

God Provides
July 31, 2022
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2 Kings 7:1-20

We have an expression: *“When your back is against the wall.”* What does it mean? What are some ways people respond when their back is against the wall?

Desperate situations cause some people to doubt, some people to hide, some to even blame God. None of us wants to face a desperate situation, but we need to understand that God sometimes uses desperate situations to force His people to trust Him to make a way when there seems to be no way.

God had made a way for Israel time and time again. He reminded them in **Isaiah 43:15–16 (NLT)** — **15** I am the Lord, your Holy One, Israel’s Creator and King. **16** I am the Lord, who opened a way through the waters, making a dry path through the sea.

Israel’s problem was they just couldn’t seem to hang on to the memory of that “Red Sea moment” as well as all the other times God had ‘made a way.’ In today’s text Israel’s back was against the wall with seemingly no way out. The Aramean army had the capital city of Samaria surrounded and was starving the city to death. In their desperation the people were eating bizarre things like “donkey’s heads” and “dove’s dung” (6:25) and paying inflationary prices for that awful stuff! Eventually some even resorted to cannibalism (6:28-29). Israel’s king Joram the son of Ahab and Jezebel was beside himself in despair. Just like his evil parents, Joram blamed God (6:33) and God’s prophet Elisha for his dilemma. His solution was to kill Elisha! I’m not sure how that would fix the situation, but that was his plan so he and his officer went to Elisha’s house. Elisha already knew they were coming to cut off his head but instead of hiding in fear, he had a word from the Lord which he calmly delivered.

1 Elisha replied, “Listen to this message from the Lord! This is what the Lord says: By this time tomorrow in the markets of Samaria, six quarts of choice flour will cost only one piece of silver, and twelve quarts of barley grain will cost only one piece of silver.” **2** The officer assisting the king said to the man of God, “That couldn’t happen even if the Lord opened the windows of heaven!” But Elisha replied, “You will see it happen with your own eyes, but you won’t be able to eat any of it!”

- Elisha announced God’s promise: 24 hours from now inflationary prices will drop and there will be food to purchase at more reasonable prices.
- When we see the officer’s doubt and scoffing we might say, “What do you expect from a pagan?” Why should he have known better than to doubt?

- **Would you classify his doubt as skepticism or cynicism? What's the difference between the two?**ⁱ
- The skeptic would say, *"I don't see how God will do this."* The cynic would say, *"There is no way EVEN God could solve this problem."*
- **Is it ever appropriate for a Christ-follower to be a cynic? Why?**
- The first step to trusting God in a desperate situation is to stop questioning HOW He will solve our dilemma and simply BELIEVE He will!
- The officer had a hard heart and he cynically doubted God's power and provision. The next day this officer would pay a big price for his unbelief.
- Next we meet some unlikely (and unnamed) "heroes" in this story.

3 Now there were four men with leprosy sitting at the entrance of the city gates. "Why should we sit here waiting to die?" they asked each other. **4** "We will starve if we stay here, but with the famine in the city, we will starve if we go back there. So we might as well go out and surrender to the Aramean army. If they let us live, so much the better. But if they kill us, we would have died anyway." **5** So at twilight they set out for the camp of the Arameans. But when they came to the edge of the camp, no one was there! **6** For the Lord had caused the Aramean army to hear the clatter of speeding chariots and the galloping of horses and the sounds of a great army approaching. "The king of Israel has hired the Hittites and Egyptians to attack us!" they cried to one another. **7** So they panicked and ran into the night, abandoning their tents, horses, donkeys, and everything else, as they fled for their lives. **8** When the men with leprosy arrived at the edge of the camp, they went into one tent after another, eating and drinking wine; and they carried off silver and gold and clothing and hid it. **9** Finally, they said to each other, "This is not right. This is a day of good news, and we aren't sharing it with anyone! If we wait until morning, some calamity will certainly fall upon us. Come on, let's go back and tell the people at the palace." **10** So they went back to the city and told the gatekeepers what had happened. "We went out to the Aramean camp," they said, "and no one was there! The horses and donkeys were tethered and the tents were all in order, but there wasn't a single person around!" **11** Then the gatekeepers shouted the news to the people in the palace. **12** The king got out of bed in the middle of the night and told his officers, "I know what has happened. The Arameans know we are starving, so they have left their camp and have hidden in the fields. They are expecting us to leave the city, and then they will take us alive and capture the city." **13** One of his officers replied, "We had better send out scouts to check into this. Let them take five of the remaining horses. If something happens to them, it will be no worse than if they stay here and die with the rest of us." **14** So two chariots with horses were prepared, and the king sent scouts to see what had happened to the Aramean army. **15** They went all the way to the Jordan River, following a trail of clothing and equipment that the Arameans had thrown away in their mad rush to escape. The scouts returned and told the king about it. **16** Then the people of Samaria rushed out and plundered the Aramean camp. So it was true that six quarts of choice flour were sold that day for one piece of silver, and twelve quarts of barley grain were sold for one piece of silver, just as the Lord had promised.

- Verse 4: Look at the way these lepers logically outlined their options.
- My Daddy used to say, *“Do something even if it’s wrong!”* That’s an extreme statement but the principle is solid. At some point we have to do what we know to do while we wait on God to do what only He can do.
- The lepers did what they knew to do and they discovered that God had fulfilled His promise in a way no one could imagine. He scared away a mighty army with the sound of a mightier army!
- The king of Israel and all the citizens were still suffering as captives while God had already solved their problem and they had no idea.
- Ever stayed up all night to “help” God figure out the solution to your problem only to discover He had already solved it you just didn’t know it?
- In Psalm 27:14 David wrote about “Waiting on the Lord.”
- Listen to the verse: *Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!*ⁱⁱ
- Waiting on God doesn’t mean sitting paralyzed in fear. Waiting means trusting that God will make a way as only He can.
- When we are in a desperate situation we need to keep doing what we know God would have us to do and trust Him to do what only He can do.
- After the lepers gorged themselves and hid their treasures they had a stab of conscience. *“This isn’t right, we need to go tell the king.”*
- Here’s an application for us when we see the lepers spreading the word of God’s miraculous delivery for Israel. When God has brought us through a desperate time in our lives, we need to be sure we share that story with others who are going through their own desperate time. God can use our testimony of His faithfulness to encourage others in a desperate time.
- Another application: This is a beautiful picture of sharing the gospel!
- It’s been said that sharing the gospel is just *“one beggar who found bread telling other beggars where to find it.”*
- Israel’s people were enslaved by the Aramean army and starving to death. God had already solved their problem but they didn’t know it yet.
- Today people are enslaved by sin and starving for hope and life.
- God has already solved that problem through His Son Jesus; they just need to know where to go for that provision and we need to tell them!
- What was the “rest of the story” with that doubting, cynical officer?

17 The king appointed his officer to control the traffic at the gate, but he was knocked down and trampled to death as the people rushed out. So everything happened exactly as the man of God had predicted when the king came to his house.

- Was that divine retribution for doubting God or God simply letting the officer continue in his cynicism and pay the natural consequences?

- Either way, the point is the same: Doubting God's promises will always result in disaster. That's especially true when it comes to refusing to accept His promise of eternal life through Christ.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- God sometimes uses desperate situations to force His people to trust Him to make a way when there seems to be no way.
- In this story God clearly made a promise to deliver Israel and He did exactly what He said He would do (though in a way they never expected!)
- When our backs are against the wall we need to cling to the promises God has given us in His word. His track record of faithfulness can be trusted!
- We also need to trade our natural skepticism or cynicism for faith.
- The first step to trusting God in a desperate situation is to stop questioning HOW He will solve our dilemma and simply BELIEVE that He will!
- When we are in a desperate situation we also need to keep doing what we know God would have us to do and trust Him to do what only He can do.
- Finally, like those four lepers we need to spread the good news of God's deliverance in our lives by sharing our testimony of how God was faithful in the desperate times in our lives.
- Most importantly we need to share the good news of how God has already solved humanity's "spiritual starvation" through His Son Jesus.
- Desperate times will come to all of us. Hiding God's promises in our hearts NOW will prepare us for the right response when they do.

ⁱ *The Associated Press Stylebook* has a simple differentiation: "A skeptic is a

ⁱⁱ The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Ps 27:14). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.