

The Confirmation

2 Kings 6:23 – 7:20

Awhile after Israel showed mercy by feeding and then releasing the Syrian army to return home, King Ben-Hadad **again** decides to go to war with Israel. Instead of laying small ambushes against the Jews, this time he launches a full-scale assault upon the capital city of Samaria. **Not everyone responds to mercy with peace. Some see mercy as weakness and are stirred to stronger attacks.**

Ben-Hadad surrounds the capital, thus choking her of all necessary supplies. No food, no trade goods, no wine, no livestock, no people enter or depart Samaria.

The city soon consumes all the storehouses inside its walls and families soon fell into starvation. Any food at all is so scarce that the prices for even the most disdainful kinds of food soar to unreachable prices. For instance a donkey's head, which is usually not eaten in proper families costs \$850. If you want a salad, you pay \$50. Many run out of money and thus have nothing to eat.

One day King Joram walks on the top of the city wall when a woman down in the street cries out to him, *"King Joram, help! I need your help Majesty!"*

King Joram is an unfeeling man and he calls down, *"If the LORD won't help you, what can I do? There is no grain in the threshing floor. There is no wine in the vats. Do I look like I can speak food into existence out of thin air?"*

But then he stops as he sees her weep in despair. *"Tell me your story? What do you want me to do?"*

"It is a terrible, terrible tale." She sheepishly continues, *"One day I was in deep despair. I had no food for myself or my children. A woman came to me with a proposition that at first was unthinkable . . . but then it seemed perhaps the only way to survive."* The woman stops for a moment as she casts her eyes to the ground ashamed to look up at the king.

"Well, go on. What did she say?"

"She said, 'We both are starving. We will not live very much longer. I have an idea how we both can survive. If you kill your little baby boy today, we will both have food to live. Then, tomorrow, I will kill my baby tomorrow and we can eat then too.' Well, I did it. We both ate that first day. Then the next day I came to her and said, 'It is your turn now. Cook your son for supper.'" But she refused. When I rushed into her house, her boy was gone. She had hidden him away. Help

me with this matter! It is not fair that I sacrificed my son and she is keeping hers. She promised!

The king stands speechless and aghast at the story the woman tells him. His stomach turns as he thinks, *“She has no shame over eating her own child! She expects me to take her side in eating another boy.”*

In fury he rips his royal robe off his chest with a shout of disgust! As he tears off his robe everyone turns to look up at him. They see that under his soft robe is a rough burlap shirt . . . **A burlap shirt is an outward sign of inward repentance.**

Yet while his outer garments communicate repentance, his heart is still hardened in sin. King Joram does not blame his own idolatry. Joram does not blame his dad and mom who led the people to worship Baal. Joram does not blame the rebellious disobedience of the people. Joram does not even blame the Syrians. **Instead Joram blames God’s prophet for the misery that has come to Samaria.** Wicked people will blame anything as the cause of their troubles, rather than their own sin.

In a fury, he shouts, *“May God do worse to me than this if Elisha still has his head on his shoulders by the end of the day.”*

Do you know that it is the commonest of things to repent with the lips, but still have a hard heart?

Well, at this moment, Elisha is sitting at home with the elders of the city. The king sends an executioner to lop off Elisha’s head, but before he arrives Elisha speaks to the elders, *“Do you know that our murdering king has just now sent out a man to cut my head off? Look, he is going to knock on my door in a few minutes. Quickly, shut the door and lock it! In fact, King Joram is with him. He is only a few steps behind!”*

Boom! Boom! Boom! The surly executioner pounds on Elisha’s locked door and he shouts, *“God is the one who is the cause of all this trouble! What will the LORD do to us next? I am so fed up with the LORD!”*

Elisha shouts back, **“Hey, take some time to listen to the Word of the LORD.** *God says that the famine is now over. By this very hour tomorrow . . . food will be flowing to all the people. The food will be so available and cheap that everyone will be able to buy grain for a few pennies. The market square will be filled with people and produce in 24 hours!”*

King Joram thinks Elisha has lost his mind. The Syrians are still surrounding the city with an overwhelming force. No food or man is coming in to the city.

The king's captain jeers at Elisha, *"You expect us to believe that nonsense?!? So a big dump truck is going to fly over our city and just dump down food upon us? What senseless talk!"*

Elisha calmly responds to the captain, *"O am sorry you said that. Because now by this time tomorrow you will see the food with your own eyes, but you will not eat even one spoonful of it."*

At bit later that day, four lepers sit outside the city gate. They had been banished from town as unclean men and are also starving to death. One says to the others, *"It makes no sense for us to just sit here suffering . . . waiting to die by starvation. We need to do something. We know that if we try to enter the city, the people will kill us. And if we do nothing, the famine will kill us. There is only one more option to try. Let us wander over to the Syrian camp and ask them for mercy. It is not likely that they will give it. But we have nothing to lose. If we die at their hand it is not any worse than dying from hunger."* So after the sun set these four go trekking to the Syrian camp.

When they enter the camp, what a shock! All the tents are empty. All the gathering places are empty. Not one soldier can be found in all the camp!

The lepers would later learn that the LORD God made the Syrian army hear the sound of horses and the footsteps of a mighty army marching toward them. The Syrian soldiers panicked as they said to one another, *"Run for your lives! The king of Israel hired the Hittite and Egyptian armies to attack us! We are going to die here!"* The Syrians ran away in a wild fright . . . leaving behind almost everything . . . horses, donkeys, tents, silver, gold, clothes and FOOD!! Every kind of food! Cornish hens and brisket and dumplings and grapes and figs and donuts and deviled eggs and milk and cheese and of course coconut cream pie!

The lepers first eat and eat and eat. Then they gather up as much gold as they can carry and they dig holes and hide the money in the desert. Then they return to camp for more gold and then eat some more food. After some hours of this work . . . the lepers stop and look at each other.

One says, *"This is not right. This is a day of salvation for the whole city and we are making it all about us. We need to invite everyone to this party! It would look really bad if people found out that we did not share this food while they were starving! Come on! Let's go tell the king the good news!"*

The lepers approach Samaria's city walls and they begin shouting, *"Hey! Can anyone hear us? We just came from the Syrian army's camp! Surprise! No*

one is there! Not a soul can be found, not a sound is heard! AND . . . get this! They left everything. They left donkeys and goats and horses and tents and gold and silver . . . and food! Tons and tons of food!!”

Well the gatekeepers who hear them run to king Joram with the good news. But the king know show crafty the Syrians were at setting traps. He calls his servants together, *“Hey, the Syrians have abandoned their camp. But I think it is a ruse. They know that we are desperate from starvation and they probably hid out in the fields. When we come out of the city to get their food, they plan to slaughter us.”*

One of the trusted advisor counseled, *“Well, that may be true. But the worse that can happen to us out there is not worse than what is happening to us in here. I suggest we send out some men in two chariots to scout out the situation.”*

The scouts then follow the Syrian army’s tracks. They led all the way out of Israel and all along clothes and equipment were dumped as the army clearly moved like scared rabbits out of Israel!

When the scouts reported back to the king, the whole city ran out to the Syrian camp like they were going to a movie star’s garage sale . Food prices immediately dropped. Grain now sold for a few pennies and food filled the market tables . . . **EXACTLY as God had promised. Every word that God speaks to us is true.**

Do you remember the king’s servant who scoffed at the Word of the LORD? Remember that Elisha told him that because of his unbelief that he would see the food, but would not taste even a spoonful of it? Well, as he looked at the food coming in to the city, he was not careful. The people behind him were so anxious to get to the food that they trampled him to death in the rush for the market. **God’s Word is truth.**

Main Idea: No one can fathom how dark our own natural heart is. God in love provides grace to rescue every person who believes in Him. Everyone who benefits from the grace of God is responsible to share His grace with others too.

The Depth of Our Desperation

“And the king asked her, “What is your trouble?” She answered, “This woman said to me, ‘Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.’” (2 Kings 6:28 [ESV](#))

“What is your trouble?” The poor woman did not know the center of her trouble. Her trouble was not so much that she was starving to death. A lack of food will cause her body to die, but her soul could still be full of life. The trouble that robbed her of life is that her heart is filled with sin. She has no spiritual life to sustain her through this trial and to bring joy to her after her body dies. Her understanding of her real trouble is superficial . . . she does not begin to understand what her problem really is.

Let me ask you, “What is your trouble?” Do you know what troubles your life? I do not think anyone here is literally starving for lack of food. But perhaps you describe your trouble in some other superficial way. **If you read your Bible and understand it, you will know that sin is the great trouble of our own life.** This is true if you have never believed in Jesus. God says in His Book that you stand before Him guilty and will be condemned on the day of judgment for the sins you have committed.

But even if you are a Christian, you too know that the answer to this question is, “My sin.” You see the LORD Jesus has taken away the condemnation and punishment that your sin deserves. He has freed you from your sins enslavement. You are secure from eternal damnation if you have Jesus. **But your sin is still the greatest threat to your life.** Your sin can take away your peace and your joy and your worship of God. Your sin can lead you into fears and frustrations. Your sin can harm people whom you love. Your sin can damage the church for which Jesus died. **No problem is like the problem of sin.**

If you think to yourself, “What is my trouble?” and you immediately jump to what some else did or to some sad loss or to some threatening problem, then you are in the same boat as this woman in the story. You do not know your real trouble and because of that you will not find the real solution. **You will wander about this world doing desperate things to find peace, provision, happiness, and meaning.** But your actions will only lead you deeper into the darkness.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9 [ESV](#))

Protest: But I am not like that wicked woman who cooked and ate her own child! I would never do anything like that.

If you asked her prior to this terrible famine if she would have entertained this act, she would have slapped you across the face! Offended that you thought her capable. But let us for the sake of argument concede that you would not cook your own child. Still this woman stands as a picture of your heart before the LORD. Like her, we all have decided to go our own way to find a path to life and happiness. We do not listen to, nor submit to the LORD. But like sheep, we have all gone astray. Each one of us has turned to his own way.

There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.” (Romans 2:9-12 [ESV](#)).

We think with a glimmer of hope, “Maybe I am among those who do good and will be given glory and honor and peace when I stand before the LORD.” But God shuts the door on this thinking.

“as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; . . . no one does good, not even one.”” (Romans 3:10-12 [ESV](#))

“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23 [ESV](#))

Truth: We are desperate for God’s provision. Many do not feel desperate and so believe that they are not desperate. We have come to the end of ourselves and so we go on with the solutions like eating our own children.

The Diversity of Responses.

Notice the diverse ways that unbelief expresses itself in this story:

The hungry mom expresses unbelief through looking to the dark solution of cooking her own child.

The king expresses unbelief through a false show of religious repentance and then anger at God. “““May God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on his shoulders today.”” (2 Kings 6:31 [ESV](#))

The king’s right hand man expresses unbelief through ridicule of God’s Word. The captain scoffs at the word of the LORD, “if the LORD himself should make windows in heaven, could this thing be?” (2 Kings 7:2 [ESV](#))

When God creates distress, Satan tempts us to all manner of unbelief. On the surface one form of unbelief seems very different from another. The woman who boils her baby seems very different from the captain who laughs at God's Word who seems very different from the king who plans to murder Elisha. But all these responses are rooted in unbelief.

Truth: Unbelief is man's greatest danger because unbelief is the one sin that will keep us from receiving God's grace. Faith is man's greatest friend because faith is the one response that opens the door to God's grace.

There are really only two responses to God: Belief or unbelief. Submission or rebellion. Love or hatred. Reception or rejection. **There are lots of angles at which man falls away from the LORD, but there is only one angle at which we stand upright before Him.** That one angle is a complete trust in and dependence upon Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Only faith in Christ opens the door to receive the benefit of God's love. Jesus says,

"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." (John 3:18 [ESV](#))

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." (John 3:36 [ESV](#))

The Disclosure of God's Grace

How does God disclose His grace to us? By Word and by experience. We see both kinds of disclosures in this story.

BY THE WORD: "But Elisha said, "Hear the word of the LORD: thus says the LORD, Tomorrow about this time a seah of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria."" (2 Kings 7:1 [ESV](#))

Why is Elisha so confident that food would flow through the streets of Samaria within 24 hours? Answer: He received the Word of the Lord and believed it. Elisha's physical eyes saw exactly what Joram and the captain's eyes saw. A vast army surrounding the city. No means for food to enter the city. People starving. Yet Elisha reasoned, "God gave His Word and God never lies."

Truth: The LORD gives His Word so that people who trust in Him will have hope in times of desperation and darkness.

BY EXPERIENCE: "And when these lepers came to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent and ate and drank, and they carried off silver and gold and clothing and went and hid them. Then they came back and entered another tent and carried off things from it and went and hid them." (2 Kings 7:8 [ESV](#))

God gave a direct experience of His love to outcast lepers. The LORD gives grace to individual and then gives them the responsibility to tell others of the grace of God.

Has the LORD given you grace? If so, are you disclosing His grace to others through your testimony?

Illustration: Kimberly and I were in a public sauna while on sabbatical. Close quarters. Woman from Chicago came in and we began to talk. Found out that she believes in Jesus . . . that she came with friends who do not believe . . . she is a teacher for Bible Study Fellowship . . . "Please tell us your testimony." "I do not have a testimony." OK. "Are you hoping to share the Gospel with your friends who are with you on vacation?" "No. I believe in sharing by the way I live."

It is good to live a life that exemplifies the Gospel. But think about the four lepers for a moment. Suppose they thought, "Hey . . . let us stay here and eat for the next few weeks and then let us walk by the city. Maybe people will say, "Hey, those lepers really put on some weight! We need to ask them how they did it!" Ridiculous? Yes.

The LORD does not place on us the responsibility to convert anyone. That is a work that only God CAN DO by His sovereign grace. BUT if we have received the grace of God, the Lord does call us to disclose it with our testimony.

Application: Ask God for an opportunity to share your testimony of God's grace this week.

God discloses His grace through His Word and through His people. It would not be unrighteous of God to express grace and then do nothing to disclose it. But

God's love is so abounding that not only does he release the goodness of His grace to us, but HE DISCLOSES IT! And He discloses His grace to us in remarkable fashion!!

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . . For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." (John 1:14-18 ESV)

The Destruction of Unbelief

Notice how many terrible outcomes flow from unbelief in this story. Each one of them is given to us as an example of what happens when we refuse to believe the LORD.

1. **The mother boils and eats her own son.**
2. **The king is filled with dark fury. No light, no peace, no hope, no love in his heart. He is a spiritually bankrupt man.**
3. **The captain loses his life.**

"And he had said, "You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it." And so it happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gate and he died." (2 Kings 7:19-20 ESV)

I do not know all the problems you face. Maybe you are angry at the direction of our country. Maybe your marriage is in shambles. Maybe your body is breaking down. Maybe your friends have forsaken you. Maybe your job is miserable. Maybe you have no income. Maybe you feel despressed and hopeless. Maybe you experienced extreme trauma in our childhood. Maybe people are slandering you and making all kinds of evil accusations against you. All of these are painful and significant hurts and losses. We do not minimize them.

BUT we do acknowledge that unbelief and unbelief alone keeps us from experiencing the blessing of the LORD in the midst of them. Nothing other than unbelief can destroy us. The Syrians could not destroy God's people. The famines could not destroy God's people. **Here in this story and every story in the Bible God points us to the source of our personal destruction . . . unbelief.**

Truth: Our own unbelief cuts us off from the LORD's loving provision to overcome every broken-world trial. Faith is the open hand that receives God's loving provision.

*"He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. **No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.**" (Romans 4:19-21 [ESV](#))*

Unbelief makes us waver concerning the promises of the LORD. Friend, is unbelief destroying your joy, your peace, your hope, your life? Stop wavering and grab hold by faith of God's promises.

The Demand for Evangelism

"Then they said to one another, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news." (2 Kings 7:9 [ESV](#))

Evangelism is first and foremost a reflection of our heart. It not primarily about our courage or our skills or our Bible knowledge or our training. Evangelism is about our compassion . . . our love for people who are starving and who have no food. A neglect of evangelism is a heart problem.

So what do we do if we have no heart for evangelism? We DO NOT TRY TO SCOLD OURSELVES INTO HAVING A HEART OF EVANGELISM. Guilt and shame will not help us to overcome the hurdles that our fears and our flesh place in front of us. What are we to do? We repent before the Lord and we ask Him to do a miracle in us. We seek Him by faith for heart change. When our hearts are changed our lives will change . . . our world will change.

There were some hurdles in front of the lepers to hinder them from going to tell the people of the city.

"Well, they do not like us and we do not like them."

"They do not care about us, why should we care about them?"

"We need to secure our own future. They might eat all our food."

"We do not know how to tell them about this food. We have never been to school to learn how to be a reporter. We probably will mess up the message."

"They might not believe us. In fact, they might even ridicule us because they think that our message is ridiculous."

"They might throw rocks at us."

Notice that God did not require these lepers to ARGUE with the Israelites about the existence of food. He just called them to tell them about it. The people's response is not the leper's responsibility. Of course, the lepers wanted the people to benefit from the ample supply of food. But they were not tasked with dragging them to the camp, but only of telling them.

Question: What reasons do you give for eating at the King's table and not telling your neighbors and your friends and your family members about the food?

Maybe they hate the LORD

Maybe they worship another god.

Maybe they are wallowing in some enslaving sin.

Maybe they do not like to talk about religion.

Maybe they will reject you if you do.

Maybe they will ridicule you.

I know that evangelism is not easy. But our reception of the LORD's bounty makes us responsible to tell others.

The Lord invites everyone to His table. If we are at the banquet, we are compelled by God's kindness to us to tell others!

But it is true that most people do not consciously know that they need the food that only God provides.

"But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." (John 4:32 [ESV](#))"

The woman at the well first through she was fine. Until Jesus spoke to her personally. Many are like this woman, they think that they are fine without Jesus. They need a personal encounter with the LORD. And God calls us to be part of that encounter by bringing Jesus' word to others. The Spirit takes it from there.

F B Meyer writing about this story of the four lepers, *"Let us tell men that the Saviour has overcome our foes, and has opened the kingdom of heaven to all who believe. Let us speak from a full heart of all that He has proved to be. Let us invite men to share with us the grace which hath neither shore nor bound . . . One ounce of testimony is worth a ton weight of argument . . . Let us remember that we are called to be witnesses of what God hath done for us."*

The Dependability of God's Word

God's Word is eternal in the heavens. The world came into existence by the Word of God.

Truth: The LORD does not lack power to fulfill His Word to us. Not one Word from God's Book will fail. What God says, He can be trusted to do.

Application: Let us immerse our lives in God's Word and be careful to receive it by faith.

The Word is the sword of the Spirit that God provides to battle the lies and the temptations that Satan shoot at us. The protection of our lives depends upon the reception of God's Word by faith.

I am concerned that many in the church give external approval of God's Word without internal reception. This is a danger to every soul.

External acceptance without internal reliance leads to spiritual defiance.

Question: What are you doing with God's Word?

For some the answer is, "I have a Bible, but I am not reading it."

For others, "I am reading the Bible, but I am not receiving it."

For others, "I am receiving the Bible, but I am not obeying it."

Only one kind of person benefits from the Word, "The one who reads it extensively, who receives it believingly, and obeys it willingly."

The Word of God can damage you as it damaged the captain in Joram's court. God's Word can either soften or harden a heart . . . it can bring a blessing or a curse. Someone has said, **"The same sun that melts the ice hardens the clay."**

"This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed

was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”
(2 Peter 3:1-7 [ESV](#))

“And when they say to you, “Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,” should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.”
(Isaiah 8:19-22 [ESV](#))

Which will you be? Will you be ice that melts under the Word and receives the life that flows from it? OR will you be clay that hardens under the Word and receives judgment from the LORD? Open your heart today!!

Unbelief is a sin by which men greatly dishonour and displease God, and deprive themselves of the favours he designed for them. Such will be the portion of those that believe not the promise of eternal life; they shall see it at a distance, but shall never taste of it. Matthew Henry

Main Idea: No one can fathom how dark our own natural heart is. God in love provides grace to rescue every person who believes in Him. Everyone who benefits from the grace of God is responsible to share His grace with others too.