

A Different Perspective
Having Faith That Moves Mountains (2)
09-23-3
Four Nobodies

Have you ever met a Mr or Mrs Super Christian!?? I have. These people have their lives so incredibly together and they seem so strong in their faith – that you go home, look in the mirror and think to yourself “I, I could never be like that. I’m hopeless. I’m a failure.”

Funny, funny how we look at things through the world’s eyes. Just because on the outside someone appears confident, and they can tell us the good stories of their lives, we assume that they are perfection personified. And we know for sure that we’re not. But if someone has a position or a title or something like that – we think – well, they’re better than me.

Over the last couple of days on the program, we’ve been looking at a time in Israel’s history that is best described as rock bottom. The city of Samaria was under siege by the Aramean army. There was no food. Things were so desperate that, well, mothers were killing and eating their children.

Now God had a plan – and His plan was to bless His people. And you and I we’d imagine that He’s going to use the king – the king of Israel to bless His people. Or maybe God’s Prophet, Elisha – God’s man on the ground. That’s because we look at it from a human perspective.

But God did neither of those things. He chooses, well not even ordinary people like you and me, because He wanted to make a point. So He chooses the least of the least.

I would like to introduce you now to the four key characters of this story. Let me emphasise that these men aren’t from the Bible “A list”. They’re no Abraham or Paul, or Moses or Elijah. They’re so far down the pecking order that they don’t even have names. In fact they’re lepers. Outcasts. They’re unclean. That’s why they’re sitting at the gate. They were cast out. That’s what it meant. They didn’t get to live with everybody else in safety inside the city walls. The leper colony was on outside the walls, outside the protection of the city.

If there were a social register in Samaria, these men would be so far down the bottom that they wouldn’t even make it on the list,

because as far as the people inside the safety of the city were concerned, these men didn't even belong. They are at the complete opposite end of the social scale to the king.

Now there were four leprous men outside the city gate, who said to one another, "Why should we sit here until we die? If we say, 'Let us enter the city,' the famine is in the city, and we shall die there; but if we sit here, we shall also die. Therefore, let us desert to the Aramean camp; if they spare our lives, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die."
(2 Kings 7:3,4)

It turns out that these four nobodies asked the very best question they could ask: *Why should we sit here until we die?*

There they are at the gate. They look back over their shoulders. That's not an option – everybody's starving in there. Go there and we're going to die. They look down at their feet. That's not an option either – what are they going to do. Stay here – right here at the gate and starve here? They look out towards their enemies. They shudder. But you know something? It's the only option with any hope of success, however slim that hope may appear from where they sat.

So they arose at twilight to go to the Aramean camp; but when they came to the edge of the Aramean camp, there was no one there at all. (2 Kings 7:5)

Imagine, it is twilight. The sun's just gone down. The first of the stars are just starting to come out, and you and I are two of those four lepers sitting at the gate. We've thought it through. It's logical. Our hunger tells us so. We know that if we sit here much longer, we're going to die. So we get up, and we start that long walk to the Aramean camp.

How do we feel? Do we feel jubilant? Do we feel excited? I do not think so. I think we're sick in the stomach. We've weighed up our chances and they're slim at best. Five percent, ten percent at best? Every fibre of our beings wants to stay put. To preserve our lives for just a few more hours. Maybe a few more days. As our feet sandals crunch in the dirt, we look up at the stars staring to appear and in our heart of hearts, we know that this will be our last twilight.

It is such a long walk that walk. A kilometre. Two? Three? Out to the Aramean camp across the open ground. Across "no-man's land" But then, then we arrive at the Aramean camp and something strange is going on. Have a listen (2 Kings 7:5-8):

So they arose at twilight to go to the Aramean camp; but when they came to the edge of the Aramean camp, there was no one there at all. For the Lord had caused the Aramean army to hear the sound of chariots, and of horses, the sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, "The king of Israel has hired the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Egypt to fight against us." So they fled away in the twilight and abandoned their tents, their horses, and their donkeys leaving the camp just as it was, and fled for their lives.

When these leprous men had come to the edge of the camp, they went into a tent, ate and drank, carried off silver, gold, and clothing, and went and hid them. Then they came back, entered another tent, carried off things from it, and went and hid them.

Where is everyone? I stick my head in this tent. It's full of stuff – but there's no one there. You stick your head in the next tent. Same thing. What's going on? We wander around the tents, in absolute disbelief.

The one thing these lepers hadn't banked on was God. Surely God wouldn't be in that hopeless place with them. Surely God wouldn't help them – lepers after all – against a mighty army. If God would help anyone, it would be the king. He was after all God's anointed. He's the one that God would help.

As Dr Barry Chant, the one of my lecturers at Bible College put it – **when we step out, God steps in.** In fact as catchy and as memorable as that is, it's not quite correct, because what these lepers discovered when they stepped out, was that God had already stepped in. God had gone before them and driven the mighty army out.

And what happened was exactly according to the Word of God through the Prophet Elisha. It was unbelievable! So eventually, after they've played in Aladdin's cave for a while they go back and tell everyone. At first, the king and the people won't believe them. They send out scouts to confirm that these, these, these lepers after all are telling them. And then, finally the nation figures out that God showed up. Get it. Not through the king, but through four lepers. The king thought it was a trap. But eventually, well, have listen.

So the messengers returned, and told the king. The people went out, and plundered the camp of the Arameans. So a measure of choice meal was sold for a shekel, and two

measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD. (2 Kings 7:9-16)

Exactly as the Prophet Elisha had predicted the day before. I love this part of the story. God's just done an amazing miracle. And it's discovered by four lepers who decided to step out of the misery and gloom and hopelessness, not out of some great altruistic sense of faith. But because they had to. They stepped and they walked into God's miracle. They bumped into God's miracle and they were blessed. But the one man who wasn't blessed was the captain of the king's guard. Have a listen to what it says:

Now the king had appointed the captain on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate; the people trampled him to death in the gate, just as the man of God had said when the king came down to him. For when the man of God had said to the king, "Two measures of barley shall be sold for a shekel, and a measure of choice meal for a shekel, about this time tomorrow in the gate of Samaria," the captain had answered the man of God, "Even if the LORD were to make windows in the sky, could such a thing happen?" And he had answered, "You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat from it." It did indeed happen to him; the people trampled him to death in the gate. (2 Kings 7:17-20)

God did an amazing miracle that day. Not through the king, not through the prophet but through four hapless lepers.