

“If God be for Us”
2 Kings 6:9-23
(Preached at Trinity, February 27, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've often seen, this section of 2 Kings contains numerous events in the life of Elisha. Most of them are displays of God's miraculous work through His prophet. The author's primary intent is to direct our eyes upon the greatness of God.
2. The passage opens with Elisha's prophetic insight into the movement of the Aramean army. The Arameans were once again at war with Israel. We are not given the identity of the kings but whatever maneuvers the Aramean king did Elisha knew it and told the King of Israel. It was unnerving to the Aramean king and he supposed he had a traitor in his midst. Finding out it was Elisha's doing, the king ordered his capture. One has to wonder why the king didn't presume Elisha would know this plan as well. It showed his spiritual blindness to God's omniscience over all things.
3. Once again, as we read this narrative we can see several things about the nature of God and His oversight in the lives of His people.
 - I. This passage is a reminder of God's superintending care of His people.
 - A. God has not spared His people from danger.
 1. David faced life or death situations often.
 - a. King Saul was resolved to put David to death. At one point David told Jonathan,
1 Samuel 20:3 NAU - "But truly as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is hardly a step between me and death."
 - b. He also had to flee from his own son Absalom. He told his followers in Jerusalem:
2 Samuel 15:14 NAU - "Arise and let us flee, for *otherwise* none of us will escape from Absalom. Go in haste, or he will overtake us quickly and bring down calamity on us and strike the city with the edge of the sword."
 - c. But never was David's life outside of God's Divine oversight. David would later write:
Psalms 34:19 NAU - "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all."
 2. The Apostle Paul also experienced endless trials. He wrote regarding God's faithfulness.
Romans 8:31 ESV - "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

3. We've also witnessed dangers in the life of Elijah.
After the prophets of Baal were killed Jezebel sent word to Elijah:
1 Kings 19:2 NAU - "Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."
Never was Elijah's life outside God's Divine oversight.
 4. Now we find Elisha's life in danger. But again, we find God's intervention.
Jesus spoke of the boundless forces of God always ready at His command
Matthew 26:53 NAU - "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"
- B. We don't know all the ways God protects us each day.
1. While Elisha was resting the Arameans had surrounded the city.
Elisha's servant had risen early and saw the Aramean army. This was apparently Gehazi's replacement. His heart was smitten with fear.
2 Kings 6:15 NAU - "Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"
 2. You can imagine the terror of looking outside the city and seeing an army on every side with no possible way of escape. They couldn't run. They couldn't fight. "What shall we do!"
The servant based his feelings on what he saw. This is how most people live. This is the life without faith. But faith is able to look beyond what we see.
 - a. Hebrews 11 defines faith as confidence in the unseen:
Hebrews 11:1 NAU - "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."
 - b. The KJV translates the word for "assurance" as "substance"
Hebrews 11:1 KJV - "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
In other words, faith enables us to bring substance upon that which we cannot see.
 - c. The servant saw the multitudes surrounding the city and could only see calamity.
 - d. Without faith our hearts are smitten with fear. Like the Israelite army as they stood before Goliath.
1 Samuel 17:11 NAU - "When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid."
Elisha was neither afraid nor dismayed.
 3. Elisha commands him not to fear because the multitude of Arameans could not compare with the power of God to protect.
2 Kings 6:16 NAU - "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

4. But that was insufficient for the servant. All he could see were the horses and chariots and armies of the Arameans. All he could see was doom and gloom. Elisha prayed that God would open his eyes to the reality of God's protection.

2 Kings 6:17 NAU - "Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."

- II. This passage is a reminder of the great spiritual battle that is raging around us. It is a battle that is unseen but produces dreadful results.
 - A. Most people live without any comprehension of the spiritual realm
 1. All that they know is what they see with their eyes.
 2. They are blind to the movement of Satan and his demons. Many do not even believe he exists.
They are blinded and bound by Satan and they are completely oblivious to his work.
 - B. Sadly, many Christians are also oblivious to the spiritual war raging behind the scenes.
 1. Too often Christians take the attitude, if we can't see it it doesn't exist. We don't believe that there are angels still active today.
 2. And we don't really believe in a literal spiritual war. Paul commands us to put on our spiritual armor to battle our spiritual enemies.
Ephesians 6:11-12 NAU - "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*."
 3. Abraham Kuyper rightly described it – "If once the curtain were pulled back, and the spiritual world behind it came to view, it would expose to our spiritual vision a struggle so intense, so convulsive, sweeping everything within its range, that the fiercest battle ever fought on earth would seem, by comparison, a mere game. Not here, but up there—that is where the real conflict is waged. Our earthly struggle drones in its backlash."¹
 4. It is a powerful war indeed, but God will overpower and reign victorious. It was Martin Luther who wrote:
*And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God has willed
his truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo! his doom is sure;
one little word shall fell him.*

¹ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Preacher's Commentary, Vol. 21: Daniel*, (Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988) Page 199.

III. We find a mirror of God's mercy upon His enemies.

- A. Elisha prayed for the Syrian army to be smitten with blindness
1. The theme of blindness is significant in this passage.
 - a. The king of the Syrians was blind to Elisha's insight into his movements. The king was blind whereas Elisha had miraculous insight even regarding the secret words spoken in the king's bedroom. This was also the reality discovered by Elisha's servant, Gehazi - **2 Kings 5:25-26** - "And Elisha said to him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" And he said, "Your servant went nowhere." ²⁶ Then he said to him, "Did not my heart go *with you*, when the man turned from his chariot to meet you?"
 - b. The king then hoped that his army would have insight as to the location of Elisha.
2 Kings 6:13 NAU - "Go and see where he is, that I may send and take him."
 - c. We're told that Elisha's servant was blind to the spiritual realities surrounding him. Elisha prays in **Verse 17** – "O LORD, open his eyes that he may see."
 2. Now we read that Elisha prays that the Syrian army be smitten with blindness – **Verse 18** – "**Strike this people with blindness**"
The text doesn't tell us if it is literal blindness or figurative. Either way, it is another miracle from the hand of God who is sovereign over the minds and understanding of men, both in giving sight to the blind and blinding eyes of those who persist in unbelief.
 - a. The word is only used three times in the OT. Twice here and the other describing the men in Sodom trying to seize Lot's guests. It literally means "a dazzling light" like that used to blind Paul on the road to Damascus.
 - b. Were their eyes deprived of physical light or mental clarity. Were they cast into literal darkness or thrown into confusion so that they didn't know where they were or what they were doing?
It may refer to the latter in this case. It's hard to imagine Elisha leading an entire army who were literally blind.
 - c. One can only imagine the great terror of latter stage dementia – to not know your surroundings or even recognize your loved ones. Years ago, we had a church member take a drive in his car and became so confused he couldn't find his way home.
 3. Elisha approached them and told them he could guide them to the man they were seeking. He brought them to Samaria, into the hand of the army of Israel.
 4. In their confusion they could have easily been slaughtered. Elisha prayed that they might see, and they became aware of their predicament.
 5. The king of Israel was overjoyed with excitement. "Shall I kill them!"

- B. Elisha commanded that they be treated with mercy
1. We might be confused here. Wasn't Ahab judged for his failure to destroy the Syrian king, Ben-hadad? God delivered Ben-hadad into the hand of Ahab and Ahab spared him.
1 Kings 20:42 - "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have let go out of *your* hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.'"
 2. Ben-hadad was under God's judgment and Ahab had the duty to utterly destroy him. This is a different situation. These soldiers were not the king's captives. They were Elisha's captives. By the will of God Elisha commands mercy.
 3. This is the situation all of humanity finds themselves. All are condemned. But God is demonstrating His longsuffering and patience in this life. Instead of bloodshed and destruction, God is blessing us with rich feasts and abundant pleasures.
 4. A great feast was prepared for them and they were sent on their way.

Conclusion:

1. The Syrian army was fed and sent home. Like Naaman after he was healed of his leprosy, they expressed gratitude for the mercy of God.
 - A. Naaman, however, had a true, lasting change. It is significant that he is not present in this account. He was one of the king's trusted captains, but where is he in this military campaign?
Without reading too much into it, we know he was greatly concerned about his role as the king's military captain. His role included participating in the king's pagan sacrifices.
2 Kings 5:18 NAU - "In this matter may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon your servant in this matter."
It is possible that Naaman found the compromise too much for his conscience and took the opportunity to retire from his military post.
 - B. The other leaders of the Syrian army experienced a temporary change. In **Verse 23** we read: "they went to their master. And the marauding bands of Arameans did not come again into the land of Israel."
But in **Verse 24** we read: "Ben-hadad king of Aram gathered all his army and went up and besieged Samaria."
They completely disregarded the people of Yahweh and treated them with particular cruelty.
2. God's mercy is used to stir the hearts of fallen men. Some turn towards God in love and submission. Others continue in their sin to their condemnation.
Romans 2:4-5 NAU - "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵ But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,"
3. How have you responded to the mercies of God?

4. It is also a reminder to us of the New Covenant peace we must maintain.
- Matthew 5:43-45 NAU** - "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous."
- Romans 12:20-13:1 NAS** - "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. "