

II Kings 3; Gen. 18:27-33; For the Sake of My People I. A Positive Presence II. The Dividing Water

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, does our presence have a positive or beneficial effect on the world around us? Does our place of work or our community in which we live experience general blessings simply by our being there? I remember being asked a few years back, would your community miss your church if you were not there? As we return to II Kings this morning, we find that not only is the army of Israel blessed because Elisha the prophet is present- they are blessed because there is a righteous king present as well. There are two main substances that this chapter revolves around- water and blood. In many ways, the ministry of both Elijah and Elisha are directly related to water. Elijah's ministry began with a terrible drought- now Elisha is found in the desert- a dry and weary land without water as well. But we also see blood- from the color of the water, the killing of an army and even the shedding of the son's blood. In many ways, blood like water holds life and death. This morning we find ourselves on the east side of the Jordan River. There 3 main people groups here on the East Side of the Jordan- we have the Ammonites up North- Moab in the middle and Edom in the south. And as you may remember, the two sons of Lot were called Ammon and Moab. So our passage begins with a son of Lot- Moab- rebelling against the sons of Abraham- Israel. And we consider this theme: Jesus Christ reveals the blessings of His presence as Israel is spared for the sake of a righteous King. This is a longer and more complicated text, but we see how the LORD spares His people once more.

### **I. A Positive Presence**

In our first point, we find that there are 3 kings who band together against 1 king. Of these kings, we know that most of the kings are wicked and idolatrous, while one king remains righteous and holy in his service of the one, true God. So we start with the son of Ahab- wicked king Jehoram or Joram wants to go to war with Moab because Moab has not been paying their dues. Moab has rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. Jehoram invites the king of Judah- righteous king Jehoshaphat- to go with him to battle against Moab. And because the Edomites were subject to Judah at this time, Edom and their

troops come along as well. So we have 3 kings of Israel, Judah and Edom going to war against 1 king. A coalition against an underdog. In order to surprise the king of Moab, these 3 kings take the longer, a 7 day desert route to the SE. However, they are caught in the desert without water- their supply runs out. There is a well-known river called the Zered Wadi which is a river valley which normally has a constant supply of water. This way the Israelite army could resupply before they entered the land of Moab. However, this river had dried up and there was no water to be found. This is an incredibly desperate situation- and the King of Israel- Jehoram- is convinced that this is a sign of God's judgement and that all three kings and their armies are going to be wiped out- v. 10. But remember, Jehoram does not know the One True God- he worships a gold calf! One of the reasons that Elisha is present- and that God allows His word to go forth- is to rebuke and chasten the King of Israel. This is Ahab's son- he is a wicked king but he is not the worst. He still holds on to the sins of Jeroboam in his idolatry. Thinking the LORD had abandoned his people. However, righteous king Jehosaphat has another view and he comes to his senses. Back in I Kings 22, Jehosaphat had agreed to align with Ahab, Joram's father, in battle- and the first thing Jehosaphat did was ask the LORD'S will by way of the prophet Micaiah. However, this time the King of Judah neglects to ask the LORD'S will until defeat seems imminent- but now on the brink of disaster- thankfully Jehosaphat remembers and seeks the LORD'S will. And who is present in their midst, none other than Elisha. So by the hand of Elisha, these 3 kings inquire of the LORD. Now the response is quite telling. If it were not for the presence of Jehosaphat, I would not even listen to your request or pay attention to your request as Elisha says v. 13 says. Talk about a humbling blow to king- You are no even worthy of my time- I would ignore you all together! You wicked king of Israel- you son of Ahab- go and consult the idols of your father! But there is another here- one whom I know and love. Righteous king Jehosephat- He is known to me- says Elisha- and more importantly he is obedient to the LORD and serves Him rightly! Although Jehosephat has chosen to be in poor company again, he does rightly inquire of the LORD and the LORD has regard for this king of Judah in the line and faith of David.

And the answer that the LORD gives to these kings is this- for the sake of this one man- because righteous King Jehosaphat is here- I will not allow your armies to perish of thirst. For the sake of this one king, the entire course of the battle is changed- defeat will be turned into victory! The fact is, the presence of the righteous in the land is not something that escapes the LORD'S attention. Remember that we have sons of Abraham going out to battle one of the sons of Lot. Do you remember what happened back in Gen. 18- specifically concerning the righteous in the land? As the LORD said in Gen. 18, if there are but 10 righteous ones in the city of Sodom, I will not destroy the city. Abraham interceded on behalf of the city- and according to the request of Abraham, the LORD promises- if there were but 10 righteous ones- that city would be spared. And even though there were not 10 righteous ones to be found, the angels still took Lot and his wife by the hand so that the destruction would not sweep them away. If Lot was the only righteous man tormented by what he saw around him- this one would not be left behind! Not one of the lost sheep will be lost! Here we have but 1 righteous man- obedient Jehosaphat- and because of him these kings and their armies would not be destroyed. The fact is, the presence of God's people upon this earth is a gift from God's hand. God could simply remove His people- bring them up to heaven as soon as they believe- but our LORD leaves them on earth to be salt and light- a witness to the world. But He also leaves His people the earth so that His people might learn to be blessing to those around them. Jehosaphat did not know it before- but by the words of Elisha it becomes clear- because of you- because of my love for you- I will spare this army. It seems that if Jehosaphat was not present, God would have handed this army into the hands of Moab. So the worldly, wicked king ends up benefitting from the presence of this one, righteous man. Just as kings would benefit from the presence of Joseph, Daniel and Nehemiah. Egypt would be spared from the famine because the line of Abraham was present in Joseph! God will not wipe the righteous away along with the wicked. In II Kings 3 we catch a glimpse of what is going on behind the scenes. God will not ignore, forsake nor neglect His own. Even the death of His faithful one is something precious in His eyes as

Psalm 116 says. We do not always know why things happen- and why hardships fall on those who are God's people. But v. 14 makes clear- God regards the cry of His own- He sees them- and He will not shut His ears to their request for aid! So the first application should be one of comfort- even if you are surrounded by the wicked and forced to dwell in the company of the rebellious. Even if it seems like you alone are left- God still has regard for you- He sees you- He knows you- He loves you- and He hears your cry for help! No church is too small- no saint so insignificant that they escape God's attention! For the sake of this one man- this army will be spared. Again we see that the prayer of the righteous is powerful! Don't let the overwhelming numbers of the wicked cause you to fear- God has a remnant- He knows His own- and His ear is inclined to their prayers! And as Jer. 29 tells those in captivity, be a blessing to the city in which you dwell. Pray for the peace of the land in which you dwell- for in its welfare you will find your welfare. So we are not surprised to hear that the welfare of these kings and their armies are secured when the one righteous king requests the aid of the LORD. And sometimes God is pleased to bless the world for the sake of His people who live in the land. God may choose to bless the city in which we dwell as we pray for that blessing on their behalf.

## **II. The Dividing Water**

So in order to bless his child- to spare this army from annihilation, the Lord promises water by the words of Elisha. As Elijah said to Ahab- only at my word will it rain again. So v. 16 reads- I will make this dry streambed full of pools. This riverbed will become filled with water and your life and the lives of your animals will be spared. Streams of water will run down into the valley- but without storm cloud or wind. It will be a miraculous and unexplained miracle and a gracious provision by the Lord's hand. But as miraculous as this provision of water is, Elisha continues in v. 18 by saying- not only will you have water, I will give you a complete victory today as well. I will deliver the Moabites into your hand! So we come to v. 20- and at the time of offering sacrifice, water comes from the direction of Edom and the people drink and are refreshed. Again, note the reference to sacrifice. And as the Moabites come upon the

Israelites, they see what appears to be blood to them- and they think that these 3 armies have already attacked and killed one another. So we see that this water is really making a division- a separation of sorts. To some, the arrival of water is a blessing as their life is spared. But to Moab, the water appears to be blood and hastens to their own doom! The Moabites think that these 3 armies are dead and they rush in to take the spoil and plunder these dead bodies. So they approach the camp of Israel quite unprepared for battle- with their swords in their sheaths and their defenses down. So the army of Israel, Judah and Edom get up from their place, newly refreshed from the water, and easily beat down the Moabites until they flee before them in v. 24. Water and blood have a dividing function in Scripture- so this concept is not new. To some, the presence of blood is a harbinger of doom, to others blood is a promise of life! Think of the first Passover, the Israelites who were under the blood and had the lamb's blood smeared on their doorpost would be rescued- their life spared. While those who did not have blood to cover them tasted the sword of the destroying angel. And even the first of the 10 Plagues- water turns into blood. This bloody water not only stunk, it killed all the fish that lived in the water and the people were forced to look elsewhere for water to drink. The Israelites were forbidden from drinking blood because life is in the blood as Dt. 12 puts it. So why does the LORD cause the water to appear to be blood? Well, Moab believes that this is the blood of her enemies- but it ends up being a sign of their own blood soon to be shed. Moab had rebelled against Israel- and it would cost them their blood! The fact is- rebels deserve to die. Now I do not want to push this point beyond the meaning of our text- but Scripture does make it clear that without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness. The point is clear- sinful rebels who cast off the yoke of their rightful king deserve to have their blood shed for this treasonous act.

So where are we in this passage- where do we find our place in this narrative of II Kings 3. Well, the first place we see ourselves is in the rebellion of Moab. All mankind is like the Moabites- we rebel against our rightful King as we seek to throw off the bonds of God's yoke. All men are treasonous- like Moab-

who sought to cast off the bonds of allegiance to the king of Israel. That is one way to see ourselves in this narrative. Another is to look at the righteous King in our text. The only hope for a lost, sinful humanity is that a righteous King would come and plead our cause! Although we deserve to die of thirst in our sins, our only hope is that righteous King Jesus plead our cause and secure our deliverance. Think about this- we too can see that there is nothing in us that would cause God to look on us- to remember us- to pay any attention to us! The only reason that God hears and answers our prayers is because we are in Christ- our place is in the body of the righteous and holy King Jesus! And that brings us back to this concept of blood- someone's blood has been shed for us! It makes all the difference in the world doesn't it- on which side of the blood do you stand? Does the blood of the Lamb of God cover you- then His blood becomes your healing and restoration- life to your soul! If not, the blood of Jesus is a promise of future death and destruction as Moab here receives! But if you are in the camp of the Righteous King- your life will be spared! So the Israelites go out and obey the Word of the LORD- they carry out God's judgement on the land in v. 25 as they razed the cities, stopped up the wells of water, threw rocks on the good land and cut down every good tree. The territory of Moab would be a reminder that there is a God in Israel- that Elisha is His prophet and Jehoshaphat His servant the good king. The LORD continues to deliver and rescue His people- even though we have these wicked kings- for the sake of the one righteous one the LORD acts on His behalf and for the sake of His name.

Our passage concludes with the shedding of blood once more. Meshah, the King of Moab, knows that he cannot win. He tries to break out through the line in v. 26 but is repelled, so he does what he thinks is the only thing that will help. He sacrifices his own son. So in v. 27 he offers his oldest son as a burnt offering- in the sight of everyone killing his own flesh and blood. This son was to be king- and in killing the prince the King of Moab makes it clear that his line is at an end. Now this despicable act is linked to the worship of the false god Chemosh- who is very similar in function the god Moloch. Child sacrifice was a common and accepted practice by which they tried to secure their god's help. So this son of the

king is killed- and the battle concludes- so the Israelites return to their own land. Although the land has been ruined, the people of Moab remain in rebellion and the king of Israel continues to diminish in power, rank and influence. Moab is ruined, but the King of Israel does not gain the victory either. Yes, the King of Israel may enjoy a short reprieve from the justice of God for the sake of the Righteous King Jehosaphat, that justice will come soon enough. The line of Ahab will be wiped out, and God's word will be fulfilled. Jehoram- later called Joram- will die for his sins in chapter 9 to fulfill the words of the Elijah pronounced against Ahab. So Joram's time will come- but for now his life and army are spared because he stands in the company of God's servant.

To conclude, understanding how the church influences and impacts this world and the time of God's justice helps us live sober lives today. God is patient as II Peter 3 says- and in His patience He keeps the church in this world and gives man time to repent. He will not remove all testimony concerning His name- a remnant will remain in the land- and until that entire number of saints is gathered, this fallen world will be allowed to endure. The day of judgement and justice is held back until the last lost sheep of Israel is gathered. And when that day comes, those who are in the camp of the Righteous King will be spared! Jesus Christ reveals the blessings of His presence as Israel is spared for the sake of a righteous King. Sometimes, God blesses a city or a nation for the sake of His people living within. Other times, God may choose to bring destruction on the city or nation for their rebellion against His Word- but rest assured that God's people will not be forgotten. At the end of this chapter, we have to say-God's ways are not our ways! His ways are beyond all tracing out! So may we all learn to submit to the providence of God in humility, and may we learn to run to the only, truly righteous King as we seek our life, provision and rescue from His hand!