

God's Forbearance

2 Kings 8:7-15 + 2 Kings 9:1-13

⁷Then Elisha went to Damascus, and Ben-Hadad king of Syria was sick; and it was told him, saying, "The man of God has come here." ⁸And the king said to Hazael, "Take a present in your hand, and go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD by him, saying, 'Shall I recover from this disease?'" ⁹So Hazael went to meet him and took a present with him, of every good thing of Damascus, forty camel-loads; and he came and stood before him, and said, "Your son Ben-Hadad king of Syria has sent me to you, saying, 'Shall I recover from this disease?'" ¹⁰And Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You shall certainly recover.' However, the LORD has shown me that he will really die." ¹¹Then he set his countenance in a stare until he was ashamed; and the man of God wept. ¹²And Hazael said, "Why is my lord weeping?" He answered, "Because I know the evil that you will do to the children of Israel: Their strongholds you will set on fire, and their young men you will kill with the sword; and you will dash their children, and rip open their women with child." ¹³So Hazael said, "But what is your servant—a dog, that he should do this gross thing?" And Elisha answered, "The LORD has shown me that you will become king over Syria." ¹⁴Then he departed from Elisha, and came to his master, who said to him, "What did Elisha say to you?" And he answered, "He told me you would surely recover." ¹⁵But it happened on the next day that he took a thick cloth and dipped it in water, and spread it over his face so that he died; and Hazael reigned in his place.

—2 Kings 8:7–15

¹And Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets, and said to him, "Get yourself ready, take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth Gilead. ²Now when you arrive

at that place, look there for Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, and go in and make him rise up from among his associates, and take him to an inner room. ³Then take the flask of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, 'Thus says the LORD: "I have anointed you king over Israel." ' Then open the door and flee, and do not delay." ⁴So the young man, the servant of the prophet, went to Ramoth Gilead. ⁵And when he arrived, there were the captains of the army sitting; and he said, "I have a message for you, Commander." Jehu said, "For which one of us?" And he said, "For you, Commander." ⁶Then he arose and went into the house. And he poured the oil on his head, and said to him, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I have anointed you king over the people of the LORD, over Israel. ⁷You shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. ⁸For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; and I will cut off from Ahab all the males in Israel, both bond and free. ⁹So I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. ¹⁰The dogs shall eat Jezebel on the plot of ground at Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her.' " And he opened the door and fled.

¹¹Then Jehu came out to the servants of his master, and one said to him, "Is all well? Why did this madman come to you?" And he said to them, "You know the man and his babble." ¹²And they said, "A lie! Tell us now." So he said, "Thus and thus he spoke to me, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "I have anointed you king over Israel." ' " ¹³Then each man hastened to take his garment and put it under him on the top of the steps; and they blew trumpets, saying, "Jehu is king!"

—2 Kings 9:1–13

Read 2 Kings 8:7–15 and 2 Kings 9:1–13

Have you ever wondered why God allows wicked individuals to come to power and evil to proliferate? You're not alone! It is hard to reconcile the goodness of God and His creation with the wickedness we often see around us. It would seem that God allows men and women to carry out the evil intentions of their

hearts in order to expose evil, cause those afflicted by evil to long for righteousness, and to show the necessity of His divine judgment.

Though God permits evil, He in no way condones it or approves of evil. In fact, a record is kept of every evil done, and every evil deed requires atonement.

God showed Elisha the men who would reign as the next kings of Syria and Israel. Though neither of these men would reign righteously, God nevertheless permitted both men the opportunity to be king. Both men had the opportunity to seek the Lord and do good or to turn from God's instruction and do evil.

Although it is difficult at times to reconcile the evil in this world with the righteous God of the Bible, it is important to remember that God allows men free will—the ability to choose between right and wrong. God also chose through the blood of His Son, Jesus, to offer atonement for sin to anyone who would turn to Him in repentance. The offer from God is still open to every person on earth. Our righteous God patiently waits in order to allow every man and woman the chance to repent and be saved from the consequential judgment that their sins deserve. Judgment is coming against all evil and sin and only those whose sins are covered by the blood of Jesus will be saved.

Ask the Lord for greater understanding and wisdom as you wrestle with the allowance of evil men and the goodness of God in your study this week.

1. Use 2 Kings 8:7–8 to write your observations as you answer the questions listed:
 - a. Where did Elisha go?
 - b. What was the king of Syria told concerning Elisha?

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

In 2 Kings 1:2, Ahaziah, a king of Israel, inquired of Baal concerning his recovery from injury. By contrast, here we see this pagan king seeking truth about his recovery from the God of Israel.

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

While the kings of Israel sought to kill the prophet of Israel, the kings of other nations honored him with abundant gifts.

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

Assyrian records confirm that Hazael was a usurper of the throne by applying to him the derogatory epithet "Son of a nobody." He ruled ca 843–802 BC.¹⁹

—NIV Study Bible

- c. What did the king of Syria instruct Hazael to do?
 - 1) What do the king of Syria's instructions reveal about Elisha's reputation?
2. Note and comment on how Hazael heeded the king of Syria's instructions. 2 Kings 8:9
3. Remark on the following aspects of Elisha and Hazael's conversation using 2 Kings 8:10–13:
 - a. Elisha's word
 - b. Elisha's response
 - c. Elisha's foreknowledge
 - d. Hazael's response
4. From 2 Kings 8:14–15, cite the events that unfolded.

5. Write down any insights or observations you received as you read this account.

6. Use the following verses from 2 Kings 9:1–3 to record Elisha’s instructions to his servant:
 - a. Verse 1

 - b. Verse 2

 - c. Verse 3
 - 1) What do find most intriguing about these instructions?

7. Summarize the obedience of Elisha’s servant using 2 Kings 9:4–10.

8. Use 2 Kings 9:11–13 to observe and remark on the following responses to Elisha’s message from:
 - a. Jehu

 - b. The captains of the army

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

The servant repeats the word of the Lord given to Elijah twenty years earlier in 1 Kings 21:17–24.

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

Through the anointing of Hazael and Jehu, Elisha is fulfilling the word of the Lord given to his predecessor Elijah in 1 Kings 19:15–17. Jehu was the only king of the Northern Kingdom commended by God (2 Kings 10:30). However, because he perpetuated the idolatry of King Jeroboam (the first king of Israel), Israel was diminished.

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

Note how the captains of the army placed their garments under Jehu signifying their recognition, loyalty, and promise of support to him as king. This same act was done over 800 years later when the people of Israel spread out garments beneath Jesus as He entered Jerusalem (Matthew 21:8; Mark 11:8; and Luke 19:35–36).

9. Share any thoughts you have concerning:
 - a. Benhaddad
 - b. Hazael
 - c. Elisha
 - d. Elisha's servant
 - e. Jehu
 - f. The captains of Israel's army

10. What is your greatest takeaway from 2 Kings 8:7–15 and 2 Kings 9:1–13?