



RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

PETER BELLINGHAM

03 OCTOBER 2004

You shall eat the good of the land

God's word is full of great and precious promises to us. Promises of how He will help us, how He will act in our lives, how we can know His presence and His blessing in our daily lives. We looked at one of those promises last week: *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.* (1 Peter 5:6-7 NKJV) We may feel oppressed, we may be struggling with different things, but God promises He will lift us up in due time. In other words He will lift us up and renew our strength, our peace and our joy at just the right time. We can cast all of our cares on Him because He cares for us.

Sometimes our circumstances seem impossible. The challenges just seem too great. We feel like there is little or no hope for us. But God's word is full of examples of His people finding themselves in impossible situations, but God intervenes and His people have the victory. Maybe this morning you find yourself faced with situations that seem impossible. You feel quite hopeless. God wants to speak to you in the middle of your situations.

In the Old Testament there was a man called Zerubbabel. He was tasked with rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. This task was fraught with difficulties, with challenges, with dangers. It seemed like a great mountain in front of him. A mountain that would be impossible to climb over. What did God say about it?

Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.⁶ Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.⁷ Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.⁸ Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,⁹ The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.¹⁰ For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth. (Zechariah 4:5-10) Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain. . . . The task looked impossible, but what is impossible for men is possible for God. God promised that His spirit would make the task possible. The work would be completed. And God promises you this morning that the challenges you face are not impossible because He is with you. We need to trust God that He is with us and His spirit is at work to make our mountains into plains. Amen?

Now let's look back at what God said to Zerubbabel. In verse 6 and 7 God promises that His Spirit will accomplish the work. Grace, grace to it. Grace means God's working in our lives. Not our human efforts. I need lots and lots of grace. I need God to be at work in my life because I as a human am weak and incapable. Do you need grace? Do you need God to be at work in your life? I need lots of grace. Do you?

So here God is promising Zerubbabel that he will see God at work to make that mountain into a plain, to finish the temple. **When you are discouraged, remind yourself that God is with you, and that He is at work in your life because He cares for you.** But now let's look at verse 9. *The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it.* Whose hands laid the foundation? Zerubbabel's hands. Whose hands would finish the house? Zerubbabel's hands. Ah, so even though it is the Lord who is at work and makes the task possible, it is Zerubbabel that has to actually lay the stones one on top of another. Zerubbabel has a part to play in the work. In the difficult challenges you find yourself in, maybe at work, maybe at home, maybe in your heart, God is at work and He promises to make the mountain into a plain. But, you have a part to play also! If you want the victory, you must do the things God tells you to do! Even if they seem like small and insignificant things!

God wants to
speak to you in
the middle of
your situations.

Look at verse 10: *For who hath despised the day of small things? For they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel* In other words, no doubt there were people present who were saying, "Ah, this is a joke. Look at how pathetic this building project of Zerubbabel is. Surely if God was in this, it would look grand and huge and magnificent. God would tell us to do something amazing and huge." These people were despising the day of small things. God often tells us to do what seem like small things. He may show us that we need to speak a kind word to a family member. He may tell us to tell a colleague that Jesus is real and that He loves them. He may tell us to get our finances into order. Right now He is telling a handful of us to meet here on Sundays while there are many churches even in this city which have hundreds and even thousands of people in their meetings. And these things God tells us to do seem like small things. But if we will do the small things God tells us to do, the work will be accomplished and we will see God's grace and power in our lives. God was telling these people, don't despise the day of small things, you are going to see this project finished and Zerubbabel is going to finish it, because He understands that I am with him and He will do what I have told him to do.

God often tells
us to do what
seem like small
things.

God promises you this morning that the mountain before you will become like a plain. You must trust Him and believe that. But also you must do the things He tells you to do if you want to see that mountain become like a plain, if you want to see victory in your life. God's promises come with conditions. We have a part to play. ¹⁹*If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land;* ²⁰*But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.* (Isaiah 1:19-20NKJV) Do you want to eat the good of the land? It is there for you. Be willing and obedient and you will eat the good of the land.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²*"Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise:* ³*"that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."* (Ephesians 6:1-3) In other words, children, if you honor your father and mother, God promises that it will be well with you and you may live long on the earth. God makes that promise to you, but you must do your part.

Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him. (Psalm 127:3 NLT) *And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* (Ephesians 6:4 KJV) This is a word to parents, especially to fathers. Don't provoke your children; don't make them angry by treating them roughly and insensitively. Instead, bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. If you do, you will enjoy to the full the gift God has given you- your children. They will be a blessing to you, more than you can imagine, if you obey God's word in this area.

God is with us and wants to bless us. But we have a part to play. Let's look at one more example of this.

Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper. (2 Kings 5:1 KJV) So here you have a powerful, brave, honorable Syrian military commander. But he suffers from horrible skin disease- leprosy.

And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. ³ *And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.* (2 Kings 5:2-3 KJV) Naaman's wife has a little Israeli girl as her servant. Clearly Naaman and his wife have treated this little girl very well, because she longs for Naaman to be healed of his leprosy. And she knows that God's prophet in Samaria can heal him.

And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel. ⁵ *And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.* ⁶ *And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.* ⁷ *And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.* ⁸ *And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.* (2 Kings 5:4-8 KJV) Someone hears the little girl speaking about the prophet, and tells the king of Syria. He also cares for Naaman, and sends him to the king of Israel with money asking him to heal Naaman. The king of Israel knows he cannot do it, but Elisha the prophet steps forward and offers to deal with the situation, so that Naaman will know that there is a prophet in Israel, and therefore know that the God of Israel is the true God.

So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. ¹⁰ *And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.* ¹¹ *But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.* ¹² *Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them,*

and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.¹³ And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? (2 Kings 5:9-13 KJV) So Naaman, this great military commander who suffers from a horrible disease, goes to Elisha's house. Elisha sends a messenger telling him to go wash in the Jordan seven times and he will be healed. Is God offering Naaman a miracle? Is he offering to make his mountain into a plain? Is God offering him favor and blessing? A thousand times yes! Is Naaman willing and obedient? No! Why?

God says if we
humble ourselves
He will lift us up.
And we humble
ourselves through
obedience.

Naaman is a great and powerful man. He expects Elisha, the great and powerful prophet, to come out of his house and make a special prayer and wave his hands around so that Naaman can be healed. Instead, Elisha does not even come out to see him. He sends a messenger. And instead of praying some grand prayer, he tells him to go and dip seven times in the Jordan. Naaman does not want to humble himself and simply obey. His servants recognize this, and ask him, "if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" Naaman is despising the day of small things. God is saying to him, I will make your mountain like a plain. I will give you grace. But you need to humble yourself and do the one small thing I am telling you to do. Many times we are like Naaman. We are in a trial or we have a problem and we go to God for help and he shows us what to do. But we dismiss it and say, "That cannot be God, God would tell me to do something much bigger!" Or we refuse to do something that will humble us; something that we think will make us look smaller. But God says if we humble ourselves He will lift us up. And we humble ourselves through obedience.

Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. (2 Kings 5:14 KJV) Finally Naaman recognized his pride. He obeyed what God had told him to do through Elisha. And he was clean and free.

What are the difficult challenges you face in your home, in your work, in your life, in your heart? God says, humble yourself before Him and in due time He will lift you up. He resists the proud, those who say they can take care of things without Him, but He gives grace to the humble. Cast all your cares on Him. Before you, the mountain will become as a plain. You will lay the headstone on the building God has called you to build, and all around there will be shouts of "Grace, Grace!" You will emerge from the water of the Jordan clean and free. Children, God will bless your lives. Parents, your children will be a blessing to you like you could never have imagined. You will eat the fat of the land. But you must be willing and obedient. Do not despise the day of small things. Do what God shows you to do. He is with us!
