DOVER DAILY DEVOTIONAL:

On Sunday we studied 2 Kings 13 and saw the patience of God toward people who repeatedly turned away from him. We considered how easily we ask for relief while leaving our sins untouched, admire faithful believers without following their Savior, and settle for halfhearted obedience. Yet we also saw that God remembers his covenant and has power to bring life where we see only death. As we reflect on this passage together, may his kindness lead us to repentance and his faithfulness strengthen our confidence in Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and rose never to die again.

Monday: When We Keep Painting Over the Stain

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 13:1–3 (ESV)

A stain on the ceiling can be covered with a fresh coat of paint, but that does nothing to stop the water coming through the roof. In much the same way, we can work hard to make our lives appear peaceful and respectable while leaving the sin underneath untouched. Jehoahaz continued in the sins of Jeroboam, and what should have troubled him had become an accepted part of life in Israel.

There is a danger in becoming comfortable with something simply because it has been around a long time. An angry temper can become something everyone in the family learns to work around. Dishonesty can become the way business gets done. We may even excuse ourselves by saying that this is how we were raised. But a familiar sin still harms us, and the people who live closest to us often learn from what we allow.

Thankfully, Jesus Christ came to save sinners, including those who have spent years making excuses for themselves. His death is sufficient to cover our guilt, and his Spirit enables us to turn from habits we could never overcome in our own strength. Because there is forgiveness in him, we can tell the truth about what is wrong without pretending that we are beyond hope.

Consider one thing you have been avoiding because dealing with it would be uncomfortable. You may need to confess an unkind pattern, ask forgiveness without defending yourself, or seek help from a mature believer. Repentance often begins with an honest admission that we have been trying to keep hidden. We can make that admission knowing that our Savior already sees us and calls us to come to him.

Reflection Questions

What sinful habit have you begun to excuse because it feels familiar or normal?

How might that habit be shaping the people who live or work closest to you?

What specific act of confession or repentance can you take today, trusting Christ for forgiveness and help?

Prayer

Father, you know the sins I have tried to hide or explain away. Forgive me through Jesus Christ, who bore my guilt on the cross. Help me to receive your correction with humility. By your Spirit, give me courage to confess what is wrong and begin making things right. Teach me to trust your mercy as I learn to walk in obedience. Amen.

Tuesday: The Kindness That Calls Us Back

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 13:4–6 (ESV)

Jehoahaz had repeatedly dishonored the Lord, yet when he cried out under the weight of Syria's oppression, the Lord listened. Take a moment to consider the kindness of that response. God saw the suffering of people who had resisted his Word, and he gave them deliverance they had done nothing to deserve.

Sadly, the people received relief and continued in their old sins. It is easy to become frustrated with them until we consider our own prayers. We ask God to carry us through a difficult week, and once the pressure eases, we return to the same neglect of him. We ask for forgiveness while holding tightly to our resentment toward someone else. Paul reminds us in Romans 2:4 that God's kindness is meant to lead us to repentance.

We see the depth of that kindness in Jesus Christ. The Father sent his Son into a sinful world, and the Son willingly gave himself for people who could never earn their way back to God. When we come to him in faith, we receive forgiveness as a gift of grace. That grace begins to change what we love and how we treat the people around us.

Think back over a mercy you have recently received. Perhaps someone was patient with you, a need was met, or you were forgiven after speaking carelessly. Thank the Lord for that kindness, and consider what a grateful response would look like today. Someone in your own household may need the same patience you have been glad to receive.

Reflection Questions

What recent mercy from God have you received without giving it much thought?

Where have you asked for relief from consequences while resisting the changen God's Word requires?

Who needs to receive patience, generosity, or forgiveness from you today?

Prayer

Merciful Father, thank you for listening when I call upon you. I confess that I have often received your kindness and gone back to my own way. Thank you for the forgiveness you give through your Son. Let your goodness soften my heart and lead me to sincere repentance. Make me patient and generous toward others as I remember your patience with me. Amen.

Wednesday: Following the Savior We Hear About

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 13:10–14 (ESV)

When King Jehoash heard that Elisha was dying, he went to see him and wept. The king recognized that this prophet mattered to Israel. Yet the same passage tells us that Jehoash continued in the sins of Jeroboam. His affection for the Lord's servant had not brought him to faithful worship of the Lord.

Many of us can think of someone whose faith has helped us. Perhaps it was a praying mother, a patient Sunday school teacher, or a pastor who explained the gospel when we needed to hear it. We ought to thank God for these people. At the same time, we need to ask whether we have received the truth they taught us. It is possible to treasure someone's influence while continuing to resist the Savior they loved.

Jesus Christ is the one who reconciles us to God. A loved one's prayers cannot take the place of our trusting him, and a warm attachment to the church cannot take away our sins. But the Savior proclaimed in the gospel welcomes everyone who comes to him. We do not need to become impressive Christians before we can come. We come as sinners, depending upon his finished work.

Remember a truth that a faithful believer has patiently taught you. Perhaps you have heard it many times without taking it seriously. Open your Bible, bring that truth before the Lord in prayer, and consider how it should shape your life. We honor faithful teachers when we follow the Christ to whom they have pointed us.

Reflection Questions

Whose faith has most influenced you, and what have they taught you about Christ?

Are you resting in Christ himself, or mainly taking comfort in your connection to faithful people?

What biblical truth have you long admired but still need to put into practice?

Prayer

Lord, thank you for the faithful people you have placed in my life. Forgive me for the times I have praised their example while ignoring the truth they taught. Draw me to Jesus Christ in sincere repentance and faith. Help me to hear your Word and receive it with a willing heart. Make my life a faithful witness that points others to the same Savior. Amen.

Thursday: A Willing Heart

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 13:15–19 (ESV)

Elisha announced the Lord's victory over Syria and then told Jehoash to strike the ground with the arrows. The king struck three times and stopped, and the prophet rebuked him. We are not

told everything that passed through the king's mind, but Elisha's response makes clear that something was lacking in his response to the promise God had given.

This account gives us reason to examine our own willingness to obey. Sometimes we do enough to quiet our conscience while keeping our hearts at a distance. We offer help, but hope no one will take us up on it. We listen to someone's trouble, but are already thinking about how to end the conversation. The outward action may be there while the love that should give it life is missing.

We should also remember that eager service cannot purchase God's favor. Our acceptance rests upon Jesus Christ, who obeyed his Father perfectly and gave his life for us. Because we belong to him by grace, we can serve without constantly measuring whether we have done enough to be loved. His Spirit teaches us to desire what pleases him and strengthens us to do it.

Wholehearted obedience may be very ordinary. It may mean listening carefully to a lonely person, following through on a promise, or quietly finishing a task someone else depends on. Illness and age can limit what we are able to do, but the Lord knows those limits. Ask him for a willing heart in the particular work he has placed before you today.

Reflection Questions

Where are you tempted to do only enough to avoid feeling guilty?

How does resting in Christ's finished work change your reason for serving others?

What responsibility or opportunity can you approach with greater willingness today?

Prayer

Father, you have been generous to me through your Son. Forgive the reluctance and resentment that sometimes enter my service. Help me to rest in Christ's perfect obedience rather than trying to earn your love. By your Spirit, give me a willing heart for the work you have entrusted to me. Teach me to love the people I serve and to leave the results with you. Amen.

Friday: The God Who Remembers His Covenant

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 13:22–25 (ESV)

Near the end of this chapter, we are told why the Lord continued to show compassion toward Israel. He remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The people had given him many reasons to judge them, but their failures had not caused him to forget his promises. Even the three victories announced through Elisha came to pass as the Lord had said.

That is a needed word for anyone who has become discouraged by repeated weakness. We may look back over the week and remember an impatient answer, a neglected duty, or an opportunity to speak kindly that we let pass. Those things need to be confessed. Yet our hope of forgiveness rests in the faithfulness of the God to whom we confess them.

In Galatians 3:16, Paul identifies Christ as the promised offspring of Abraham. God's covenant purpose reaches its fulfillment in him, and those who belong to Christ share in the blessing God promised. Our assurance rests upon the Savior who shed his blood for us and rose from the grave. He has given us a firmer ground for hope than our changing feelings or uneven progress.

Bring your failures honestly before the Lord today, and receive the comfort of his promise to forgive those who come through Christ. Then return to the duty you have neglected or the person you have wronged. God's faithfulness gives us courage to begin again. We can repent without despair because the one who calls us back is trustworthy.

Reflection Questions

What failure from this week are you carrying as though Christ's mercy could not reach it?

When your feelings change, what truth about Christ's death and resurrection can steady your assurance?

How can confidence in God's faithfulness help you return to an unfinished responsibility or damaged relationship?

Prayer

Faithful Father, thank you that you remember your promises. I confess how quickly my confidence rises and falls with my circumstances and feelings. Fix my hope upon Jesus Christ and the salvation he has accomplished. Give me assurance of your mercy as I confess my sins. Strengthen me to return to the path of obedience with gratitude and trust. Amen.

Saturday: Life Beyond the Grave

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 13:20–21 (ESV)

Elisha died and was buried, but the Lord's power did not end with the prophet's life. When another man's body was thrown into Elisha's grave and touched his bones, the man revived and stood on his feet. This strange account reminds us that the power at work throughout Elisha's ministry had always belonged to God. Even at the prophet's tomb, the Lord was able to give life.

That gives us reason to keep praying when we see little evidence of change. We may be discouraged about someone who seems hardened to the gospel, or weary from years of serving with few visible results. We cannot make a heart alive by wishing or working harder. But we can continue to speak the truth, show mercy, and ask the Holy Spirit to do what we cannot do.

The man in Elisha's grave returned to mortal life and would eventually face death again. Jesus Christ rose never to die again. Having borne the judgment our sins deserved, he conquered death, and everyone who trusts in him shares in his resurrection hope. His promise in John 11:25–26 gives us confidence that even death cannot take his people away from him.

We are not promised that every difficulty will be resolved before we die or that every work we

begin will flourish as we hope. We are promised life with Christ and the resurrection of our bodies. As we prepare to gather for worship again, we can bring our weariness, our grief, and our unfinished prayers to the living Savior. He is able to sustain us as we wait, and he will keep the promise he has made.

Reflection Questions

Who or what have you stopped praying for because you have seen so little change?

How does Christ's resurrection speak to a particular fear or grief you are carrying?

What faithful act can you continue this week while entrusting the outcome to the Lord?

Prayer

Living God, thank you that death could not hold your Son. Strengthen my hope in the resurrection he has promised to everyone who believes in him. Give spiritual life to those I love who are still far from you. Sustain me when I am weary and help me remain faithful when I cannot see what you are doing. Prepare my heart to worship you with your people and to await the day when we will see our Savior face to face. Amen.