

Devotion 15:

Our Father Preserves Many For The Sake Of One

II Kings 1—25

They are called “teachers’ pets.” I was one of them. That is why when recess was winding down, classmates would push me toward the playground supervisor, hoping that my plea would stand a better chance of being favorably received and the precious gift would be granted—extended recess time. I didn’t fully understand or appreciate the dynamics at the time. I have come to see how it works, though, in church meetings, at work gatherings, and even around family functions. If one participant in particular speaks for something, that something has a better chance of coming into existence than if that person had remained silent, or worse, spoken against the idea.

As I read II Kings, that concept goes through my mind. For example, the prophet Elisha is a major player in our Father’s drama in this book. He is blessed incredibly by God with a double portion of the spirit than even Elijah had before him. (2:9) He becomes known as “*a man of God.*” (8:8) And, like Jesus, Elisha goes about doing much good for many with the power he has from God.

In this book 15 kings continue to act as most of their predecessors did in I Kings: they “*do evil in the eyes of the Lord.*” In fact, even some of the few kings who do what is right fail to remove “*the high places.*” (15:35) The disobedience leads our Father to reprimand the divided kingdom by allowing the Assyrians to take Israel, the 10 tribes in the north, captive in 722 B.C. and allowing the southern kingdom, Judah (and Benjamin) to be taken captive by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. In other words, He did what He said He would do if the children of Israel did not keep their part of the covenant:

“But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those you allow to remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will give you trouble in the land where you will live. And then I will do to you what I plan to do to them.” (Num. 33:55-56)

But our Father’s love is tremendously longsuffering and hope appears amid the repeated failures of Israel and Judah:

“Jehoram...king of Judah...did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Nevertheless, for the sake of his servant David, the Lord was not willing to destroy Judah. He had promised to maintain a lamp for David and his descendants forever.” (8:16-19)

This promise is repeated in 19:34:

“I will defend this city (Jerusalem) and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant.”

Reading through II Kings is a sad and painful reminder of our daily existence with the sinful flesh. We relate all too well with Paul's words in Romans 7:21-24:

“So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

We sin. We fall short of the glory of God. Over and over again. But, praise God, our Father preserves many for the sake of One:

“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
Rom. 8:1

“For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Again, the gift of God is not like the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” (Rom. 5:15b-19)