

The Siege of Samaria

by Denis Lyle

The sermon explores the themes of sin, judgment, and God's mercy as exemplified in the siege of Samaria, highlighting the importance of faith amidst despair.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 28:53, Isaiah 10:5, Romans 4:21, Ephesians 3:20, Philippians 4:19, 1 John 5:21

Topics: "God's Providence", "Faith And Doubt"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches on the Siege of Samaria, highlighting the misery that sin brings, including idolatry in the land and the hypocrisy of the leader, King Jehoram. Despite the dire circumstances, Elisha proclaims God's mercy, promising an amazing, abundant, and available supply of food within 24 hours, showcasing the timing, terms, and tone of God's provision. However, there is mockery from a royal counsellor who doubts divine intervention, leading to divine retribution as God's Word is fulfilled. The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith, the consequences of unbelief, and the reminder that God is able to deliver in the darkest of circumstances.

Transcript

Reading: 2 Kings 6:24... 7:2 16, THE SIEGE OF SAMARIA History is punctuated with the remarkable stories of the heroism of besieged communities, who performed acts of incredible bravery against tremendous odds. Indeed so inspiring are these stories that in the 20th century films have been made of some of the most famous... Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans defending the pass of Thermopylae against the Persians: General Gorton's resistance to the death against the invading Muslim Dervishes at Khartoum in the Sudan: Davy Crockett with his 130 Texans at the siege of the Alamo holding out against the 4,000 Mexican troops of Santa Anna...

These are just a few examples of these heroic stands. But as far as I know, no one has ever filmed the even more spectacular deliverance from almost certain death, which unfolded in the incident before us. I have never lived through a siege, but it takes little imagination for us to know that it must be a very frightening experience. The sense of confinement must be very disturbing, the feeling that there is no escape because the enemy surrounds the defended area and flight is impossible.

The defending walls must seem very much lower and very much thinner than they appeared to be during less dangerous times: at any point the enemy could breach or scale those flimsy battlements. All boasting and laughter about the bravery of the defenders, the superiority of their weapons, and the great volume of stored food, must quickly give way to realism and an honest appraisal that the picture is not as bright as it

once appeared to be. Death itself, which once looked such a remote possibility, is probably never from far from the anxious thoughts of those confined within the besieged fortress.

Well, here Samaria is besieged. The gracious treatment that the Syrians had received at the hands of Elisha (6:22) had the effect of keeping them outside the borders of Israel... but not for ever. Now that "a great famine", (6:25 8:1) strikes Samaria, Benhadad decides to launch a full - scale offensive. He chose his hour and attacked when Israel was in sore tribulation. My, is this not one of Satan's favourite methods with us Have you discovered that he strikes when you're at your lowest ebb When your nerves are already stretched to the limit: when you are lying ill: when you're passing through the hour of sorrow or bereavement, is it not then that you have heard the whispers of the Devil, causing you to doubt the goodness of the Lord My, that's what it was like here.

The enemy kicked them when they were down. Can you picture this scene Samaria besieged... The result Destitution: degradation: starvation even cannibalism. But even in the most tragic circumstances God has His man, with His message, for the moment, and Elisha proclaims that within 24 hours, there would be an abundance of food. Incredible, you say, indeed that was the response his message received, but within 24 hours the Syrians had fled and vast amounts of food were left to relieve the starving city.

Now as we think of The Siege of Samaria I want you to notice: (1) THE MISERY THAT SIN BRINGS What a scene of misery and gloom is brought before us here. You see the design of the Syrians was not to Storm the City, but to Starve the City. So they threw a military cordon around it so that none could either go out or come out. My, it was a time of Acute Hunger: It must have been a long time since an ass's head featured on Israeli menus, (Arthur) and how would you fancy the refuse of the bottom of a bird cage for Sunday lunch Indeed so ravenous did these people become, that gradually they became cannibals, eating their own children (6:28-29 Deut 28:53) It was a time of Acknowledged Helplessness: The King had no resources with which to meet the situation. (6:27) Sin had brought Misery!

How Well, for one thing there was: (a) THE IDOLATRY IN THE LAND: The Book of Proverbs says, "The curse causeless shall not come". (26:2) When God afflicts a people it's because He has a controversy with them. My, God was dealing in judgment with Samaria. (Is 10:5) Why Because they had turned away from Jehovah and were worshipping false gods. (3:3 1 Kings 12:28) And God according to His Word had visited them with severe judgment! The result was that most repulsive kinds of food were sold at exorbitant prices, and in their desperation they were even driven to devour human flesh.

Do you recall God's Word to Israel " It shall come to pass if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God... the Lord shall bring a nation against thee... and he shall besiege thee... and thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness." (Deut 28:49 52-53 Lev 26:27-29) This was even more completely fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70.

But here the sinfulness of the nation had brought bareness to the land. (a) What about idolatry in the Life In your life In mine John says, "Little children keep yourselves from idols". (1 Jn 5:21) What is an idol Anything we put before the Lord. Are Christians guilty of idolatry Well, what is it you put before the Lord Pleasure: Possessions: Position Is it the Family, the Firm, the Football One thing is absolutely sure. Here is the reason for Spiritual Famine. Sin! Sin in the lives of God's people.

My... do we recognise that Perhaps we've been trying to shift the blame and say its present day conditions: its the hardness of men's hearts: its the sign of the times: its the moral chaos: its materialism.

No doubt all these have played their part, but let's be honest the reason for the Spiritual Famine and Drought in our lives and in our land is your sin and mine! (a) And then was: (b) THE HYPOCRISY OF THE LEADER: Sure, King Jehoram wore the outward symbol of repentance, "he had sackcloth within upon his flesh." (6:30) but at the very same time he was cherishing a secret resentment against Elisha.

It's likely that the King never forgave Elisha for allowing the Syrians to escape, when they were trapped. Moreover, there was probably a general feeling that Elisha could have delivered the city by some miracle. We may assume that the words of (6:33) were spoken by King Jehoram, "Behold this evil... this siege with all its horrors... is from Jehovah... from Jehovah, whose prophet thou art. Why should I wait for Jehovah... temporize with Him... keep, at it were, on terms with Him by suffering thee to live... any longer" (7:17) My, the King rent his garment, but he never rent his heart, indeed he blamed Elisha for the dilemma of the city, when he himself was the real cause of the people's misery!

It's not the first time nor will it be the last, that the servant of God is made the scapegoat. Have you never heard the comments, "It's the pastors preaching, that's why there's no blessing" "It's the attitude of the elders that's why there is no growth in the church". I've often discovered that people who say such things are themselves guilty of the most glaring hypocrisy! Indeed My, are we not all a bit like Jehoram Is it not so easy to have the outward appearance, and at the same time have the inward resentment To have a religion which is a form but not a force.

Are you like Jehoram Are you guilty of the sin of hypocrisy Are you outwardly all right, but inwardly all wrong (1) (2) THE MERCY THAT GOD SHOWS Picture this scene! The King and his executioner are on their way to the home of Elisha. I mean how would you feel if you knew that you were going to be beheaded Well, look at Elisha's composure. We read, "But Elisha sat in his house". (6:33) Does that seem to you like a man who is disturbed The psalmist says, "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them". (Ps 119:165) Elisha knew that peace, indeed to the wrathful King he announces the end of famine conditions.

"Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the Lord,... " (7:1) It was as though Elisha said, "I have listened to your insulting words which you have spoken of my Master, now hear what He has to say to you, He is about to have mercy on your kingdom, He is about to provide for your every need." How like our God who does not treat us as our sins deserve, and who can totally reverse our bad fortune. Did you catch what Elisha said God was going to bring about such abundance of supply within the space of twenty four hours that prices would drop through the floor for those staple foods which up to now had been unobtainable.

Do you know what that is (2) Have a look at this promise of provision and notice: (a) THE TIMING OF IT: "Then Elisha said... "(7:1) Then... when When things were at their lowest ebb, when the outlook appeared to be utterly hopeless, when the strength of the city was almost gone, when the people could hold out no longer, then God stepped in! Has this been your experience Have you not discovered that God always steps in at the right moment Do you remember Israel when they were delivered from Egypt They were in a cul-de-sac, the sea was before them, the enemy was behind them, the mountains were around them, there was no way out!

My, is that where you are this ... Well, listen to the Word of the Lord, "Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord". (Exod 14:13) Do you remember Elijah We read "And it came to pass after a while that the brook dried up". (1 Kings 17:7) Is that where you are this... Could it be that you're facing the drying brook of popularity: diminishing business: decreasing friendships Well, listen to the Word of the Lord,

"Arise get thee to Zarephath... I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee".

My, God's supply is perfectly adequate and perfectly timed. (a) (b) THE TERMS OF IT: Here is the promise of AN AMAZING SUPPLY: The city was in the grip of famine, but Elisha announced that the crisis would be changed overnight. Here is the promise of AN ABUNDANT SUPPLY: For Elisha predicted that they would be able to buy six times as much food for one - fifth the cost. Here is the promise of AN AVAILABLE SUPPLY: For this food was to be sold in the gate of the city... the normal place for transacting daily business.

Let's face it the thing that causes us so much worry is how we're going to make ends meet. Yet the Lord Jesus said, " Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what ye shall put on... "(Matt 6:25) In other words Christ says, " Stop worrying". Why Because He will meet our need. "My God shall supply all ..". (Phil 4:19) Ill: "Said the robin to the sparrow". (a) (b) (c) THE TONE OF IT: There is the tone of AUTHORITY: "Thus saith the Lord...

"(7:1) Elisha had the mind of the Lord. There is the tone of FAITH: Elisha did not add anything to this promise. He simply gave the Word of the Lord and trusted God for the results. Now will you put yourself in Elisha's shoes for a moment My, this promise of God's provision made a severe demand on the prophet's faith. God simply told Elisha what He was going to do, but not how He was going to do it. I can well believe at that very moment Satan was whispering in his ear. "Elisha, exercise prudence, be wise.

Wait a little longer lest you make a fool of yourself. Elisha, it would be cruel to raise false hopes among these starving people". Can't you believe it But here was a man who simply took God at His Word "being fully persuaded that, what He had promised He was able also to perform". (Rom 4:21) " Faith mighty faith, the promise see's And trusts in God alone, Laughs at impossibilities And cries it shall be done." My, are you like Elisha Are you strong in faith (Rom 4:20) When you read the promises of God do you believe them Do you act upon them (1) (2) (3) THE MOCKERY THAT MAN VOICES You see Elisha's authoritative prediction was not allowed to go unchallenged.

Look at (7:2) This royal counsellor, (was he the minister of agriculture) refused to believe that God could reverse the city's serious plight. Here was a man who: (a) SAW NO PLACE FOR DIVINE INTERVENTION: Look at: (1) The WAY HE REASONS: Here was a man who argued from what he could see and as no possible relief was visible he scorned it's certainty. Here was a man who lived his life on the basis of human calculation and saw no place for Divine Intervention. Now tell me how are you living Are you living on the basis of simple calculation Do we calculate our needs, our resources and then refuse to believe that God can augment our meagre supplies My, what was the difference between the prophet and the politician Just this, Elisha lived with a plus factor in mind... the plus of God's promise (3:16-17) of God's power (6:16-17) of God's provision. (4:42) (1) Look at: (2) THE WORDS HE USES: For his denial is filled with religious clichés: "Behold if the Lord...

" (7:2) AT "Look, even if the Lord should put open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen" Here was a man who knew the terms of religion without the truth of it! Are you guilty of using Christian clichés without regard to their proper meaning My, do we have the vocabulary of the Christian life without the victory of the Christian life (a) (b) HAD NO ESCAPE FROM DIVINE RETRIBUTION: For the retribution that Elisha Forecast in (7:2) was Fulfilled in (7:17) " And the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said".

Thus God's Word in relation to Mercy (7:1,16) and in relation to Judgment (7:2,17) was fulfilled, exactly fulfilled, literally fulfilled, fulfilled to the very letter. (b) I wonder will this be you Because you've treated the Word of God with contempt: unbelief: indifference Will you see God's deliverance with your eyes, but not taste of it Will you see others saved and yet be lost yourself Will you recognise Heaven and yet end up in Hell My, you need not for as God was able to deliver Israel, Christ is able to deliver you.

Sinner... Don't Deny His Ability! Christian... Don't Doubt His Ability! My, however dark: discouraging: disappointing your circumstances may be God is able! The Siege of Samaria proves that! Will you go out this... and proof that "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph 3:20).

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