

# Water and Bears

## 2 Kings 2:19-25

### May 10, 2020

## Blessing

Ralph Davis proposes an interesting alternative:

But I think these versions give a wrong impression. In my judgment the New Jerusalem Bible has captured the sense better: The people of the city said to Elisha, 'The city is pleasant to live in, as my lord indeed can see, but the water is foul and the country suffers from miscarriages. "Suffers from miscarriages" better picks up the sense of the verb *.āka1* (see K-B, 4:1491-92). Moreover, when Elisha announces Yahweh's 'healing' of the waters, he assures townsfolk that the water supply will no longer cause death or miscarriage (v. 21). The problem is far more serious than unproductive land (cf. NIV). There was something lethal in the water supply, causing fatalities in livestock and humans. Hence when verse 19 says, 'the land miscarries,' I take 'land' as a cipher for its occupants, i.e., livestock and people.<sup>1</sup>

Davis again:

Isn't this backdrop significant for verses 19-22? The city under a curse now receives a blessing of grace. The place where Yahweh inflicted his destructive word now enjoys his healing word. Long ago at Marah (Exod. 15:22-26) Yahweh had shown he would rather heal than destroy—and he has not changed. Here in 2 Kings 2 Curseville has become Graceburgh. Is this incident not a cameo of Yahweh's own character? See how he delights to turn the most curse-ridden, sin-laden, judgment-bearing situations into episodes of his grace in living color? It seems too good to be true and too much for sane sinners to hope for. But it is the testimony of this text: God's word through God's prophet brings God's grace—even to Jericho.<sup>2</sup>

the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ralph Davis quote:

Is this not a needed word in our church assemblies? If you are a pastor, don't you thrill to preach such a word? Isn't there hope here for that woman in the third row from the front who has had two abortions in her past? Does this text not address the man who still despairs as he looks back to that sin-twisted, knowingly rebellious decision he made, and, though he has long since repented in tears and sincerity, a cloud seems to hover over his life—he fears he can never enjoy the sunlight of God's smile again. Or perhaps it was that immoral act, years ago, that has infected your marriage and infested your conscience; and, though finally confessed, you are convinced that, though God may tolerate you, he can never welcome you or delight in you. Sometimes pastors and preachers must grab

---

<sup>1</sup> D. Ralph Davis, 2 Kings, Christian Focus, 2005 p35

<sup>2</sup> Davis p36

such folks by the scruff of the neck, and when they ask, 'Hey, where are you taking me?', we must say: 'I'm carting you off to Jericho, and when we get there, I'm going to shout to you, "Here is your God!" Is there anything as thrilling as that -as meeting the Lord who 'binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow' (Isa. 30:26, ESV)?<sup>3</sup>

## Cursing

Davis:

The Word Elisha spoke here was a curse 'in the name of Yahweh'. And then there were the bears. We must size up these bears correctly. They were covenant bears. The covenant curse of Leviticus 26:22 ('I will let loose the wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children') explains the episode. Covenant infidelity (hatred of Yahweh's representative and, perhaps, persisting in Bethel's perverse worship) has brought the covenant curse. Had Elisha been wrong to curse, one would assume Yahweh would not have fulfilled the curse. That Yahweh did so validates Elisha's curse. Here is not an irritable prophet but a judging God.

What then is the significance of this episode? A proper answer takes in the whole chapter. Elisha is Yahweh's appointed successor to Elijah, endowed with both his power (vv. 7-15) and his wisdom (vv. 16-18) and who speaks Yahweh's word in either grace (vv. 19-22) or judgment (vv. 23-24). It is important to keep verses 23-25 with its companion piece, verses 19-22. The two go together: Yahweh's word can bring both healing (v.21) and harm (v. 24), either deliverance (vv. 19-22) or disaster (vv. 23-24). In these two vignettes one sees the double-edged word of God at work in both grace (Jericho) and judgment (Bethel) among his people.

## Lessons

--Idols:

--Wrath

--Grace

---

<sup>3</sup> Davis - 37

## Home Study Guide

**Monday:** Read 1 Kings 2 How is the Grace of God displayed here?

**Tuesday:** Josh 6 How is this curse on Jericho relieved in last Sunday's text?

**Wednesday:** Lev 26 How was the prophecy of vs 22 fulfilled in last Sunday's text?

Sunday's Sermon will be "Make This Valley Full of Ditches"  
2 Kings 3

**Thursday:** Deut 2 compare God's dealings with the Moabites here and with next Sunday's text.

**Friday:** 2 Sam 8 How did the Edomites become vassals of Israel/Judah?

**Saturday:** Numbers 20 Here is another water miracle. God provides needed water for his people just like he does in tomorrow's text. Why did Moses get in trouble in this passage?

Prayer Items:

# Family Catechism Study

## [Westminster Shorter Catechism]

### **Q. 87. What is repentance unto life?**

A. Repentance unto life is a saving grace<sup>a</sup>, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ<sup>b</sup>, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God<sup>c</sup>, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience<sup>d</sup>.

[a]. Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25 [b]. Ps. 51:1-4; Joel 2:13; Luke 15:7, 10; Acts 2:37 [c]. Jer. 31:18-19; Luke 1:16-17; 1 Thess. 1:9 [d]. 2 Chron. 7:14; Ps. 119:57-64; Matt. 3:8; 2 Cor. 7:10

We are born with a natural bent away from God. The Bible calls this enmity. We are opposed to him and his law, because in our natural state we strongly desire to run our own show. This desire for autonomy is innate in the fallen heart of every sinner. We must turn from this position of opposition to God. We must first see the rebellious position we are in. We use many diversions to avoid recognizing this; but until we come to this position it is impossible to be saved.

Repentance is a daily and moment-by-moment process also. There is an initial repentance that we experience when we first come to Christ; but there is a necessary turning from sin daily as we make progress in our Christian lives. This is what the Catechism calls the endeavour after new obedience.

We repent when we turn from demanding that we be God -- that, then, plays out in our lives by seeking obedience to the true God in all areas of life: relationships, work, \$\$\$, leisure etc. It is a positive thing too. So often we regard repentance as a negative, but whenever we turn to God away from the foolishness of this world's system, we are making the right move. We are in fact doing ourselves a favor, while seeking the will of God!!!