

The Syrian Army Fails to Capture Elisha

2 Kings 6:8-23

2 Kings 6:8-23 – *“Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel; and he consulted with his servants, saying, “My camp will be in such and such a place.” And the man of God sent to the king of Israel, saying, “Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are coming down there.” Then the king of Israel sent someone to the place of which the man of God had told him. Thus he warned him, and he was watchful there, not just once or twice.*

Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was greatly troubled by this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, “Will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?” And one of his servants said, “None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.” So he said, “Go and see where he is, that I may send and get him.” And it was told him, saying, “Surely he is in Dothan.”

Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, an army was surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

And Elisha prayed, and said, “LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. So when the Syrians came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, “Strike this people, I pray, with blindness.” And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

Now Elisha said to them, “This is not the way, nor is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.” But he led them to Samaria. So it was, when they had come to Samaria, that Elisha said, “LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see.” And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and there they were, inside Samaria! Now when the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, “My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?” But he answered, “You shall not kill them. Would you kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.” Then he prepared a great feast for them; and after they ate and drank, he sent them away and they went to their master. So the bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel.”

Background Notes

The king of Syria (probably Ben-Hadad II) went to war against Israel. He told his servant: “This is what I’m going to do; here’s where I’m going to go.” But Elisha told the king of Israel (most likely Jehoram) all the movements that the Syrian army was making. So Ben-Hadad said, “What’s going on here? Do I have a traitor in my army?” His servants said, “There’s no traitor here. Elisha is actually telling all your movements to King Jehoram of Israel.” Ben-Hadad said, “Where is Elisha? Let’s go get him.” So he sent a great military force to capture Elisha.

Then we have a double miracle. When Elisha's servant looked around and saw all the Syrian troops gathered out there, he thought his number was up! But Elisha prayed that his servant's eyes would be opened. The Lord opened his eyes, and he was able to see that surrounding angelic hosts were protecting them.

And then the other part of the miracle. The eyes of the Syrian soldiers were temporarily blinded, and Elisha led them captive into Samaria. When King Jehoram saw the captured Syrian troops in his capital city, he said to Elisha, "*My father, shall I kill them?*" "No way," says Elisha, "You don't kill captives. In fact, feed them and send them back to Ben-Hadad in Damascus." And that's exactly what they did.

The strategy worked! "*Then he prepared a great feast for them; and after they ate and drank, he sent them away and they went to their master. So the bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel*" (v23).

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord can thwart the strategy of the enemy.

"Thwart" means to successfully oppose and baffle. That's exactly what the Lord did to the enemy here! Serious efforts to overthrow Israel were thwarted. They were also thwarted in their attempts to capture Elisha, and they were baffled in their attempt to raid the country of Israel. Those attempts backfired.

And it's still true today. The Lord can thwart the strategies of the enemy. The enemy of our souls, of course, is Satan. Satan uses all kinds of schemes and strategies to try to make us ineffective - but the Lord can thwart the strategies of the enemy!

Here's an illustration from my life. Some of you know that I was an engineer for a number of years. I worked as a research scientist at the Research & Development Center for Westinghouse in Pittsburgh. Unfortunately the secretary who was in charge of typing up the research reports didn't like the fact that I was a Christian, that I read the Bible, and was willing to share my faith. As a result, my research always went to the bottom of her work pile, as far as being typed up and reported on schedule. Not good! At first I thought I would go to her boss and get it straightened out, but then I realized that this was actually part of the enemy's strategy. This was not because of my work - this was spiritual warfare. So I decided to just leave it in the Lord's hands.

Well, a few days later, a call came through to the research department from corporate headquarters in downtown Pittsburgh. One of the vice presidents wanted to have lunch with Dr. Dave Reid. Can you believe it? Even my boss was jealous! Needless to say, when the secretary heard the news, my reports went right to the top of the pile and got typed up very quickly.

To make a long story short, this vice president's son had been at a Young Life meeting where I was speaking. He found out that I worked as a research engineer at Westinghouse, and he really wanted his dad, who was not a believer, to meet me. So I went down to corporate headquarters and we had lunch together. We even got on a first-name basis! To make a long story short again, this man later became a Christian!

That's just an illustration to show that God's hands are not tied. The Lord can thwart the strategy of the enemy. It may look like the enemy has the upper hand, but no! God has the upper hand! The Lord can thwart the strategy of the enemy.

2. The Lord's forces are greater than the enemies' forces.

So often we are like Elisha's servant. The opposition looks so much stronger! But the Lord's forces are always greater and stronger than the enemy's forces. Look at verse 16: "*Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.*" One plus God is always a majority.

Let me give you some other verses to back up this point. 1 John 4:4 says, "*He who is in you [the Lord Himself] is greater than he who is in the world.*" In Matthew 16:18, the Lord Jesus said, "*I will build my church; the gates of hell will not prevail against it.*" And Romans 8:31 says, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*"

We should not think of Satan and the demonic forces as insignificant or trivial. The enemy of our soul is a formidable force - but the Lord's forces are greater than the enemy forces. Never forget that!

Practical Applications

1. Pray that your eyes may be opened.

Verse 17: "*Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.*" And the Lord answered that prayer. The Lord opened Elisha's servant's eyes, and he was enabled to see that the angelic host protecting them far outnumbered Ben-Hadad's horses and chariots. But until the **prayer**, his eyes were closed.

Notice that when his eyes were opened he saw the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire that were gathered **all around Elisha**. Not all around Dothan, like the forces of Ben-Hadad. The angelic forces were all around Elisha! God protects His people.

Do you know angelic hosts are protecting us? And God's holy angels do more than just guard us and protect us. Hebrews 1:14 says that angels are sent out to give service to those who are saved. All kinds of service - for us! Normally we don't see angels, although Hebrews 13:2 says some of us may have entertained angels, but we were unaware. But the point here is not that we would be able to see angels, but that **through prayer**, our spiritual eyes would be opened so that we can see what God is doing for us - how He's taking care of us, protecting us, and sending His angels to serve us!

So often we are so blind - so short sighted. Everything that is happening to you today and every day is really in your best interest. God is working it out, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. Even God's discipline is in our best interest. We need to have our eyes open so we can see all that God is for us. Do you believe God's Word? Romans 8:28 says, "In all things God is working for good." It doesn't say all things are good, but that God is working all things together for our good. God's goal is that we'll be made more like Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29).

Let's pray that our eyes may be opened - our own eyes and the eyes of our fellow believers - so we'll have more spiritual insight. Let's pray that our eyes may be opened.

2. Overcome evil with good!

Instead of killing the captured enemy, Elisha told King Jehoram, "Don't kill the captives. Feed them and send them home." Why this strategy? Well, you see, that would certainly bring glory to God, rather than to Israel or to King Jehoram.

It reminds us of what our Lord said in Matthew 5:44, "*I say to you, love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.*" Also Romans 12:19-21, "*Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. 'Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*"

Sometimes it's hardest to obey those Scriptures with fellow believers who have been contentious and unkind, who have talked about you behind your back, or have said unpleasant or vindictive things to you. It is not easy to overcome evil with good. But with the Lord's help, let's do our best. Let's try to overcome evil with good!