

9. The wickedness of human beings

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Jeffrey Dahmer murdered 17 men and boys;
Andrea Yates drowned all five of her children;
Ted Bundy confessed to over 30 murders, although the actual total of victims remains unknown;
John Allen Muhammad who was known as D.C. sniper, with his younger partner, Lee Boyd Malvo, he carried out the 2002 Beltway sniper attacks, killing 10 people.

What is the difference between these horrible killers and you godly people in this auditorium including myself? There are only two differences I find is that first, they carried out what they were thinking in heinous crimes; we have not; second, we have Jesus in our hearts, they didn't.

You might say, "How can you say that? I've never committed crimes in my life. I don't even have a traffic violation ticket." To be honest with you, if police officers or sheriff deputies were strict with traffic laws, you and I can easily get a half dozen tickets within an hour with the way we drive.

In our minds, we cheat, we murder, we lie, we manipulate while we smile and look holy outwardly. If God projects what we have been thinking throughout last seven days onto this screen for everyone else to see, I don't think that there would be any person in this auditorium can come out clean and not guilty.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?

If we think that we are better than these serial killers, we are not facing the truth of our own wickedness and sinfulness. Our so-called small sins are no different to our God's eyes than the worst crimes we see on the headline of newspaper.

Worse yet, if you are thinking that you are good enough to make your way to heaven without receiving Jesus Christ into your heart as the Savior and Lord, you are ignoring the very reason for the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ for mankind. It is because we cannot be holy enough with our own power to be in heaven, Jesus came to this earth to be our sacrifice and overcame the death so that we may have eternal life in Him.

By the way, the idea that you can make your way to heaven without Jesus is the biggest sin you can possibly commit and it is not something our God winks at.

This morning we are going to see a man who was told by prophet Elisha about his true wickedness; the kings who brought idol worship to their kingdom to turn their people away from God. But in the midst of this darkness, we see a family which was spared and restored by the mercy and goodness of our Lord.

A. THE WICKEDNESS OF HUMAN HEART

2 Kings 8:7-15 Then 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." 8 And 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?' " 9 So 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?' " 10 And Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You shall certainly recover.' However the Lord has shown me that he will really die." 11 Then he set his countenance in a stare until he was ashamed; and the man of God wept. 12 And 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." 13 So 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." 14 Then 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." 15 But 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.

I think that it took a gut for Elisha to travel to Damascus, the capital city of Syria. After all, he spoiled the Syrian army raid plots time after time by informing them to the king of Israel. In addition to that he led the blinded Syrian soldiers into Samaria, the capital city that was surrounded by wall and sending them back to their homeland with full stomachs but empty hands.

At the same time Elisha was known to Syrians as the man of God who was used by the God of Israel to heal Naaman the Syrian General as well as showing mercy to the captured Syrian raiding soldiers and allowed them to live.

I am sure you've noticed that even unbelievers show their respect to Dr. Billy Graham because he has been keeping himself in a godly living privately as well as in ministry. Unbelievers don't put a whole lot of stock in what we say unless our lives can back them up. They watch and listen to what we do and say. As Dr. Graham has earned their respect, Elisha also earned the respect from the Syrian people.

What do the unbelievers around you say about you when you are not around? Do they respect what you say because your life backs it up? Or do they think you are joking when you talk about Jesus as your Savior because being a Christian is contrary to what you do and say? A terrible example of this can be found in Genesis 19:

Genesis 19:14 So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

When Lot told them to be ready to get out of Dodge fast, they thought he was joking. What a sad witness Lot had been giving to his own sons-in-law!

In light of his illness, the Syrian king wanted to treat Elisha extra special so that he could give him a favorable message from God – 40 camel loads of extravagant gifts. Can you imagine Elisha walking out of his motel room door and seeing 40 camels in the parking lot? It would be like having 40 of 18 wheelers parked in front of your home. Knowing Elisha, he probably said, "Thanks, but no thanks."

The way Elisha answered in Hebrew was deliberately ambiguous – "You shall certainly recover, but will die." In other words, the sickness was not terminal, but the king was about to be terminated.

According to 1 Kings 19:15, God told Elijah to anoint Hazael as king over Syria. But Elijah was taken out of the earth before he got to do that. Now it was Elisha's obligation to carry out what the Lord told Elijah to do. The text doesn't tell us, but this may have been the point at which Elisha anointed Hazael with the sacred oil.

Now some of you might have a question: "Since prophet Elisha mentioned to Hazael that he would become king over Syria, did that comment make him to kill his king?" Knowing the Lord and His way from the Bible, I can answer it in this way: I believe that Hazael had a strong ambition to become king someday. God simply affirmed it through Elisha.

When Hazael heard the prophecy from Elisha, he came up with his own conclusion: "Why wait?" If he was a righteous person, he would wait until his king died, but he'd rather kill his boss and made himself to be king. Listen carefully, please. When the human heart is bent on evil, it can invent all kinds of excuses. Hazael ruled Syria for 41 years.

Elisha was not weeping for the Syrian king, rather he was weeping for his people because he loved them even though they were far from the Lord. It would be hard to see what was going to happen to them and there was nothing Elisha could do.

B. AN EXTENDED THOUGHT

Folks, listen carefully. For last several years, I've been mentioning to you that I've been praying for persecution against the American Christians so that the church in America becomes pure and holy in the sight of our Lord. I believe that the time of persecution is just about here. Like no other time, this very country that was founded in Christianity turns its heels against the Lord our God and is controlled by satan to come after His people and their faith.

My heart is aching for some of you who are not determined to follow the Lord with all of your hearts, because when persecutions come, you can easily fall away as Jesus said.

Luke 8:13 But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.

You may say, "I will never fall away." The disciple Peter also said the same thing and denied the Lord three times.

What would you do? If somebody from authority come to your home and threaten you to take your home, money, job, cars, even your family and throw you in prison for believing Jesus as your Savior and Lord. But if you denounce Him, you can keep everyone and everything as is, what would you do? Would you say, "I will denounce God outside in pretension, but I will be a God's Secret Service believer," or would you say, "No matter what you do to me or to my family, I will follow Jesus."

You might even say, "That will never happen." If that is your answer, have you ever thought that the United States Congress would pass the law that would put anyone who stands against homosexuality in prison and the U.S. Senate is about to do the same thing? Of course, the President Obama will be more than happy to sign it to become a law?

Ladies and gentlemen, wake up. We are living in the last days when evil is considered good and good is treated as evil. Would you be willing to give up everything for Jesus? If not, Jesus says that you are not worthy of Him.

Matthew 10:38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

Some of you may think, "It is no wonder why you don't have a big congregation in this church, because you talk about this kind of things. Who wants to hear this?" I say, "You'd better hear this. Because this is the truth, and this is the reality, Christians." Jesus stood up for our sins, should you not stand up for Him?

C. THE FOOLISHNESS OF COMPROMISE

We are not going to read every verse from v16 to 29. But we need to draw our attention to v16 through 18.

2 Kings 8:16-18 Now in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Jehoshaphat having been king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat began to reign as king of Judah. 17 He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 18 And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife; and he did evil in the sight of the Lord.

The writer now shifts to the southern kingdom of Judah and tells us how king Jehoram brought apostasy and judgment to the land. For five years Jehoram served as co-regent with his father Jehoshaphat, and when Jehoshaphat died, he took the throne. Jehoram was married to Athaliah, a daughter of Ahab.

In other words, Jehoram compromised what they were supposed to do in God and allowed pagan worship to come into his kingdom.

For a believer to marry an unbeliever is a terrible compromise. Some say that there is not one good man or woman among Christians. That is nothing more than a flat out lie. It is because that person is carnal and looking for another carnal person to please his or her worldly mind. But the Word of God is crystal clear on this.

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

I've heard a Christian man said, "I am not going to marry her. We are just going out." Oh yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Go out with that none believer and just before you get serious, you will stop, huh? Here is a verse from the Word of God.

Proverbs 6:27 Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned?

D. GOD'S EVERLASTING MERCY

2 Kings 8:1-6 Then Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, "Arise and go, you and your household, and stay wherever you can; for the Lord has called for a famine, and furthermore, it will come upon the land for seven years." 2 So the woman arose and did according to the saying of the man of God, and she went with her household and dwelt in the land of the Philistines seven years. 3 It came to pass, at the end of seven years, that the woman returned from the land of the Philistines; and she went to make an appeal to the king for her house and for her land. 4 Then the king talked with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, "Tell me, please,

all the great things Elisha has done.” 5 Now it happened, as he was telling the king how he had restored the dead to life, that there was the woman whose son he had restored to life, appealing to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, “My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life.” 6 And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed a certain officer for her, saying, “Restore all that was hers, and all the proceeds of the field from the day that she left the land until now.”

If you remember what happened in chapter 5, you have to scratch your head and wonder: “I thought Gehazi became a leper and his descendants would be lepers because of his greed. Then how could he stand around the king of Israel to talk about what Elisha did? I thought a leper could not be near non-leprous people?” You are absolutely correct. This shows that this event happened before chapter 5. Remember, the ancient Hebrew writers weren’t overly concerned about keeping every event in chronological order.

At the very moment Gehazi was describing this wonderful resuscitating miracle, the mother of the child walked into the throne room. How about that for God’s timing! She had returned home only to discover that strangers had taken over her estate.

God’s timing is always perfect. We are the ones who are always impatient. I am a good example of it. Whenever I complain about the Lord’s slow schedule in my opinion, my wife Karen gives me that look. Husbands, do you know that look you get from your wife? Of course, you do.

In the midst of national and spiritual compromise, pagan worship and cannibalism, the Lord extended His mercy to this godly family to preserve them. In the midst of national dilemma and spiritual deterioration, rampant homosexuality, eroding ethic and immorality, our Lord Jesus still extends His mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Living for Jesus takes more than attending churches, reading the Bible from time to time, and praying once in a while. Either we are for Jesus or against Him. There is no middle ground.

2) We need to remember that active wickedness is always stronger than a half-hearted godliness.

3) In the midst of national dilemma and spiritual deterioration, rampant homosexuality, eroding ethic and immorality, our Lord Jesus still extends His mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments.