

## A House of Cards

Elisha: Living the Impossible Life – Part IX

II Kings 9-10

### Introduction

I was recently shown a very interesting book by one of our church staff members. It is a dictionary that was published in 1940. That is not necessarily interesting, except that there is, in the back of the book, an appendix called, “Dictionary of American Slang”. The appendix has a subtitle of, “A compilation of slang terms, colloquialisms, and stereotyped phrases used by the American people”. It was interesting to look through the pages and discover the well known truth that many words, which begin as slang, become a part of our language.

There were many expressions in the appendix that no longer have the same meaning or have since disappeared from our language. For example:

- alligator – a non-musical fan of swing type music;
- banana oil – insincere praise;
- dead beat – one who buys things on credit (aren’t you glad that has disappeared!);
- biscuit shooter – a waitress;
- boiled shirt – a pompous man;
- dope – used to refer to both sauce served on ice cream and Coca Cola;
- embalming fluid – coffee;
- from Missouri – a person who is skeptical, not easily convinced;
- parlor pink – one who is liberal;
- picture gallery – a man with tattoos;

- to run a temperature – to become emotionally upset;
- old smokey – the electric chair;
- punch bowl – a boxing ring;
- to know your onions – to be intelligent and efficient.

There were also some words and expressions that have become a part of our language. For example:

- back-seat driver – a person who persists in giving others unsolicited advice on driving (say no more!);
- a bad egg – a dishonest person;
- to bark up the wrong tree – to pursue a useless or incorrect course;
- beef – a complaint;
- belly-ache – to complain or whine;
- fat chance – means, “no possibility”;
- hot – stolen; wanted by the police;
- in the bag – certain, sure, as good as in one’s possession;
- in the clear – safe, free from suspicion;
- in the doghouse – in someone’s bad graces, especially your wife’s;
- pain in the neck – an unpleasant person (that is the man who lives in the doghouse – I made that up!).

In the space of fifty years, the English language has changed dramatically.

One of the remarkable things about the nature of God is an attribute that we call “immutability”. That is a “ten cent” word that means, basically, God does not change. What God says never becomes antiquated or out of date. What He said fifty years ago, means the same thing fifty years later. God says what He means and He does what He says. It can be encouraging to know that God will keep His word or it can be frightening, depending on where you stand with the Lord whose word is immutable.

Today, we are going to discover that judgment means judgment. We are going to study the truth that just because the patience of God delays punishment from Him, does not mean that sin will not ultimately be judged by Him.

In our study of II Kings, the house of Ahab is about to fall. On the outside, Ahab’s dynasty seemed solid as a rock. There would never be a lack of male descendants for his throne, for Ahab has fathered seventy sons. However, in chapters 9 and 10 of this book, we are given the gory details of Jezebel’s death and the destruction of Ahab’s dynasty.

In the middle of chapters 9 and 10 lies a hinge verse. It is a critical, summary verse around which this gruesome story is told. Turn to chapter 10, verse 10.

***Know then that there shall fall to the earth nothing of the word of the Lord, which the Lord spoke concerning the house of Ahab, for the Lord has done what He spoke through His servant Elijah.***

If you remember our study in I Kings, Elijah had pronounced judgment on the house of Ahab and Jezebel. They had murdered Naboth in cold blood. They had stolen his vineyard and taken it as a possession for the royal family, which violated so many of God’s laws. They had also, on top of that, led Israel into idolatry. And, God, through Elijah, pronounced that the judgment of God was going to come.

## **The Secret Coronation**

Now in chapter 9, we are introduced to the instrument of God’s judgement. His name is Jehu. He is secretly anointed with oil by one of Elisha’s associates. Some rabbinical traditions believed this associate was none other than Jonah, as a young prophet in training. Look at verses 6b and 7.

***. . . and he poured the oil on his [Jehu’s] head and said to him, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘I have anointed you king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel. You shall strike the house of Ahab your master, . . .***

(now notice God’s purpose clause),

***. . . 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.”***

### **Three truths about the judgment of God**

Let me insert, at this point, three truths about the judgment of God.

#### **Even when God seems slow to act, His people are never forgotten**

1. Even when God seems slow to act, His people are never forgotten.

You may remember that Jezebel had gone on a killing rampage. She slaughtered the prophets of Yahweh who refused to bend their knee to Baal, and sent the followers of God underground in fear. It seemed God had lost and Baal had won.

Missiologists report that today, in our generation, there are more Christians being martyred for their faith than in any other generation. The Jezebels of the world think God’s silence means God is powerless.

#### **Even when God’s children seem overwhelmed, God is at work preparing the instruments of judgment**

2. Even when God’s children seem overwhelmed, God is at work preparing the instruments of judgement.

Jehu was nothing more than a common foot soldier when Ahab stole the vineyard. He was one of Ahab’s two bodyguards who heard Elijah pronounce judgment.

How ironic that an ordinary bodyguard was being prepared during the height of Ahab’s power, to be the instrument that would bring Ahab’s house, like a house of cards, crashing to the earth.

Now I want you to notice what all of the other army captains do in response to Jehu's secret anointing. Look at verse 13a.

***Then they hurried and each man took his garment and placed it under him on the bare steps, . . .***

That is an ancient way of implying submission to the right of a person to tread upon your life. To allow them to walk upon your coat is to tell them that they could walk on your life if they wanted to.

As an aside, you may remember when Jesus Christ entered the city of Jerusalem. The crowds were shouting, "Hosanna!" Do you remember what they were also doing? They were throwing their cloaks in front of the feet of the donkey on which Christ rode. That was not to cushion the feet of the donkey; that was to imply that He had the right over their lives; He had the right to rule; He had the right to rule over them if He wanted. They were implying submission.

So, it is a surprising thing that all of these captains, instead of jealously, bitterly opposing Jehu, throw their coats on the ground. And, the latter part of verse 13 says,

***. . . and blew the trumpet, saying, "Jehu is king!"***

Imagine that these military leaders would throw their entire support behind a man who had risen through the ranks; who had started out as a bodyguard. God prepares His instruments of judgment and His timing in unleashing them is perfect.

### **Even though God's warnings seem distant and hypothetical, judgment will eventually come**

3. Even though God's warnings seem distant and hypothetical, judgment will eventually come.

Fourteen years had come and gone since God pronounced judgement on the house of Ahab. Undoubtedly, Jezebel thought she was "off the hook".

I can remember as a kid, my mother promising that as soon as we got home from church, I was going to get a spanking I would not likely ever forget. She said, "I'm going to wear you out!" She had a way with words! Sunday afternoon wore on slowly, with no spanking. I was the most polite kid on planet earth. As each hour passed, my hope grew, as I thought, "Maybe she changed her mind or maybe she forgot." I knew if she forgot on Sunday, I would

probably not get that spanking. I can remember at least once, she did indeed forget.

Perhaps Jezebel "cleaned up her act" just a little fourteen years earlier. Maybe she called off her "hit" men for a week or two. Perhaps she thought, "Let's lie low and see if God's threat of judgment has any substance!"

The popular concept of God today, strips Him of His judicial character, His holiness, and His righteousness, and robes Him with no other attribute but love. He is a God who, no matter what, is perpetually smiling, and whose most common utterance is, "That's alright."

Most people today, do not even have to deny the existence of God and they do not even have to ignore Him. All they have to do is recreate Him into the image of whomever they like.

However, the unfailing word of God says, in Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 27,

***. . . it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.***

There are two categories of people:

- those who are in Christ, and are therefore in the One who has already taken the full force of God's judgment, and
- those who are not in Christ, and are therefore standing alone and will bear the judgment of God for all of eternity.

God's word about the future, ladies and gentlemen, is as certain as His word in the past. And we see the fulfillment of His word in the past.

## **A Double Assassination**

Look at verse 21 of II Kings, chapter 9.

***Then Joram said, "Get ready." And they made his chariot ready. Joram king of Israel [Ahab's son] and Ahaziah king of Judah [Ahab's son-in-law] went out, each in his chariot, they went out to meet Jehu and found him . . .***

(note this),

***. . . in the property of Naboth the Jezreelite.***

Do not think for a moment that this is a coincidence. No! This is the judgment of God being fulfilled completely.

Continue to verses 22 through 26.

*When Joram saw Jehu, he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" And he answered, "What peace, so long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?"*

*So Joram reined about and fled and said to Ahaziah, "There is treachery, O Ahaziah!"*

*And Jehu drew his bow with his full strength and shot Joram between his arms; and the arrow went through his heart and he sank in his chariot.*

*Then Jehu said to Bidkar his officer, "Take him up and cast him into the property of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite, for I remember when you and I were riding together after Ahab his father [as bodyguards], that the Lord laid this oracle against him:*

*'Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons,' says the Lord, 'and I will repay you in this property,' says the Lord. Now then, take and cast him into the property, according to the word of the Lord.'*

You can hear the many repeated references to "the word of the Lord". This is what God said, and this is what God would do, and this is what God indeed did!

The key word, I think, is in verse 26, when He says, "Surely I have seen *yesterday* . . .". You should underline that word "yesterday". You may think that God has forgotten, but He has not forgotten. He has seen "yesterday" the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons, and now, today, He will take action in fulfilling His word.

### **The principle of spiritual agriculture or the principle of reaping what you are sowing**

Now, there is a principle that is not getting much "press" today. It is the principle of reaping what you are sowing. I like to call it the principle of spiritual agriculture. I will define it this way,

*While sin is immediately cleansed upon confession, according to I John, chapter 1, verse 9, it produces consequences that may last a lifetime.*

Now, if I were addressing a company of unbelievers, the talk of judgment from God would

make them uncomfortable. But, I think it is equally true that the talk of consequences; of lifelong reaping makes the believer uncomfortable.

The Bible never says, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all the consequences of sin." It says, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin."

Certainly, the eternal consequences of our guilt and sin have been paid by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but some of those sins will carry lifelong consequences of heartache and pain.

In the book of Galatians, chapter 6, verse 7, Paul wrote to Christians, when he penned,

*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, this he will also reap.*

Then Paul went on to plead with the believers to sow seeds, not to the flesh, but to the Spirit.

God's law of sowing and reaping operates in the lives of His children.

I have read statistics recently, that reveal, among college students, an alarming rise of a sexually transmitted disease called HPV (Human Papillomavirus). It is virtually unpublicized because of the more dangerous virus, HIV (Human Immune Deficiency Virus). But HPV is growing at an epidemic rate and is causing cancer among women. And, it will produce barrenness. The statistics that I read said that it affected thirty percent of college age girls. God will forgive your fornication, but dear friend, one day you may weep over the inability to bear children.

Today, we could fill four super bowl football stadiums with teenagers who are involved in prostitution to support their drug habit. God can save a person from drug addiction, but the physical and mental damage may last a lifetime.

A population of ten times that of our city of 100,000, lines up each year to abort a baby conceived out of wedlock. God will forgive that, if they confess it, but we are raising a generation that will struggle with what another generation legalized and promoted, that is nothing less than sin.

There is the principle of sowing and reaping! I must have heard it a thousand times, as my father used to say to us, his four sons, "You cannot plant wild oats and then pray for a crop failure."

J. Vernon McGee wrote about an evening he spent with Mel Trotter. Mel Trotter was an evangelist who

had been an alcoholic before his conversion to Christ. God wonderfully saved and cleansed him and then, gave him an effective ministry to thousands of people.

One night, after Mel Trotter had preached, a group of people, including J. Vernon McGee, went out to a restaurant for desert. Everyone ordered big banana splits, or milkshakes, or malts. All Mel ordered was a little glass of carbonated water. Everyone began to rib him about it, and asked him for the reason. McGee said, he never forgot Mel Trotter's answer, "When the Lord gave me a new heart at my conversion, He did not give me a new stomach. I am paying for the years I spent drinking."

The law of spiritual agriculture is a strong reminder that we are all in need of the grace and mercy of our Savior. It is also a warning. If you are thinking of walking away from your marriage; beware, you will reap lifelong consequences. If you are thinking about engaging in immorality or infidelity; beware, you will reap the harvest of broken trust and guilt. If you are thinking about stealing or lying or anything else that sows seeds to the flesh, God is not deaf; He is not blind, dear Christian, you can ultimately lose, what John referred to as, your full reward. While you will not lose your salvation, John also wrote that you may be ashamed at His appearing.

John Wesley wrote, as his life resolution, ". . . to never do anything that I would be afraid of doing were it the last hour of my life."

## **The Death of Baal's Princess and Priests**

Well, there is judgment that will occur in the life of Ahab's house. Look at verse 30 of chapter 9.

*When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out the window.*

By the way, her eye make-up is literally, antimony. It was a black powder that was used by women of the east to darken the edges of their eyelids and eyebrows. In other words, it was ancient eye shadow and eye liner. Some things never change! She is not trying to entice Jehu, as she is an old woman, but rather, she is literally preparing herself to die. She will look like the queen that she is. There is an icy stubbornness that comes from the way she acts. There is no remorse; no guilty conscience. Notice what she says to Jehu in verse 31.

*As Jehu entered the gate, she said, "Is it well, Zimri, your master's murderer?"*

She called him, "Zimri". That takes us back to I Kings to the time when Zimri usurped the throne. He only lived for seven days and died in the flames of the palace. Jezebel is taunting Jehu, saying, "Oh, you are no better than Zimri. You may steal the throne, but you won't live to enjoy it. You won't live any longer than Zimri. You'll live only seven days, that's what I'd bet. Seven days and you'll be finished."

There is no doubt in my mind that she knows of the anointing. It has spread through the kingdom that the prophet of God has said that he will bring judgment to the house of Ahab. And, underlying this is a woman whose name means, "Baal's princess". She is refusing, even near death, to repent.

Look at verses 32 through 37.

*Then he lifted up his face to the window and said, "Who is on my side? Who?" And two or three officials looked down at him.*

*He said, "Throw her down." So they threw her down, and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses, and he trampled her under foot.*

*When he came in, he ate and drank; and he said, "See now to this cursed woman and bury her, for she a king's daughter."*

*They went to bury her, but they found nothing more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands.*

*Therefore they returned and told him. And he said, "This is the word of the Lord, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'In the property of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel;*

*And the corpse of Jezebel will be as dung on the face of the field in the property of Jezreel, so they cannot say, 'This is Jezebel.'"*

The word of God, with all of its horror, was fulfilled.

Now, in chapter 10 of II Kings, there is simply the story of the execution of the seventy sons of Ahab. The house of Ahab was destroyed. The final act, in verse 18, occurs when Jehu tricks the priests and the prophets of Baal into their temple and then, he executes them. In the space of about twenty-four hours, this most powerful house falls.

Who would have ever dreamed this? Who could ever overthrow the house of Ahab? They had failed to reckon, however, with something that never changes, and that is, the word of God.

## Application

Now, as I studied this passage, I discovered it is one of the reasons why preachers do not preach I and II Kings. It seems so remote, distant, and gory. However, there are several applications that can be drawn from it. Let me give them to you.

### **When God's word is rejected, the wickedness in a person's life is unbelievable**

1. First, when God's word is rejected, the wickedness in a person's life is unbelievable.

Who would have ever thought that Israel would follow a woman like Jezebel. Who would have ever thought that they would sacrifice their children to false gods, as we have studied, and be involved in religious promiscuity. Yet, when you reject the word of God, then, by the word of a prophet as recorded in the Bible, you are opening the door to unbelievable wickedness that you will be able, in your mind, to justify, to rationalize, to defend.

There are people in our world who treat God like a faucet. That is, they turn Him on whenever they need Him; such as in an emergency or crisis. There are people who treat the Bible like a bus. That is, they get on it and take it for a ride as long as it is going where they want to go. The trouble is, apart from this word, the way is downward and they are heading for a tragic life of self-centered evil.

### **When God's authority is denied, the wasting of a person's life is inevitable**

2. Secondly, when God's authority is denied, the wasting of a person's life is inevitable.

One of the most wonderful things about Christianity is it rescued you and me from wasting our lives on ourselves.

I think of Ernest Hemmingway, who was a brilliant genius with his pen, but was a man who denied God's authority. He even, on one occasion, rewrote the Lord's Prayer. He wrote, "Our nada ("nada" is Spanish for "nothing"), who art in nada." Can you imagine? His life ended when he put a bullet

through his own head. His life was the epitome of a wasted life.

I want to ask you a question, my friend, "Are you building a house of cards today? Is the mortar mixed with pride and independence? Are the bricks colored with cherished, unconfessed sin? Have you written over the doorway, the motto of our generation, and the theme of mankind for all time, 'I built it my way'?"

If this is the case, you are sowing seeds to the flesh. The word tells us that you will reap the harvest of bitterness.

### **When God's plans are obeyed, the difference in a person's life is unmistakable**

3. Thirdly, when God's plans are obeyed, the difference in a person's life is unmistakable.

To some, this discussion will be a wake up call or a warning. To all of us, His word should be a challenge to follow the plans of God, even when we cannot see results; even when it does not seem to be of any benefit. There are times when God takes years to fulfill His word. He took fourteen years to fulfill this one oracle concerning Ahab's house. There will come a day when He will fulfill His word and give those who believe their promised place in the kingdom of heaven. For those who have denied His word, He will give to them their promised place in an eternal, terrible hell.

So, what of life today? As I was thinking through this study, I recalled something else my father taught us. The older I get, the wiser he gets – do you know what I mean? He said on a number of occasions, "If Christianity was not true; if there really was not a God in heaven; if there was no future heaven for believers, I would still live the kind of life the Bible describes as the right way to live because it is the only life worth living."

That statement is the truth. When God's plans are obeyed, the difference in a person's life is unmistakable, not only to that person, but to others as well.

My wife and I, thanks to our sitters, were able to slip out late one evening without our four children. We went to a local restaurant and were the only people there at that late hour. The waitress came and we ordered two cups of coffee, or "embalming fluid". She brought the coffee and then, stood there a minute and said, "You're Christians, aren't you?"

I was shocked because we had only been there about three or four minutes. We had not been talking about the church, which is a miracle for us! I had not handed the waitress the gospel of John. My wife was not wearing “sign of the fish” earrings. There were no clues. So, I asked the waitress, “How did you know? We didn’t say anything about the Lord or Christianity or anything.”

She answered, “Well, I could tell by the way you talked; the words you were using.”

We started a conversation with her and found out she had come to know Christ just a few months earlier. She was growing. She said, “I serve a lot of people in this restaurant and I have always been able to tell those who know the Lord.”

Isn’t that interesting – and encouraging? You may not think people notice, but they do. And, ultimately, it is the only life worth living.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 4/21/1996 by Stephen Davey.

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