It's Easy for the Lord

2 Kings 3:1-27
Key Verse: 2 Kings 3:18
"This is an easy thing in the eyes of the Lord; he will also deliver Moab into your hands."

Last week at work, I was trying to transpose a list of variables from a horizontal list to vertical list. I thought that I had done it before in Excel but I couldn't remember how to do it. I was under pressure to get it done for a meeting that I had in a little while. My frustration grew as none of the different things I tried worked. After spending about 20 minutes on this finally I did the smart thing and googled it. Within seconds the answer I needed was right there. And you know what; it was so easy that I finished it in three clicks. And I said to myself, "Why didn't I do that sooner?" Have you ever been in that situation before? Where you are beating your head against the wall trying to figure something out and then someone comes along and says, "Here let me help you," and the next thing you know it's done. On one hand you're thankful to get it done, but on the other hand you want to smack the person who showed you because they acted so smug about it. Well, today's passage is a lot like the situation I described except that it involved three kings, a prophet, and the word of the Lord.

Our passage starts out today in Samaria with the king of Israel. Take a look at verses 1-3. "Joram son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned twelve years. **2** He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, but not as his father and mother had done. He got rid of the sacred stone of Baal that his father had made. **3** Nevertheless he clung to the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit; he did not turn away from them." In these verses we are introduced to Joram, who was the son of Ahab. He's now become king after his brother, Ahaziah died. And we find out that like most of the kings of Israel, he too, did evil in the sight of the Lord by living in idolatry. However he was a little different from the others. While he got rid of one kind of idol worship, by removing the sacred stone of Baal, he replaced it with another, worship of the golden calf that took place in Bethel. He may have done this after his mother Jezebel died because later in this book we see somehow another Baal stone pops up. With all the good the Lord has done for Israel, you would have thought that if he was going to get rid of Baal worship, and go against the current culture of society, he would turn to the one true god, the Lord. However in the end, he couldn't break free completely, because Jeroboam's bad influence.

Shortly into his reign, Joram faces a crisis. Take a look at verses 4-6. "Now Mesha king of Moab raised sheep, and he had to pay the king of Israel a tribute of a hundred thousand lambs and the wool of a hundred thousand rams. **5** But after Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. **6** So at that time King Joram set out from Samaria and mobilized all Israel." The nation of Moab had been under Israel's rule since the time of King David. They had been forced to pay an annual tribute to the king of Israel in the form of 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams. That's about 275 sheep and ram's wool a day, every day forever. To me, that seems like a

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pretty heavy burden to bear. And Mesha, the king of Moab, agrees because when he finds out there is a new king on the throne in Israel, he sees an opportunity to break away from Israelite domination and to avoid future payments of tribute. And so we read in v5 that the "king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel." Naturally, this couldn't go unanswered by Joram so he gathered his troops for war. But he knows there is strength in numbers and so he entices Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, to join him. And Jehoshaphat answers, as Mike put it, "Me casa, su casa." Here I find something interesting; there is no indication that Jehoshaphat sought the Lord's will before making this alliance with an ungodly king. Jehoshaphat had a bad habit of doing this. He should have known better from his past experience but we all know in our own lives how frequently we fail to learn from past mistakes. However when we look at the map, Jehoshaphat probably agreed to join Israel because Moab was next door to Judah and possibly a threat. And if Moab rebels against Israel, how long would it take before it was a threat to Judah.

So Israel and Judah form an alliance and they throw in Edom for good measure, after all they are like brothers to them because the Edomites are descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother. With the alliance in place, notice their strategy. The king of Moab would most likely be expecting them from the north around the top end of the Dead Sea, but instead they decided to take their troops all the way down through the wilderness around the southern end of the Dead Sea through Edom and attack Moab from the south which was probably not as heavily armed. With this strategy they thought they would surprise the Moabites and thus be able to defeat them quickly. "So the king of Israel set out with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. After a roundabout march of seven days, the army had no more water for themselves or for the animals with them." (v9) Now notice the first words out of Joram's mouth in response to their dire circumstances. Take a look at verse 10. "What!" exclaimed the king of Israel. "Has the Lord called us three kings together only to deliver us into the hands of Moab?" Isn't it interesting that the first time Joram speaks about the Lord, the only thing he has to say is something negative? Why does he blame God for the situation he's in? When you see it in this context, it looks so silly, but isn't amazing how often we do the same thing and blame God after we've gotten ourselves into a difficult situation and we need his help to get us out of it. We cry out, "Lord, why did you let me get myself into this?" And the sad thing is none of the three kings sought God's will or his wisdom in the first place. All I can say is, "Thank God that He is a patient and gracious God."

It was a good thing Jehoshaphat was there, for he was a follower of God even though he made foolish alliances at times. Refusing to accept Joram's assessment, he asks, "Is there no prophet of the Lord here, through whom we may inquire of the Lord?" (v11) Why hadn't he thought of this before? Why don't we always inquire of God before we act? And I find it interesting that a nameless officer knows where to find God's servant and none of the three kings do. He replies, "Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He used to pour water on the hands of Elijah." Let me take a few moments and draw out of this section five characteristics I see here in Elisha that would be greatly desirable to have in our lives during a time when people become desperate for answers as we see here with Elisha.

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1. We should be someone people think of when they want to find out what God says.
This means your life will have to be one that is consistently governed by the Word of God, by God's wisdom. There is a lot of human wisdom floating around, but when people get desperate for answers they don't want the latest idea or theory, they want something that works, that is true. So you must develop the reputation of living your life by God's authority and Word. People must see that consistently in your life so they know you are someone who knows God's heart, God's wisdom, God's truth. Elisha was known as that kind of man. Notice Jehoshaphat says, (v.12) "The word of the Lord is with him." In other words, if we want to know what God says, he's the man to go to. Wouldn't you love to have that kind of reputation? You can, but it involves choices on how you live your life, choices that must be built upon every day.

2. We should be someone who has shown ourselves to be faithful servants.
It's significant that the king's servant identified Elisha as the one "who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah." Elisha left behind a prominent and financially secure position with his family to be a servant for 10 or more years to Elijah. He's known as the man who pours water for Elijah. I don't think too many people would be content to be known by that. Jesus came as a humble servant and that is the attitude we must have. Are you a servant, especially those of you who are leaders? There are a lot of ways to have a servant attitude. I couldn't list them all but here is a quick test: do you pitch in when something needs to be done or do you leave it for someone else to do? We are to be servants. God honors and uses people who are servants.

3. We should be someone who is unaffected by flattery or people.
Standing before Elisha were three kings, who needed his advice. That didn't happen every day. And yet, Elisha was unmoved by it all. He wasn't nervous or shaken, he's been in the presence of God, and so he wasn't impressed by men. Elisha wasn't a "yes man," his allegiance was to the Lord and to the principles of His Word regardless of a person's position, power, or wealth. It makes no difference to Elisha who stands before him; he simply speaks the words God gives him. There is no cringing or catering before royalty. In verses 13-14, he is fearless even as he points out the emptiness of Joram's phony religion and prophets.

4. We should be someone who cultivates sensitivity to the Spirit of God.
I think there is some righteous indignation here in Elisha and rather than speaking the first thing on his mind or what he would like to speak, he takes time to quiet his heart before the Lord in order to hear clearly what the Lord wants him to say. He desires to be sensitive to God's Spirit speaking to him and through him. Take a look at verse 15. "But now bring me a harpist." While the harpist was playing, the hand of the Lord came on Elisha" Sometimes how quick we are to speak. Some of the most unproductive and damaging words in the human language are, "I think..." I have no doubt if it is needed the Lord will give us what to say on the spot, but let us be slow to speak our opinions. We need to cultivate our sensitivity to the Spirit of God and listen to Him before we speak.

5. We should be someone who speaks God word clearly.
Take a look at verses 16-19. "and he said, "This is what the Lord says: I will fill this valley with

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pools of water. 17 For this is what the Lord says: You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink. 18 This is an easy thing in the eyes of the Lord; he will also deliver Moab into your hands. 19 You will overthrow every fortified city and every major town. You will cut down every good tree, stop up all the springs, and ruin every good field with stones."" In these verses we find the translations seem to be a little off. In the older version of the NIV v16 says, "This is what the Lord says: Make this valley full of ditches" but in the newer translations it says, "I will fill this valley with pools of water," I believe the connection between the two is with the ditches and pools. As I prepared this message I was trying to understand the difference and I believe the translators were trying to focus more on what God was doing instead of what people should do and how fitting these verses fit under this section about speaking God's word clearly. However I like the older translations because we see beautiful co-working between God and people. "Dig ditches. Attack and overthrow Moab." That was the essence of Elisha's word from God but that is what God said so that is what Elisha said. In Elisha's instructions we see a beautiful dovetailing of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. The Lord's provision for their needs would be a miraculous gift of water but they had to dig ditches, for the pools to form, in order to receive it. Victory would be theirs if they were obedient to their human responsibilities of digging the ditches. This would demonstrate their dependence on the Lord, a change from their former self-dependence which had already failed them.

Through Elisha, God told them to pursue a course which military tacticians call a "scorched earth policy." Sometimes God is not very environmentally friendly when it comes to dealing with sin. But let's read verse18 again and let it soak in for a minute – "This is an easy thing in the eyes of the Lord; he will also deliver Moab into your hands." The three armies were facing an impossible situation. There was absolutely nothing they could do to fix it. They had marched themselves out into the desert, got lost, and ran out of water, many were going to die. But listen to how beautiful Elisha's words are, they are like cool water to a dry mouth (forgive my pun) he says, "This is easy for God, he's got this." What was impossible for them to fix, was easy for the Lord. This is contrary to our understanding; miracles are a small little thing for God. We think the opposite – they are huge, that's why we call them miracles, but for God it requires no effort. God does not have to go and rest afterwards because He is drained from the effort. It requires no effort on God's part to change that which is unchangeable. Our God is omniscience. He is omnipotent. He has unlimited knowledge and infinite power. This is an easy thing. It requires no effort. Just so that you get the power of this statement let me apply it to other situations:

- It was easy for the Lord to create the heavens and the earth and everything that is in them. With the Hubble telescope astronomers are still finding new things they didn't know existed.
- It was easy for the Lord to have the creativity to create so many different and unique and beautiful creatures. Earlier this week, the internet was abuzz over the new discovery of Hyalinobatrachium dianae, a new species of glass frog that looks exactly like Kermit the Frog.
- It was easy for the Lord to provide for 3 million people in a desert for 40 years.

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- It was easy for the Lord to deliver Israel time and time again even though they were outnumbered and overpowered.
- It was easy for the Lord to heal the sick even bringing back Lazarus from the dead.
- It was easy for the Lord to show us mercy, grace and love us. He didn't struggle to send his only Son, he made it part of his plan from the beginning.
- It was easy for the Lord to cause a virgin to be with child and give birth to the Son of God.
- It will be easy for the Lord to come again in power and glory.
- It will be easy for the Lord to completely and forever defeat Satan and all his hosts.
- It will be easy for the Lord to create a new heavens and a new earth.

I want to point out something for you, verse 17 says, "For this is what the Lord says: You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink. " If we take a look at the map we find something interesting, the terrain east of the Dead Sea was mountainous, no big deal but when we read verse 20, "The next morning, about the time for offering the sacrifice, there it was—water flowing from the direction of Edom! And the land was filled with water." We see that the water was flowing from Edom, and there's an ! just to show the amazingness of it because according to the terrain the water should flow west to east but it was flowing south to north. This too was easy for the Lord.

Take a moment and let your mind explore all the possibilities verse 18 can bring about. Sometimes we can feel stuck, in a rut with a problem that seems like it's never going to go away. Nothing we do can solve it and sometimes it feels like we're wandering in the desert. Do you know what Jesus told his disciples when they faced an impossible situation? He said, "…"What is impossible with man is possible with God."" (Lk 18:27) Jesus wanted to make sure his disciples knew this. Likewise, it's an easy thing for the Lord to take care of you, provide for you, to pour out His grace on you. And whatever situation you are facing today it's an easy thing for the Lord to deal with. He is not baffled, stumped or frustrated. He is the God who has the power to change that which is unchangeable. There is no situation which requires more effort than any other, but God does require our trust and obedience. In fact God can kill two birds with one stone. The water that he sent to save the three kings was used to destroy the Moabites. In verses 21-23, when they heard they were being attacked, the Moabites stationed all their men on the southern border, however when they got up the early morning sun was shining on the water and it looked red and they thought it was blood and somehow their enemy had killed themselves. So they ran to pick up whatever valuables they could find. However when they got there they were surprised to find three armies ready and waiting for them. They were cut down and slaughtered.

God's power and deliverance is amazing. However I believe there is a warning contained in the last parts of this passage. A warning of the danger of taking our eyes off the Lord, and His power to do the impossible, and letting them focus on other things. The mirage the Moabites experienced wasn't an accident. The Lord caused it because he was protecting his own. Those who are not on the God's side, may find themselves on the receiving end of his will and that isn't any fun. Not only that in verses 26-27 we see that idolatry has its source in the demonic powers of Satan, a

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murderer and hater of mankind, often included human sacrifice, especially the offering of children. The Moabite king sacrificed his firstborn son, through a burnt offering, and thus released a demonic backlash of fury against the Israelites that was so intense it caused the retreat of the Israelite forces and thus kept them from complete victory. We see the same principle at work in our situations many times. Even though the devil is a defeated foe, he still has power to deceive us. That's his only way to get back at God, is to draw his children away from him, and that is exactly what he does when we find ourselves in these impossible situations. We see the chains that bind us and we think it's hopeless and this leads us to take our eyes off the Lord and his power to change that which is unchangeable. We see the sickness that doesn't respond to treatment or worse, completely baffles the doctors and we conclude it is hopeless.

The enemy wants to deceive you into thinking it is hopeless for he knows if he can accomplish that you will get your eyes off the Lord and cause you to doubt in the hope that you will stop believing that ultimately everything is easy for the one who created it all in the first place. And if he can deceive you in that way, you will stop calling on the Lord and trusting in Him to do the impossible. God wanted to give these 3 kings the complete victory. It was an easy thing to do, but they were kept from complete victory because they allowed some mighty display of the enemy to get their eyes off the Lord and His great power to work on their behalf.

So this morning, I call you back to the truth that we belong to a God who can impossible, possible, and change the unchangeable. We belong to a God that no matter what situation we're in, it's an easy thing in His eyes of the Lord. Granted we don't know God's will or plan in every situation, sometimes He doesn't always change the unchangeable sometimes He changes us instead. Yes, it's an easy thing in the eyes of our God to change the unchangeable but whether it's His will or not I don't know, yet I will continue to put trust Him with my life, my family, and my future because I've seen it happen in other and have experienced it personally myself. And I will continue to ask in Jesus' name that He would display His mighty power in and through our lives. And I hope you do too.

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