

Elisha, the Prophet of Grace

2) The Aroma of Life and Death

'Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ'
(2 Cor.2:14-17)

'Then the men of the city said to Elisha, "Please notice, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the ground barren." And he said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, "Thus says the LORD: 'I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.'" So the water remains healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke'

(2 Kings 2:19-22)

✓ *'Please notice, the situation of this city is pleasant'*. Jericho was a beautiful city, known as the city of palms

✓ When Israel conquered Jericho there were two things they were forbidden to do:

1) To take any of the spoil for themselves

2) To rebuild the city, *'Then Joshua charged them at that time, saying, "Cursed be the man before the Lord who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates"'* (Josh.6:26)



- ✓ **Both of these instructions were ignored**
- ✓ **The first was by Achan, who, 'saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold' (Josh.7:21), which he coveted and stole, for which he was punished**
- ✓ **The second was broken centuries later, in the reign of the apostate king, Ahab: 'In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho' (1 Kings 16:34)**
- ✓ **So this beautiful city was marred; it was characterised by the curse**

- ✓ **We need to see a similarity between Jericho and the fall**
- ✓ **As Jericho had become cursed, so the blessing of God at creation was exchanged for a curse**
- ✓ **The water of this city was bad and the ground barren. Lit. 'causing to miscarry.' These waters caused the cattle to cast their young, the trees to shed their fruit before it ripened, and even the women to be incapable of bearing children**

✓The Hebrew word which is rendered '*bad*' (*ra ah*) is a much stronger word than the English denotes. In the great majority of cases it is translated 'evil' (e.g. Gen.6:5), and 'wicked' 31 times. Its first occurrence is in 'the tree of knowledge of good and *evil*' (Gen.2:9)

✓Man could rebuild the city, but not remove the curse that is upon it. For all the advancements of mankind, evil still abounds in many forms

✓But where sin abounds, grace abounds much more. Elisha came to this city and dwelt among them, just as Jesus came and dwelt with us (Jn.1:14-17)

- ✓ **They came to Elisha and told him their predicament**
- ✓ ***Bring me a new bowl. God doesn't patch up the old but makes a new. Lk.5:36-38. He makes a new creation***
- ✓ ***And put salt in it. Salt is the great purifier and preserver***
- ✓ **Salt prevents putrefaction**
- ✓ **Salt is the best seasoning; many foods are tasteless without a sprinkling of salt**
- ✓ **It is a symbol of grace, *'Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt'* (Col.4:6)**

✓ **Jesus said, 'You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men' (Matt.5:13)**

✓ **The flesh profits nothing. For all their cultivation and efforts to improve the city, there was barrenness**

✓ **But the salt of grace, brought in the new vessel, brings life and blessing**

✓ **That which had been called the city of palm trees became a beautiful city again (2 Chr.28:15)**

✓ **So the water remains healed to this day**

✓ **It was no superficial, temporary change, but an effectual and permanent one. *'I know that whatever God does it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him'* (Ecc.3:14)**

'Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, "Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!" So he turned around and looked at them, and pronounced a curse on them in the name of the LORD. And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths'

(2 Kings 2:23-24)

***The true gospel will meet with two responses - joyful reception, and opposition from those who want to remain hostile to God**

***Bethel was apostate, (see 1 Kings 12:28-29, 31-33)**

***What occurred here was far more than a silly prank of innocent youngsters. It was persecution against a prophet who represented the true and living God, by a group of young thugs**



***'Go up, you bald head' was either a mockery of the report of Elijah's rapture, or a desire to be rid of Elisha**

***This was not cruel, but compassionate, in that it gave warning to the rest of Israel that judgment is the result of rejecting God**

***At almost the end of the OT era we read, 'And the Lord God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy' (2 Chron.36:15-16)**



***Those who believe the gospel will be saved; those who reject it will perish. 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?'
(Heb.2:3)**

***'Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?'
(Heb.10:28-29)**

'He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God...He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him'

(John 3:18, 36)