

Knowing God in the Word

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. Philippians 3:10.

Death in the Pot

II Kings 4:38-41 records a very interesting story from the ministry of the prophet Elisha. There, we read,

38. And Elisha returned to Gilgal, and there was a famine in the land. Now the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and he said to his servant, "Put on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets." 39. So one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered from it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, though they did not know what they were. 40. Then they served it to the men to eat. Now it happened, as they were eating the stew, that they cried out and said, "Man of God, there is death in the pot!" And they could not eat it.

Here a very interesting event is recorded for us. Elisha's servant is preparing a large pot of stew for him and his "school of prophets." A man, one of the "sons of the prophets," accidentally adds a poison gourd to the stew pot. When they begin to eat, they discover that it is poisoned, and so the prophets say to Elisha, "Man of God, there is death in the pot!"

Elisha is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ in many of the things he did, and many of his miracles foreshadowed the miracles Christ would do. In this miracle, I believe he was foreshadowing what the Lord would do regarding the sin and death in our world. As we look at our world around us, there is nothing that strikes us more obviously than the fact that there is sin and death in the world. Whether it be to look at the immorality that surrounds us, the violence of our times, or the lack of interest in the things of God, it is clear that our world is full of sin. And everything from hospitals to morgues to cemeteries witness to us that our world is full of the effects of death. Indeed, we could say to God, "Oh, Lord, there is death in the pot!" And there is. There is death in this world, and it has contaminated the whole pot.

41. So he said, "Then bring some flour." And he put it into the pot, and said, "Serve it to the people, that they may eat." And there was nothing harmful in the pot.

Now Elisha asks for some flour, and puts it into the pot. Once he does so, the stew is harmless, and is perfectly fine to eat. What strikes us about this is that there is certainly nothing inherent in flour that would cause it to take away the poison from a gourd in a batch of stew. Flour, in its natural capacity, would be totally worthless for removing poison from a pot. It is clear in this story that it was not the flour that did the job, but that only the power of God could have removed the death from this pot.

In the same way, we realize that there are no natural means of removing the corruption of sin and death from this world. Many politicians and world leaders try to deal with the things that corrupt our world. Many men have schemes for how they are going to solve this world's problems and bring about a utopia on earth. Yet ultimately, all such schemes fail, and we realize that only God's power could remove the poison of sin and death that stains our world. As we cry, "O Lord, there is death in the pot of this world!" we realize that He is the only one who can truly do a work that would remove from this world the death that has corrupted it. There are no natural means by which this pollution of sin and death can be removed. Only God can remove death from the pot.

And God will remove it, through Jesus Christ! As John the Baptist said in John 1:29b:

“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

Yes, Jesus Christ is the only one who can save this world from the poison of sin and death that has corrupted it.

For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. John 3:17.

Yes, He can remove death from this world, and He will do so someday in His kingdom. As the Holy Spirit wrote through Paul in I Corinthians 15:54-56:

54. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

55. "O Death, where is your sting?

O Hades, where is your victory?"

56. The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank the Lord that, though sin and death have corrupted this world, death will not have the final victory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, death will be defeated at last. He is the only One Who can ever do the work that will finally and forever remove death from the pot.

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