Paul admonished us to “Pray without ceasing” (1 Th. 5:17). Therefore, if we expect to receive God’s deliverance in the church today, we should have the faith to persevere in prayer.

Scripture Study

God’s Word to Joash – 2 Kg. 13:14-17

His faith tested – 2 Kg. 13:18-19, 22, 24-25; He. 4:12-13; Mt. 13:54-58

Praying for victory – Mt. 21:21-22; Lu. 18:1-8; 1 Th. 5:17

Conclusion

The apostle Paul declared, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)” (2 Co. 10:3-4). Certainly, God has given us the arrow of prayer for our deliverance.