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²²And Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. ²³But the LORD was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not yet destroy them or cast them from His presence. ²⁴Now Hazael king of Syria died. Then Ben-Hadad his son reigned in his place. ²⁵And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz recaptured from the hand of Ben-Hadad, the son of Hazael, the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times Joash defeated him and recaptured the cities of Israel.
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1. A grace that passes understanding

- a. Neither Israel, nor her kings had repented
 - a1. They still worshiped idols & dishonored God
 - a2. As with Israel on the wilderness journey, Israel sorely provoked God
- b. God's reputation of being slow to anger & slow to punish is legendary
 - a1. Israel greatly provoked God on the wilderness journey
 - a2. God chastised & then rescued oppressed Israel all the way through Judges
 - a3. From the moment the northern kingdom was established Israel worshiped the Golden Calves set up by Jeroboam I
- c. Jehoash relied upon God when he was in trouble, but did not forsake his idols
- d. We are often surprised when God does not destroy great wickedness immediately
 - a1. Ps. 2 *Why do the heathen prosper & imagine a vain thing*
 - a2. Rev. 13:5-8 Satan will be given the power to speak great blasphemy for 42 months
- e. Despite Israel's rebellion, God showed mercy on them for His Covenant with Abraham's sake – Gn. 12
- f. As in days of Noah, God waited long before judging

2. Victory by grace

- a. Just as God promised through Elisha, Jehoash was given 3 great victories over Syria
 - a1. Hazael, who tormented Israel throughout Jeh.'s reign finally died
 - a2. Under the weaker Ben Hadad III, Jeh. was able to reconquer all the cities that his father had lost to Syria
- b. Jeh.'s victories were by pure grace & not because God approved of his actions
- c. Under Jeh.'s son, Jeroboam II, Israel claimed more territory that had been lost to Syria
 - a1. Syria had wanted to make Israel part of its empire as a vassal state
 - a2. Assyria began to attack Syria from the west, so Israel was able to gain back land
- d. Israel reached the height of its territory during this period, as distracted Syria was weakened

3. Yet

- a. God had given Israel time to repent
 - a1. Rm. 2 He should His mercy to them
 - a2. Rev. 2 He gave space for reflection on God's goodness & grace
- b. *The Lord... would not yet destroy them or cast them from His presence.*
 - a1. After Assyria conquered Syria, Assyria turned its attention to conquering Israel
 - a2. 64 years after Jehoash's reign (722 BC), Assyria removed much of Israel's population & they never returned
 - a3. Elamites were mixed with the rest of the Israelites to form the Samaritans
- c. God is gracious, but his grace to the rebellious has limits (Ezk. 18), & finally judgment comes
 - a1. Gen. 6:3 God won't always strive with man
 - a2. Pv. 29:1 after many warnings, judgment finally comes with no recourse
- d. Is. 55:6-7 The Lord must be sought while He could still be found, for He will not call man forever