

~Other Speakers G-L: Denis Lyle:

Reading: 2 Kings 3:1-27

RIVERS OF BLESSING

In 1949 on the island of Lewis in the Hebrides, on the northwest coast of Scotland... a small band of believers were so burdened for an awakening on their island that they met for prayer two or three nights a week in an old barn outside their village. Night after night they pleaded with God for a revival. Their churches were cold and apathetic. Few were being saved. Their burden was becoming almost unbearable. Often they prayed into the early hours of the morning.

This went on for days: weeks: months. One night one of the young men stood up and said. "Men this is rubbish. Could it be that we, the very ones most concerned for a spiritual awakening are the very ones standing in its way The Psalmist said: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord He that hath clean hands and a pure heart". (Ps 23:3-4) With that word God suddenly revealed Himself in consuming holiness. They were literally smitten to the floor of the barn, cut to heart with conviction. They saw their sinful ways as never before and poured out their confession.

After composing themselves, they made their way, in the early morning to their homes. To their amazement they found the village people gathered at the police station. On inquiring, they discovered that at the hour the convicting Holy Spirit fell on them in the barn, the same Spirit of conviction had fallen on virtually everyone in town, awakening them from sleep and deeply convicting each one of their lostness. They dressed, gathered at the police station, not the church, trying to find out to be saved! Before dawn broke that day, most of the town was converted. It sounds incredulous does it not But then thats because we have never seen a sweeping spiritual awakening!

Illus.: A few years ago in Switzerland I heard Mary Morrison one of the converts of the Lewis Revival testify and there was no doubt in my mind that the touch of God was still on her life!

" Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord He that hath clean hands and a pure heart". (Ps 24:3-4) Why are the Rivers of Blessing slow to arrive Because the ditches have never be dug! Can you not imagine Elisha striding up and down along the valley crying, "Deeper, my men, dig deeper: for there is a great host to be watered". My... in every life there are ditches to be dug if God would pour out His blessing! Do we not need to get work with the spade Do we not need to get rid of a vast amount of earth Do we not need to engage in solemn, painful, internal soul-work, to make room for the Rivers of Blessing

What was the background to this story that brought about these Rivers of Blessing Well, for about 150 years the Moabites, a hostile nation to the east of the Dead Sea, had paid annual tribute to Israel of 100,000 lambs and an 100,000 rams. When Ahab died, their current King, Mesha, saw this as a window of opportunity to assert his independence and stop paying this sizable annual sum of "protection money", to those

" gangsters", north west of his kingdom. Joram was decidedly put out so he enlisted the help of the King of Judah and the King of Edom and (2 Kings 3) is the story of the coalition of three strange bedfellows and their joint crusade against the King of Moab! Now there are three statements in this chapter that seem to summarise this remarkable story. The first is found in

(3:9) and I'm calling this:

(1) THE DILEMMA THAT THEY FACED

Look at (3:9) "And there was no water for the host". Here we have an army facing disaster. The campaign was about to be brought to an untimely end. They had traveled 7 days into the wilderness and in the heart of the desert water failed them! Did you notice the reaction of the King of Israel (3:10) He blamed God!

Have you ever done that Have you ever set out on a path without direction from the Lord and you've ended up in a crisis and then you've turned round and blamed the Lord My,

This was (1) "There was no water". (3:9) Now what led to this dilemma/crisis Well, for one thing this crisis was brought about by:

(a) PERSONAL CONVENIENCE:

King Joram of Israel, the northern kingdom was an improvement on his parents but he was a stranger to Jehovah! (3:3) If it seemed expedient to renounce the worship of Baal and Asherah, with their lewd sensualism and dark magic powers, it appeared equally advisable to retain the idolatry of Jeroboam! Indeed when " he put away the image of Baal that his father had made", this was probably a political move to impress Jehoshaphat and secure his help. My, personal convenience: personal gain was his main concern. Is this not why he decided to go to war against Moab There was a lot of mutton and a great number of wooly rugs for the fireplace simply to write off as a "bad payer."

Joram's primary concern was mammon, not the glory of God. His priority was the maintenance of material wealth and not the enhancement of God's glory. He was putting first the kingdom of man and its prosperity rather than the kingdom of God and its righteousness!

What about you Does a rise in mortgage interest payments, a crash on the stock market, a scratch on your car, the burglary of your video recorder arouse more passion in you than hearing Christ's name used as a swear

word: or the possibility that this church has seen no conversions for three months: or that your children are bored with church altogether and don't want to come anymore Which arouses your passion more

Illus.: John Blanchard once put the issue like this: "It is perhaps the greatest sin of the greatest numbers of Christians, that in so many details of life they put God second". My, is this why you're facing the problem of spiritual drought (a) (Matt 6:33 Haggai 1:4)

(b) PUBLIC ALLIANCE:

Joram concluded that "unity is strength". He was an ecumenist. He believed that people should get together. And so he embroiled the southern kingdom of Judah, in the person of its leader Jehoshaphat, in his fight. In addition, the king of a non-Israelite nation bordering upon Israel, Edom, was also roped. Now the best of the bunch was Jehoshaphat, but even he rallied to the wrong slogan. "We are defenders of the free world", said Joram (or something like it) and Jehoshaphat made an uneasy military alliance for purely political reasons: spiritual considerations never even entered into it! My ... are you facing a crisis today because of an alliance that you've made

How often God's people are asked to enlist in the cause of some man whose sole purpose is self-aggrandisement and whose sole method is self-promotion! Sure, he may be fighting against the enemies of the church, but behind that man's drive to defeat and destroy the enemy is a desire for self-promotion! My, do we not to be careful in every sphere of life

In the FAMILY sphere!

In the BUSINESS sphere! (2 Chron 20:35)

In the SOCIAL sphere! (Ps 119:63)

In the MATRIMONIAL sphere! (2 Cor 6:14)

In the RELIGIOUS sphere!(Eph 5:11)

Lest we find ourselves in some desolate wilderness where we learn the folly of engaging in enterprises which aren't in the will of the Lord (1)

The second statement that I want you to notice is found in (3:16) and I've called this:

(2) THE DIRECTION THAT THEY FOLLOWED

" And he said... ditches". What is a ditch It's a great, ugly opening in the ground. It's just a void an empty space, a place to hold water. Evidently this command was obeyed and the next morning "the country was filled with water". (3:20) You see this direction was given:

(a) BY THE RIGHT MESSENGER:

What! Was Elisha there Indeed he was! Why and how we are not told. But God's man was there and upon Jehoshaphat's demand for a prophet one of his servants replied "Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah". (3:11) Wouldn't you like to have something of his reputation He is not identified as the miracle-worker but as the servant of Elijah. He is remembered for his LOWLY SERVICE. What way will folk remember you My, He is remembered for his LOYAL SERVICE! For Jehoshaphat said, "The Word of the Lord is with him."(3:12) And then he will be remembered for his LION-HEARTED SERVICE! The Scriptures say: "The righteous are bold as a lion". (Prov 28:1)

Do you see Elisha's courage here He comes over as a man who is in charge. He taunts Joram, rubbing his nose in the emptiness of his phony religion and his phony prophets! "Shouldn't you send for some of your state priests Won't Daddy's court jesters do Couldn't you hire some of Mummy's clairvoyants with their hotline to hell" Here is a man who is fiercely independent of flattery or compromise. He has been in the presence of God so he is not impressed by the persona of men!

Are you

Do you grovel before the rich and famous

Do you name drop

Do you judge folk by the homes they have: clothes they wear: position they hold or do you judge them according to the measure of their moral and spiritual worth My, living in the fear of God will deliver us from the fear of men (Prov 29:25) and this directive was given (a)

(b) AT THE RIGHT MOMENT:

Was Elisha's spirit agitated by the presence of ungodly Jehoram (3:14) Did he need soothing music to compose his spirit, so that he might enter into the presence chamber of a higher King and hear "His still small voice" Well, as the minstrel played the hand of the Lord came upon him". (3:15) And into that scene where there was tumult there came tranquillity: where there was panic there came peace! Do you know what it is to get perfectly quiet before God "To be still and know that He is God". (Ps 46:10) My, we shall never hear the still voice of God speaking to us until every human voice is silent and every human tongue is quiet in the presence of the Lord! (Hab 2:20) (a) (b)

(c) TO THE RIGHT MEN:

To these men who were facing a crisis Elisha said,

" Make this valley full of ditches". (3:16) This was a trial of faith and obedience and entailed a considerable amount of hard work. Before WATER there had to be WORK!

Illus.: M.Henry says: "They that expect God's blessings must make room for them".

Are you willing to make room for the Rivers of Blessing Are you prepared to get to work with the spade

Is it LUST Heave it out

Is it PRIDE Cast it forth

Is it TEMPER Crucify it

Is it SLOTH Root it up

Is it LIES

Is it GOSSIP

Is it DRINK

Is it SELFISHNESS Out with it all!

My, dig deep for the deeper the ditches the greater the blessing! The final statement that I want you to note is found in (3:20) and that's:

(3) THE DELIVERANCE THAT THEY FOUND

" And the country was filled with water". (3:20) And God even turned the means of refreshment into an instrument of victory. For notice the same provision that delivered them from INWARD DESTITUTION delivered them from OUTWARD DANGER! Now this deliverance of these three kings out of this crisis:

(a) COMMENCED WITH A DIVINE SUPPLY:

" And the country... water". (3:20) If you look at the context you'll notice how MYSTERIOUS THIS SUPPLY WAS: Elisha had said (3:17) Who of us can trace the Spirit's working in the revival of His church In the matter of God's Blessing we can issue no

" weather forecasts". (Is 45:15 Jn 3:8) Ills: Alexander Whyte who himself had witnessed revival in the North of Scotland wrote: "There is a Divine Mystery about revivals. God's sovereignty is in them". Notice how

MIRACULOUS THIS SUPPLY WAS: I mean this supply of water could not be explained on natural grounds. God PROMISED the Supply: God PLANNED the Supply: God PROVIDED the Supply.

All that was required of the soldiers was that they dig ditches to make room for the divine supply. Do you know something No amount of effort or organization on our part in and of itself is going to bring about God's Blessing! My, after we have done our best, after we have dug every ditch of repentance, prayer, faith, sacrifice we must turn away from our ditches and look to God alone for His blessing upon us! Ills: God has taught me that lesson well in Ballyclare! I mean there were lots of unsaved people under the Gospel this week. On one night alone one family alone had brought 11 unsaved people under the sound of the Gospel! And I felt sure someone was going to be saved that night. But NO! You see "Salvation is of the Lord". And God's supply is MYSTERIOUS and MIRACULOUS

But note God's SUPPLY IS MEASURELESS! "The country was FILLED with water". Not a man or animal lacked. There was sufficient for all! Isn't it interesting to observe that this MEASURELESS SUPPLY was given at the time the meat (or meal) offering was being offered. (3:20) The meal offering was symbolical of dedication to God... first the dedication of the Lord Jesus (Lev 1:1 Ps 40:7 ROM 12:1) and then of the believer in Christ! My, do you see that it is only as your all is on the altar that God in turn gives you His all.

Heaven's full supply comes in response to earth's full sacrifice. We RECEIVE only as we RESIGN: we GAIN only as we GIVE! So DELIVERANCE from this crisis (a)

(b) CONCLUDED WITH A HUMAN VICTORY:

For (3:21-25) record the complete victory of the three Kings over the Moabites! My, the Divine Supply is given to us simply as a means to an end, and that end is the defeat of our enemies. God FILLS us that we might FIGHT for Him! He SUPPLIES in order that we may successfully overcome. (Zech 4:6) Do you what is so tragic about the church today Its this so many of us are trying to fight the enemies of the church... cultism: communism: Romanism: materialism without Heaven's Supply!

RIVERS OF BLESSING! Do you not want to experience them Do you want to know " times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19)

Do you want victory over the enemy There's one answer. THE DIVINE SUPPLY! RIVERS OF BLESSING! And while God is Sovereign in giving this Blessing, you and I are responsible to make room for this Blessing! Do we need to get to work with the spade Is there some internal soul-work that you must do to make room for the RIVERS OF BLESSING

Do you need to dig ditches Remember the DEEPER the DITCH, the GREATER THE BLESSING!