

Today's Quick Word 2 Kings 7:8-9

By Bruce Christian

2 KINGS 7:8-9 *The men who had leprosy reached the edge of the camp and entered one of the tents. They ate and drank, and carried away silver, gold and clothes, and went off and hid them. They returned and entered another tent and took some things from it and hid them also. Then they said to each other, "We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace."*

This is one of those parts of the Bible that make me feel very uncomfortable. This is not surprising because the Author of Hebrews tells us, "the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12). A reason for my continuing to use the M'Cheyne program for reading through the whole Bible is that it requires me to be confronted with challenges that I might otherwise try to avoid - like today's passage!

The powerful Aramean army had held the city of Jerusalem under siege for a very long time, leaving God's people destitute, helpless and perishing. Four starving lepers had decided to leave the doomed city and take their chances with the besieging

army camped outside - it couldn't be any worse than just dying inside the city!

They couldn't believe their good fortune in finding the Aramean camp deserted, because they were not aware that "the Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a great army, so that they said to one another, "Look, the king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us!" So they got up and fled in the dusk and abandoned their tents and their horses and donkeys. They left the camp as it was and ran for their lives." (6-7).

The first reaction of the four lepers was to get stuck into the food and start hiding the treasures for their own future benefit. They didn't get very far with this plan before their consciences got the better of them, and they saw their responsibility to take the good news of this miraculous deliverance back into the city!

Are we among those who have discovered even greater deliverance and treasure in Jesus, and are feasting at his table on the Bread of Life and the Living Water found only in him, but are not sharing this good news with others? If so, are we feeling convicted and uncomfortable that "We're not doing right.?"

Today's Quick Word Hosea 1:8-10

By Bruce Christian

HOSEA 1:8-10 *After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son. Then the LORD said, "Call him Lo-Ammi, for you are not my people, and I am not your God. "Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people', they will be called 'sons of the living God'.*

We might struggle with God's enigmatic Providence today as we see suffering throughout the world, especially in the case of our many persecuted brothers and sisters, and as we experience suffering in our own nation, in our families and in our personal lives.

But the Prophet Hosea has an important message for us: he had to inform God's loved, chosen people, Israel, that, because of their sin, they were NO LONGER 'loved' and they were NO LONGER [HIS] PEOPLE! To give this 'shocking' message a more powerful impact, the faithful Prophet was even required to marry an adulterous prostitute, Gomer, and then for them to give two of their children the strange names, 'Lo-Ruhamah' ('not loved') and 'Lo-Ammi' ('not my people'). Their HOLY, Covenant-binding God, the LORD, knew that it was going to need something as confronting and drastic as this to get them to see just how abhorrent their sinful, idolatrous behaviour was to him, and the devastating impact it had on their relationship with him! Did it not mean anything to them that they were his special, 'redeemed' people, to whom he had spoken, loudly and clearly, through Moses: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no

other gods before me. ..." (Exodus 20:1ff)?

But Hosea shows us an amazing truth concerning God's Providence: no matter how confusing it might be to us at any particular time, it is ALWAYS undergirded by GRACE! Notice the strange words given to the Prophet: "In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people', they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

The Apostle Paul takes up this point as he, himself, grapples with the problem of God's Providence in Romans 9-11. He writes: "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel." (Romans 9:2-4a) and later adds: "As he says in Hosea: '... It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," they will be called "sons of the living God"' (Romans 9:25-26). The point Paul is making in Romans 9-11 is that God's Covenant promises MUST hold good, and that even the hardening of Israel's heart, and the subsequent suffering that ensued, are all part of God's Providence, as HIS fore-ordained means of bringing the 'not my people' GENTILES to faith.

In the light of all this, as we struggle with God's Providence today, let us never lose sight of his gracious PROMISES! And let us all pray earnestly, in an attitude of repentance-and-faith, that God will show us his mercy and grace in these troubled days!

Today's Quick Word Psalm 119:111-112

By Bruce Christian

PSALM 119:111-112 *Your statutes are my heritage for ever; they are the joy of my heart. My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end.*

How blessed we are to live in a country where we have ready access to the Scriptures in our own language. Those of us who are older (today is my 80th birthday!) can remember a time when we could, as a nation, say, "Your statutes are my heritage" - when the Bible's teaching was generally respected and regarded as God's revealed truth even if, in practice, it wasn't 'the joy of our heart'.

But now we have lost that sense of the Bible's 'authority' in our culture, our legislative processes, and our educational system. We can't do much about this disturbing trend when it is being

championed so strongly in all platforms of the media, but we CAN do something about it at a personal level.

As I read these verses today, it made me realise just how much God's 'statutes' really are my 'heritage' and the 'joy of my heart' - and the more I read the Bible, the truer this becomes. So I was also particularly challenged by verse 112: Is 'my heart SET on keeping [God's] decrees to the very end'?

The Hebrew word for 'heart' really includes the 'mind', so I ask myself, "Do I strive to maintain a 'mindset' that is directed by God's revealed truth rather than by all the pressures of my surrounding culture, even when this means 'swimming against the tide' and being criticised/mockered and 'written off' as an 'out-of-touch' 'fundamentalist'?"