

# BIBLE BRIEFING

## “Stare Because You Care”

Second Kings 8:7-15

**2 Kings 8:7** 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."

**2 Kings 8:8** 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?' "

**2 Kings 8:9** 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?' "

**2 Kings 8:10** And Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You shall certainly recover.' However the LORD has shown me that he will really die."

**2 Kings 8:11** Then he set his countenance in a stare until he was ashamed; and the man of God wept.

**2 Kings 8:12** 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."

**2 Kings 8:13** 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."

**2 Kings 8:14** 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."

**2 Kings 8:15** 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.

Elisha and Hazael got into a staring contest. Elisha won, but it led him to tears. The sense of verse eleven is this:

**He**, Elisha, set his gaze upon Hazael until Hazael turned away from Elisha in shame; then Elisha wept.

Face-to-face with Elisha, God's Word exposed the innermost thoughts of Hazael's heart, laying open and bare his hidden intentions to murder Ben-Hadad. He went away denying what God's Word declared, yet quickly carried out his murderous intentions.

We'd call this a word of knowledge. The Holy Spirit supernaturally revealed to Elisha something he could not have otherwise known.

The word of knowledge is a specific gift, given at certain times. The bigger picture here is the reminder that the Word of God is **always** a revealer of the thoughts and the intentions of the heart.

The writer to the Hebrews put it this way, in Hebrews 4:12-13, saying,

**Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

**Hebrews 4:13** And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account.

God's Word brought Hazael face-to-face with his own heart; he went away unchanged.

God's Word brings **you** face-to-face with *your* own heart; the question to ask yourself is, "*How do I go away?*"

I'm going to suggest to you that a big reason Christians don't go away changed is that they don't expect each reading, or each Bible study they attend or hear, to have a personal application. Your attitude ought always to be that there is *something* in what you are reading or hearing that **is** for you - a Word from God, anointed by His Spirit, to expose your heart.

Hazael didn't expect the Word to be for himself; that's a big reason why he went away unchanged.

**2 Kings 8:7** 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."

Fearing God, Elisha feared no man. Ben-Hadad had previously sought to capture Elisha, probably to imprison or execute him. Told to go to Damascus, Elisha doesn't hesitate for a moment. He knows that God will deliver him *from* Ben-Hadad... Or that God will deliver him *through* the trial.

**2 Kings 8:8** 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?' "

Ben-Hadad would be content to recover. What he needed was to be regenerated!

There are lots of "recovery" programs; they can have their place; God can use them. But what men and women and children need is to be regenerated.

Hazael was an advisor to the king of Syria - apparently a trusted advisor. Ben-Hadad's trust in Hazael would prove fatal.

**2 Kings 8:9** 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?' "

It was the custom in those days to bring gifts to the prophet when asking for ministry. The gifts sustained them in their work for the Lord. This was a particularly generous gift - forty camel loads. Elisha no doubt sent them on to the schools of the prophets.

Earlier in Second Kings Elisha had refused a generous gift from Namaan; now he accepts a generous gift from Ben-Hadad. This tells us to practice discernment when people want to give generous gifts to the Lord. The Lord doesn't always need their gifts; and, knowing their hearts, He knows if the gift is sincere or insincere.

**2 Kings 8:10** And Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You shall certainly recover.' However the LORD has shown me that he will really die."

Ben-Hadad's disease was not fatal; he would not die from it. But he *would* die - **at the hand of Hazael**.

**2 Kings 8:11** Then he set his countenance in a stare until he was ashamed; and the man of God wept.

**He**, Elisha, set his gaze upon Hazael until Hazael turned away from Elisha in shame; then Elisha wept.

Elisha wept because of the destruction that was shortly to come upon his people in Israel at the hands of Hazael. They deserved it; but it was grievous nonetheless. Even when people deserve their judgment, we ought to search our hearts for mercy.

Hazael came to get a word from the Lord for Ben-Hadad. He never expected to get a word for himself - never expected to have his heart exposed by God, to see the thoughts and the intentions of his heart laid bare, naked for all to see.

I'm suggesting that believers can and do fall into this kind of "expectation complacency."

1. Wives - How many times have you thought that a particular message was just perfect for your husband, but he went away unchanged?
2. Husbands - How many times have you thought that a particular message was just perfect for your wife, but she went away unchanged?

It's so easy to see the need or needs someone else has to change, and so hard to see our own hearts!

Each of us needs the Holy Spirit's surgery in certain areas of our heart. There are attitudes that stem from our flesh - attitudes which are hateful and hurtful and need to be healed. God's Word is the spiritual scalpel the Holy Spirit applies to open us and remove these maladies.

Only God's Word can truly expose, and therefore bring healing, to your heart. We quoted Hebrews 4:12 & 13 and saw that the Word of God discerns between your **soul** and your **spirit**. **Nothing else can do that!**

On a practical level, you'd be better off going to *any* Bible study than weeks or years of therapy. Jesus is already your Counselor, and is present when His Word is read or declared. The Holy Spirit dwells in you – doing surgery from deep within.

(It reminds me of *The Fantastic Voyage*, where they shrunk-down a team of surgeons and injected them into a person to do surgery from within!).

I don't understand at all why people turn to humanistic psychology. Psychological therapy is really a philosophy – not a science at all. And, as I am fond of reminding you, there is no such thing as Christian psychology.

There are a couple of ways to approach this subject of expecting God's Word to expose your heart. There is a kind of gloomy, fearful, fretting approach that only always expects the worst. This, though, makes you a spiritual handicap; it cripples you in your walk.

I prefer David's approach in the Psalms. It is summarized in Psalm 139:23 and 24, where David says,

**Psalms 139:23** Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;

**Psalms 139:24** And see if *there is any* wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

David acknowledges the **wicked ways** that are still a part of your heart. But the exposing of them is to the end of God **leading [you] in the way everlasting!**

Not all spiritual heart surgery falls into the category of correction. There is a kind of exposing of your heart that is comforting.

In Psalms 26:2-3 David says,

**Psalms 26:2** Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart.

**Psalms 26:3** For Your lovingkindness *is* before my eyes, And I have walked in Your truth.

This is wonderful! Regardless your wickedness and natural depravity, God's Word can *also* expose your faithfulness and other spiritual qualities God is building into your life. After all, if you are growing, it ought to be reflected in an examination of your heart.

Verses four through six of Psalm 26 go on to say,

**Psalms 26:4** I have not sat with idolatrous mortals, Nor will I go in with hypocrites.

**Psalms 26:5** I have hated the assembly of evildoers, And will not sit with the wicked.

**Psalms 26:6** I will wash my hands in innocence; So I will go about Your altar, O LORD,

Your heart *is* deceitful and wicked; but God knows it and can expose it so you can deal with it and grow! Expect Him to do it as you apply His Word to yourself first. His Word also exposes your growth; expect the Lord to show you your progress in areas where you've changed, trusting in His grace to make you more like Jesus.

Hazael went away unchanged. His wicked thoughts and intentions exposed, he protests but then carries them out.

We pick up the story in verse twelve:

**2 Kings 8:12** 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."

These are the terrible atrocities associated with warfare and conquest. While Elisha sees them as future, they are already present in Hazael's heart.

Hazael objects to Elisha's spiritual diagnosis:

**2 Kings 8:13** 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."

So many items in the news repulse us, and well they should. More and more people *are* acting like animals.

**2 Kings 8:14** 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."

**2 Kings 8:15** 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.

God, in His foreknowledge, saw ahead to what Hazael would do. He told Hazael in a word of knowledge.

Could Hazael have changed? *God always allows for repentance!*  
The very exercise of revealing hearts indicates the ability to change.  
With *responsibility* comes *ability*.

Why not warn Ben-Hadad? The word of knowledge, and other gifts, need to be exercised according to God's will, not our own. The Lord didn't tell Elisha to warn Ben-Hadad!

## Conclusion

God's Word brings you face-to-face with the Lord. There are times you will be ashamed, as you see what is really in your heart. There are times you will be awed, as you see what is really in your heart. Second Corinthians 3:18 says,

**2 Corinthians 3:18** But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Think of it this way: One day you will look into the eyes of Jesus. It will be in Heaven, at His reward seat. His gaze will destroy anything in your life not worthy of Heaven; and it will reveal and finish all those things done in His name. He won't turn and weep! His expression will be one of joy.

Do all you can to increase the length of His gaze, and the smile on His face, in that fantastic future encounter!