



God's Way Works

The Church that meets on Livingston Ave
by Edwin Crozier

August 17, 2014
AM Assembly

Introduction:

Sometime ago, I listened to a podcast that challenged me as a preacher to consider the goal of my work. The challenge was this: Imagine that 20 years have gone by and you have been invited back to preach at this congregation. After you're done, a brother or sister comes up and says, "You may not remember me, but I was a member when you were preaching. I have always appreciated you because you taught me _____." What do I want in that blank? What would I want someone to tell me most impacted them in my preaching? Would I want to hear, "You taught me to be baptized"? Or, "You taught me to take the Lord's Supper every Sunday"? Or, "You taught me to sing without instruments"? Or, "You taught me about drinking and drunkenness," or, "modesty," or, "homosexuality," or, "abortion"? While I want folks to learn all kinds of things, I can say without hesitation the #1 thing I want folks to remember. In fact, I'm telling you this now so you can prepare to see me again in 20 years and say this so I can know I met my goal. If you don't get anything else out of my preaching, I hope you will always walk away with this one lesson: God's Way Works. I want that so grounded that I say it all the time. I make it part of my sermons, my classes, my studies. That is even the name of my personal blog. I don't want to teach that God's way is popular or that God's way is natural or that God's way is easy. But the number one thing I've learned in my life is that God's Way Works. God's Way Works in my individual life. God's Way Works in my family. God's Way Works in my relationships. God's Way Works in the local congregation. God's Way Works. And, I believe the Bible is striving to get that message across to us over and over and over again.

Discussion:

- I. Consider these stories in the Bible, all of which demonstrate that God's Way Works.
 - A. Noah and the ark
 1. In **Genesis 6:11-17**, God said He was going to send a flood on the whole earth and destroy everything. But Noah found grace in His eyes. God told Noah to build a huge boat and bring a bunch of animals on board. Can you imagine what Noah thought at the time? Can you imagine what his neighbors thought? It will never rain that much. That boat can't survive. You can't fit that many animals inside. You can't take care of the animals. Modern day engineers tell us it was an impossible feat. Yet, Noah survived and here we are to prove it.
 2. God's Way Works!
 - B. Moses and the crossing of the Red Sea
 1. In **Exodus 12-14**, God freed the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. But God's way did not take them the most direct land route to the Promised Land. No, God's way led them to the shore of the Red Sea. Can you imagine what the Israelites thought when they saw that? That can't work. How can that possibly work? Things got worse in **Exodus 14**. Pharaoh changed his mind and decided to chase down the people. And why not? He had heard they were trapped. The people saw the army of Egypt and they cried out in fear (**Exodus 14:11-12**). Now, stuck between the devil and the deep Red Sea, the children of Israel were certain God's way could not possibly work. Why did He bring them this way? There must have been better ways, safer ways, easier ways, ways that didn't involve being stuck by the sea. But we know what happened. God parted the waters of the Red Sea and Israel walked through on dry land. When the army of Egypt tried to follow, the waters came crashing down on them and they drowned. When all hope seemed gone, when God's way seemed failed, when man could not possibly figure out how God's way could work, God stepped up and worked.
 2. God's Way Works!
 - C. Joshua and Jericho
 1. In **Joshua 6:2-5**, God gave Joshua His battle plan for taking Jericho. Can you imagine as Joshua walked into the war tent with his commanders and said, "Alright, here's what we're going to do. We're going to march around the city for six days. Then we'll march seven times around the city on the seventh day. We'll have priests blow their trumpets. We'll shout really loud. The walls will fall down and we'll charge the city. Everyone ready?" But in **Joshua 6:20** the wall fell down and the Israelites defeated Jericho.
 2. God's Way Works!
 - D. Gideon and the 300
 1. In **Judges 6-7**, God had judged Israel by oppressing them through the Midianites. When Israel turned back to Him, He called Gideon to be their judge and deliverer. But in **Judges 7:2-8**, God decided the 22,000 soldiers Gideon had mustered were too many. God dwindled the army down to 10,000. Then further down to 300. That's

impossible. How could 300 men conquer an entire army that had oppressed the whole nation? That is just silly. No military strategist would do this. Yet, in **Judges 7:15-25**, Gideon won the victory. Here's what they should really make a movie called "300" out of.

2. God's Way Works!

E. David and Saul in the cave of Engedi

1. In **I Samuel 24**, David has been promised he will be king. Saul is chasing him and planning to kill him. Through an interesting turn of events, David finds himself hiding in a cave where Saul enters to use the bathroom. While Saul is distracted taking care of his business, David's supporters encourage him, "Here is the day." They told him God was clearly giving Saul into his hands. He should kill him and claim the throne (**I Samuel 24:4**). That makes perfect sense. Any of us would probably say the same. But David knew that wasn't God's way. He shouldn't lay a hand against God's anointed (**I Samuel 24:6**). He let Saul go and continued to run for his life. And with worldly wisdom we all say here is a man doomed to die in obscurity. If he won't take these great opportunities given to him, he'll never become king. And yet, though he continues to flee for several more years, in **II Samuel 2:4**, David is named king over Judah. And finally in **II Samuel 5:1-5**, he was named king over all of Israel.

2. God's Way Works!

F. Elijah and the prophets of Baal

1. In **I Kings 18**, God had caused 3 years of famine in Israel because of the idolatry there. Finally, Elijah calls for a confrontation on Mt. Carmel. Just him alone versus 450 prophets of Baal. He called for a competition. Build an altar, but don't light it. Call on whichever god you wanted and whoever's God lit the altar on fire would win the competition showing who the true God is. The prophets of Baal danced and called and cut themselves and pled, but nothing ever happened. Finally, Elijah took his turn. But he did the dumbest thing in the world. Somehow, they were able to find some water and instead of just drinking it because they'd been in a drought, Elijah had them pour it out on the altar that was supposed to be lit on fire. He had them do this three times. Can you see the problem with this? In our wisdom, this is foolish on so many levels. But, in **I Kings 18:36-40**, Elijah offered one simply prayer to God and God lit the fire, lapping up the water and consuming the altar. The people declared Yahweh as God and slaughtered the prophets of Baal.

2. God's Way Works!

G. Ahab and Benhadad

1. In **I Kings 20:26-30**, Ben-hadad of Syria attacked Israel for the second time. In this engagement, the text says the Syrians filled the country and Israel was encamped like "two little flocks of goats" before Syria. That doesn't make any sense. Even Jesus understood good military strategy in **Luke 14:31-33**. But God told Ahab to take Ben-hadad on. In **I Kings 20:29-30**, the Israelites small flocks killed 100,000 foot soldiers and then 27,000 more fled into a city and just like in Jericho a falling wall gave the victory.

2. God's Way Works!

H. Jehoram, Elisha, and the windows of heaven

1. Ahab, like an idiot, let Benhadad go. That was not God's way. In fact, Ahab was rebuked for it. That left Benhadad to attack the northern kingdom again during the days of Ahab's son, Jehoram (**II Kings 6:24-29**). So great was their siege and the famine it produced that mothers were eating their own sons. But when Elisha was called before Jehoram in **II Kings 7:1-3**, he claimed that within 24 hours food would be so plentiful that prices would bottom out. The captain on whose hand Jehoram leaned said that was impossible. "If the Lord himself should make windows in heaven, could this thing be?" he said. Even God can't make this happen. Elisha responded, "You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it." Sure enough, in **II Kings 7:3ff**, four lepers decided to cast themselves on the possible mercy of the Syrians only to find that God had set up an amazing ruse and the Syrians had fled their camp under the cover of darkness. In **II Kings 7:16-20**, the people of Samaria ran to the enemy camp to plunder the food that had been left behind. The captain who had smarted off was given charge of the gate. He saw the plunder, but the people trampled him in their haste, so he didn't taste of it.

2. God's Way Works!

I. Hezekiah and the attack by Assyria

1. In **II Kings 17**, Assyria conquered the northern kingdom because they refused to submit to God's ways. They continued to rely on their own ideas and on foreign gods. They were conquered and led into captivity. The Assyrian behemoth turned next to Judah. What would Hezekiah, king of Judah do? No one had been able to stop Assyria. All conventional wisdom would say that Hezekiah needed to develop some powerful allies and fight back. Instead, in **II Kings 19:14-19**, he went to the temple and asked God to do something about it. Sure, praying is good. It can help you. But most folks today claim that is only psychological help. There is no way

this prayer would really help defeat the larger army of Assyria. But God said He would protect the city in **II Kings 19:32-34**. And in **II Kings 19:35-37**, an angel of the Lord kill 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. Sennacherib fled and then was killed by his own sons while worshiping in the house of his god, Nisroch. Nisroch couldn't even protect his worshiping servant while in his own temple. But our God could destroy an entire army to protect all of His people.

2. God's Way Works!

J. Daniel and the king's food

1. As Judah was falling to Babylon, Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were all taken captive (**Daniel 1**). They were placed under the charge of Nebuchadnezzar's chief eunuch. Ashpenaz was supposed to keep the boys healthy and give them an education. But Daniel refused to be defiled by the king's food and drink (**Daniel 1:8**). Ashpenaz was worried for his life. If these boys were not healthy, it would mean his head. But Daniel struck up a deal. He asked to be tested for 10 days and see how they fared (**Daniel 1:12-13**). At the end of the test, Ashpenaz discovered that these four young men were by far healthier than all the others (**Daniel 1:15-16**). Not only that, but in **Daniel 1:17-21**, Daniel and his three friends stood out above the rest of the boys in every way.

2. God's Way Works!

K. I'm sure I could go on and on and on, but these 10 stories should suffice. Surely we can see that of all the things the Bible teaches us, one of the greatest is that God's Way Works.

II. What does this mean for us?

A. *We need to quit relying on our way.* **Proverbs 14:12; 16:25** both claim that the way that seems right to us leads to death. **Jeremiah 10:23** says it is not in us to direct our steps.

B. *We need to put our confidence in the Lord and His way.* **Proverbs 3:5-6** explains we must trust God instead of our own understanding. We need to acknowledge God and His way if we wish to walk on straight paths.

C. *We must walk by faith.* **II Corinthians 5:7** says we should walk by faith and not by sight. We may not be able to see how God's way will work. We must simply know that it will and walk by it. As **Galatians 2:20** demonstrates, we need to crucify ourselves and live by faith in Jesus, believing and knowing that His way will work. No wonder we are told that our faith is the victory (**I John 5:4**). We will have victory to the degree that we believe God's Way Works and, therefore, follow it.

D. *We must live according to God's Word.* As **Psalms 119:105** says, God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. It shines the way for us. We may not be able to see where it will actually get us, but we know that it will get us to victory. No wonder, when Satan tempted Jesus in **Matthew 4:1-11**, Jesus relied on God's Word and achieved the victory.

E. *We must follow these principles in every aspect of our lives.* We need to know that God's Way Works in our personal lives, in our families, in our relationships, in our churches, in our work, in our schools, in our neighborhoods. No matter where we are, we need to know that God's Way Works! No matter what others say, no matter how they mock, no matter how they act, we need to stand by God. Why? God's Way Works!

III. One final example.

A. In **Matthew 4:8-10**, Satan tempted Jesus for the third time. He said he would give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would simply bow down and worship him. Some think the lure in this temptation was getting to rule all those kingdoms. That wasn't the lure. The fact is in **Psalms 110:1-7**, God had promised Jesus, the Son, that He would give Him all the kingdoms. As far as the kingdoms go, Satan was offering Jesus what was already rightfully his. No, what Satan was really offering was an out. You see God's way to the throne for Jesus had to do with giving up heaven for a while, being a human, suffering in the flesh, and ultimately dying. Satan was offering Jesus a way out. "Don't take God's way," he was saying. "Take this easy way. Avoid the pain and suffering. All you have to do is fall on your knees and worship me." But Jesus had faith in God and His way. He reminded Satan of **Deuteronomy 6:13**. Only worship God.

B. Then Jesus was on the cross. He was following God's way and it was leading Him into ultimate humiliation and anguish. Not only physical torment, but the spiritual agony of separation from the Father, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (**Matthew 27:46**). In **Matthew 27:39-43**, Jesus was tempted again. This time through the people at the foot of the cross. While they may not have realized the great temptation they were offering, they were again offering Jesus a softer, easier way than God's. God's way was going to lead Jesus through separation from Him because of our sins. It was going to lead Him into the grave. The people said He could go another way. If He wanted them to believe in Him, all He had to do was come down off the cross. Save Himself and they would believe Him. It was ridiculous to think of a dying Messiah. They would follow Him anywhere if He would just come off

that cross. But Jesus stayed on the cross. He decided to go God's way. In **Luke 23:46**, Jesus quoted **Psalm 31:5**, saying, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

- C. Jesus chose to go God's way. And as far as the world was concerned, He couldn't have been more foolish. How ridiculous to take that kind of beating. How ridiculous to endure all that mocking. How ridiculous to go to the cross and die. What kind of plan is that? Death? Really? Even the apostles couldn't understand it. They had been willing to fight when they thought God's way meant a fight, but when Jesus showed that God's way was through surrender and certain death, they fled (cf. **Mark 14:46-50**). How could this possibly work?
- D. But we know how this story ends, don't we (**Matthew 28:1-10**)? An earthquake on the first day of the week signaled something amazing. The stone was rolled away from the grave and Jesus wasn't there. He defied the world by going to the cross. He crossed all logic and reason by heading into the grave. And now He passed the bounds of death into life and was resurrected. God's Way Works!
- E. Yet, many did not believe. To the Jews, Jesus' crucifixion was a stumbling block, to the Gentiles it was folly. But to us who are called, it is the very power and wisdom of God (**I Corinthians 1:22-24**). And we are not ashamed of this good news because it is God's power of salvation for all of us who believe it (**Romans 1:16-17**). We are not ashamed because we know God's Way Works!

Conclusion:

So, what will we do with God's way? Will we surrender to it or fight against it? This really starts off with our very first step. I don't wish to offend anyone here who is a guest, but I want to share something for you to think about. In our religious day and age, men have come up with numerous ways to be saved. I've heard men preach that we are saved by asking Jesus into our hearts. I've heard men say that we can be saved by simply having a moment of faith. I've heard men say the way to salvation is by praying through to it. I've heard men say that we can save folks in infancy and toddlerhood by baptizing them and then maybe they will believe later. Some men say that we are saved because God said we are saved and then we will obey Him later because He causes us to. I don't wish to disparage anyone here today or any of their beliefs. I simply ask you to consider what Jesus said in **Mark 16:16**. Jesus, God in the flesh gave His way. He said, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." Man has many ways and they can argue for them tooth and toenail. But we wish to rely on God's way. Some men say they just can't see why God would do it that way. But we walk by faith and not by sight. Some men say that they simply can't understand why God would choose to save us this way. But we do not lean on our own understanding. If you were saved some way other than the way Jesus said we would be saved, I'd like to ask you to consider God's way. I'm not asking you to consider my way. I'm not asking you to consider our way. I'm not asking you to consider "the church of Christ" way. I'm asking you to consider God's way. Because if there is one thing I know and one thing I want to share with you, it is this: God's Way Works!