2 Kings - Commentaries by Grandma Smith

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 1, I Lost the Ax Head

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It was not a very happy surprise. A woodchopper cannot do much if he suddenly finds that he has put all his energy into a mighty swing, and the iron ax head has suddenly flown off into the air all by itself, and he is left holding only the handle. That is not a happy surprise.

Here is how it happened. There was a group of young men, sons of the prophets, living together in the land of Israel. They decided that their living quarters were too small, so they must find a good location and build a new place.

They found the right spot by the Jordan River, and they had a supply of axes for the job. But there was one more thing to think about. Did they want Elisha to go with them? Elisha was a man of God.

When you make a plan like that, do you want a man of God to go with you? It might be hard today to find a man of God available to go with you, not to bless the job when you are done, but to be there for your every move and conversation. But you can take a Bible with you and read it daily. And you can pray about each little problem as it arises and be thankful for all that Jesus has done for you. Is that the way you face your projects? God is willing. Are you?

The men asked Elisha to go with them, and he said, “Yes.” So they set to work. One man had no ax, so he borrowed one and helped with the work as they began to cut down trees for the log building. The axes were swinging and the chips flying. Suddenly one worker held only the wooden handle as his ax head flew off and landed with a splash in the river.

Now this workman had a problem, but he knew exactly where to turn.

Do you? When you face a problem, don’t say bad words. Don’t show impatience or anger. Tell God about it. He is right there, if you want His help, and He has the answer. He cares about your problem because He loves you.

Elisha was right there, and the workman cried out, “Alas, master! for it was borrowed!” This doubled the problem. How could he return a borrowed ax if it was lost?

I wonder if you know that your life does not belong to you. It belongs to the One who gave you a beating heart before you were born. And the problem of your borrowed life is doubled if you are a lost sinner. But we are here to tell you that God has the answer, because He sent His Son to die for you.

Where did it fall? asked Elisha.

The workman showed him the place, but the problem remained. The iron ax head still lay at the bottom of the river, and wishing would not bring it up. Prayer would not bring it up. Iron is heavier than water, and there it lay, out of sight, in the mud, for the Jordan is a muddy river. Elisha could not raise it.

I wonder if you know that God Himself cannot save you without the death of His only begotten Son. Maybe you cry about your sins every day, but God cannot save you without the precious blood of Christ to remove your sins. The lost remains lost.

Then Elisha cut down a stick. Nobody asked him to. He did this himself and threw it into the water. The water had no power over the stick because it was not heavy. It did not sink. And did you know that death had no power over the Lord Jesus when He died on the cross? We die because we have no choice, but Jesus gave up His life. He is “the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

When that stick hit the water, behold, a miracle - the ax head swam! It was the very same old ax head that was lost, and yet it had a new power. It did not float; it swam! There was God-given power now, which was above the power of gravity to make it sink.

Do you want this power? Only God can give it to you. The same boy or girl who was lost can now be given victory over sin and death by the power of God. And this power must be used if you want to live for Jesus. He is an all-the-way-home Savior. Will you trust Him now?

“Take it up to thee,” said Elisha, and the workman reached out his hand and took up the ax head. And that is where we leave it. We are not told any more about that ax head, perhaps because God wants you to finish the story yourself.

What will you do with the new life God has given you? Will you use it for Himself, with the wonderful new power that God gives? It is wonderful beyond words to know that we belong to Him now and that He will change our bodies into new and glorified bodies where death has no power at all.

“The gospel of Christ. . . is the power of God unto salvation to every one that [believes]” (Romans 1:16).

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 3, What Happened to the Brass Serpent?

The children of Israel had been bitten by poisonous snakes, and God instructed Moses to make a serpent out of brass and mount it on a pole. God’s instructions were that the people only needed to look at the brass serpent to be healed of their snake bites. It was a simple matter of

look and live!

Wasn’t that a wonderful brass serpent? No, not really. The wonder was in the God who made the promise. Maybe the serpent had to be polished to keep its shine, but it was only a brass statue on a pole and had no real power of itself. God tells you this story because He wants you to see that the power is all His own. Religion will not save you.

This amazing serpent seemed to be a treasure which the people felt must not be destroyed. Keep it, they decided. It saved our lives!

Do you think that the church can save you? No, that isn’t God’s way. Do you think that some man or woman, whoever they are, could say good prayers for you and make sure that God would listen? No, that isn’t God’s way either. These people made the same mistake about the shiny brass serpent, and it seemed to grow more important to them as the years went by.

They gave the statue lots of honor. They even burned incense to it! That means they took some sweet-smelling dried plants, the best they could find, and burned them to make a cloud of scented smoke around the serpent. This seemed very nice, but they did not search to see what God had commanded, so all their sweet smells had no value at all.

God is not hard to please. He has already provided all you need to be saved: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). He does not ask you to fold your hands and pray to the cross. No, He asks you to pray to Jesus Himself - the Lord Jesus Christ. He will save you from your sins and give you power to choose His ways and to live for Him.

The king at that time was Hezekiah. The brass serpent had been treasured all through the life of David and Solomon and many others, but King Hezekiah knew that making an idol of the serpent was wrong. He didn’t trouble himself about what other great kings had done. He saw that cloud of sweet incense being offered to that ancient statue and he said, No! That’s just a piece of brass! And he broke it to pieces.

We hear no more about it, but I hope the people listened to King Hezekiah. God doesn’t want worthless worship - don’t worship “things,” no matter how valuable they may have been to you in the past.

And I hope you listen to God’s message too. We read in the Bible that our God wants worshippers!. . . He wants you! He will not make you a miserable slave, but He wants to save you from the pain and suffering of eternal punishment and give you eternal joy with Him in heaven forever.

Yes, life is a rough road, and God does not promise to take away your troubles now. But He does promise to stay with you always, until He comes to take you home to heaven.

“In the world ye shall have tribulation [trouble]: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Think About God’s Word!

1. What did the people begin to do with the brass serpent?

2. Have you ever gotten so excited by a gift that you forgot to thank the person who gave it? Have you given a gift that no one said thanks for? How do we thank God for His wonderful gift?

Project: What examples of gratefulness to the giver of a gift can you find in the Bible? Start your search in Luke 17.

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