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## **Donkey Heads and Dove Dung Part 1**

By Mark Gorman

In 2 Kings, Chapter 6, we find the story of a Syrian King, Ben-Hadad, laying siege to the city of Samaria. The Bible says that the siege was so complete that famine quickly spread throughout the city. In verse 25, conditions had reached such a state that people were actually selling donkey heads and dove dung for food! Things were not looking good for the inhabitants of Samaria. Who would save them?

Enter heroes. An unlikely bunch for sure: four crippled lepers, and the story finds them sitting at the city gates. There they sat, men who assuredly would have been forgotten the moment they died, now immortalized forever, because of the decisions they were about to make that day. There are many leadership principles we can glean from these lepers. We'll begin by examining the question they were forced to answer at the onset of the story, "What do we do now?" Let's listen in on their conversation (2 Kings 7:3-4):

"Why are we sitting here until we die? If we say, 'We will enter the city,' the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die."

How is that for dire straits? Let's take some time to analyze the options these lepers faced.

The first option was to return to the city, but why would they even consider going back into that famine-filled place? Well, we must understand that these lepers had spent their entire lives yearning to be accepted in the City of Samaria, a city that never loved them in return. Their whole lives, they were forced to wear brightly colored clothing, so they could be recognized from a distance as lepers. They were also commanded by law to cry

out, "Unclean!" every time someone came near to them. In other words, from morning to night, they were to make a public spectacle of themselves, forever reinforcing with their own mouths their complete rejection from society. Underneath it all, they just wanted to be normal. But it's critical that we all understand, maybe being normal isn't the highest calling in life. Maybe fitting in is not the goal we should be pursuing. It's amazing how we can so easily fall in love with, and pursue after, things that will never be able to love us in return. The lepers had to stop pursuing the city, because all the city held for them was certain death. To dismiss the option of going back, the lepers had to realize that maybe what they had wanted so badly their whole lives wasn't what they really needed.

Next was the option to stay right where they were. This option was all about self pity. Their minds must have raged, "Why try? No matter what we do, we're going to die." Self pity seeks to bind. Have you ever allowed yourself to be paralyzed by circumstances? Just as the lepers did, we must overcome self pity, which beckons us to sit and die, if we are ever going to have a chance to reach our full potential.

But their final option was easily the craziest of them all. Many of us would have quickly dismissed such foolishness. Did they really entertain the thought of marching out to the Syrian camp alone? The largest obstacle to this course of action was fear. Fear makes strong men think themselves weak. There are many times that we don't step out and take a risk out of fear of losing what we have, or losing what is familiar. And fear can attack anyone. Even four diseased lepers rejected from a city full of famine can fear losing what they have. In order for these lepers to choose to move forward, they had to come to a new understanding: an understanding that they had nothing to lose.

So these four lepers chose to do the unthinkable. They grabbed their canes and hobbled out towards the camp of their enemies. Next week we will see how this amazing story ends. I know you'll be blown away when you find out what these four lepers were able to accomplish once they understood they had nothing to lose.

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