

Elisha 1

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[0 : 00] In the Old Testament, in the Old Testament, the second book of Kings and chapter 6, and we'll read verse 1 to 23.

Second Kings, chapter 6, verse 1 to 23. And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisa, or Elisha, Behold now the place where we dwell with thee is too straight for us.

Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye.

And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go. So he went with them, and when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood.

But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water. And he cried and said, Alas, master, for it was borrowed.

[1 : 12] And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he showed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither, and the iron did swim. Therefore said he, Take it up to thee.

And he put out his hand, and took it. Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp.

And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place, for thither the Syrians are come down.

And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him, and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once, nor twice.

Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was so troubled for this thing. And he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?

[2 : 13] And one of his servants said, None. My lord, O king, but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told to him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses and chariots and a great host.

And they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early and gone forth, Behold, and host compassed the city both with horses and chariots.

And his servants said unto him, Alas, my master, how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

[3 : 26] And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the Lord and said, Smite this people, I pray thee with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek. But he led them to Samaria. And it came to pass when they were coming 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 behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them?

Shall I smite them? And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them. Wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.

And he prepared great provision for them. And when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

[4 : 40] And so on. May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word. We shall now sing from Psalm 79 on page 332.

Psalm 79 on page 332 at verse 10. Why, say the heathen, where's their God?

Let him to them be known, when those who shed thy servant's blood are in our sight o'erthrown. O let the prisoners' eyes ascend before thy sight on high.

Preserve those in thy mighty power that are designed to die. And to our neighbour's bosom cause, it's sevenfold rendered be. If they reproach wherewith they have, O Lord, reproach at thee.

So we, thy flock and pasture sheep, shall give thee thanks always. And into generations, Saul, we will show forth thy praise. We shall sing these verses to the Lord's praise.

[5 : 37] From Psalm 79 at verse 10 to the end of the psalm. Why, say the heathen, where's their God? Let him to them be known. Why, say the heathen, where's their God?

Let him to them be known. When those who shed thy servant's blood are in our sight o'erthrown.

O let the prisoners' eyes ascend before thy sight on high.

Precest, there goes in thy mighty power that are designed to die.

And to our neighbour's bosom cause, it's sevenfold rendered be.

[7 : 06] In the raindrops wherewith they have, O Lord, reproach at thee.

So we, thy folk and pasture sheep, shall give thee thanks always.

And unto generations of, we will show forth thy praise.

Seeking the Lord's blessing, let us turn back to the portion of Scripture that we read together. The second book of Kings, and chapter 6.

And we can read at verse 15. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early and gone forth, Behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots.

[8 : 24] And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master, how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray thee open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

Elisha, whose name means God is salvation, was the successor of Elijah in the office of the prophet in Israel.

The Lord told Elijah to anoint Elisha to be his successor. And Elijah did as he was told.

He went and he found Elisha. And as he passed him by, he cast his cloak upon him. This was a symbolic gesture for casting his mantle or his cloak over Elisha, meant that Elijah was investing him with all the spiritual authority that went with the office of a prophet.

[9 : 50] And Elisha's response was immediate. After bidding his parents farewell and offering a sacrifice, he went and followed Elijah.

And as Elijah was coming near the end of his prophetic ministry, he visited the schools of the prophets at Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho.

And on each occasion, Elijah tried to make Elisha stay. But Elisha insisted on following Elijah. He said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.

Finally, Elijah left the school at Jericho and made his way to the river Jordan. He was, of course, accompanied by Elisha.

But fifty of the sons of the prophets followed and stood at some distance to see what would happen. And they saw Elijah taking his cloak and rolling it up.

[10 : 59] And he struck the waters of Jordan. And the waters were parted to the one side and to the other. Till both Elijah and Elisha went across on dry ground.

And on going over Jordan, Elijah asked Elisha, What shall I do for thee before I be taken away from thee?

And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. Now what did he mean by asking for a double portion?

Well, Elisha was asking that he would be treated like Elijah's firstborn. According to Old Testament law, the oldest son had a right to a double portion of his father's property.

What Elisha wanted was to be Elijah's firstborn son in a spiritual sense. He craved to have the same spiritual power in his life and in his ministry as Elijah had.

[12 : 16] Elisha knew that if there was going to be any power in his life and ministry, he needed to be as dependable upon the spirit of God as Elijah was.

Elijah's response was, Thou hast asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee. But if not, it shall not be so.

And it came to pass, as they still went down and talked, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire and parted them both asunder. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

And Elisha saw it and he cried out, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more.

And he took hold of his own clothes and rent them in two pieces. And he took up the cloak that fell from Elijah. And he came and he stood by the bank of Jordan.

[13 : 27] And he struck the waters and he cried out, Where is the God of Elijah? Elijah? Then Elisha got the answer.

When he had smitten the waters, when he had struck the waters, they parted hither and thither. And Elisha went over. And when the sons of the prophets saw what happened, they said, The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.

It proved that the God of Elijah was the living God and that he was still working and that he was still blessing.

That he was the same God that led the children of Israel across the Red Sea on dry ground by the hand of Moses. That he was the same God who led Israel through the Jordan River on dry ground by the hand of Joshua.

And today he is the same God. He is our God. For he is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

[14 : 43] He is the living God. The living and true God. Elisha went to Jericho and there he performed this first miracle in healing the waters of Jericho.

Or maybe I should say his second miracle. Because as we have just noted, the waters of Jordan parted for him.

By the time we reached the sixth chapter, Elisha has performed many miracles. In verse 1 to 7 of the sixth chapter of 2 Kings, we have recorded for us probably one of the most familiar of all Elisha's miracles, the miracle of the floating axe head.

An extraordinary miracle performed by an ordinary man. It is worthy for us to note how Elisha is described for us in this chapter as the man of God.

Which I think indicates to us that Elisha was a man who walked very close to God. In the book of Psalms, the psalmist says, the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him and he will show them his covenant.

[16 : 08] However, this morning I would like to spend a short time looking at this episode in Elisha's life where his life was being sought after.

In his early prophetic ministry, Elisha had a servant by the name of Gehasa and Gehasa had every spiritual advantage that a man could have.

He had witnessed many of the miracles that Elisha had performed including the cleansing and regenerating power of God's grace when Naaman the leper washed himself in the Jordan River and was cleansed.

Now, Naaman wanted to reward Elisha but Elisha refused to accept any reward and Naaman made his way back to Syria and here is where we see the fall of Gehasa who was the first servant of Elisha.

You see, Gehasa was a covetous man and he yielded to temptation and he went after Naaman and caught up with him and there he began with his lies and deceit and although he tried to conceal his sin it could not be hidden bringing that scripture which says be sure that your sin will find you out.

[17 : 52] When he returned to his master Elisha Elisha said to him wait not mine heart with thee when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee is it a time to receive money and to receive garments and olive yards and vineyards and sheep and oxen and men servants and maid servants Elisha was making known to him that he knew about his sin that he knew what he had done and then came the most chilling moment when Elisha said the leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and unto thy seed forever and he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow but at the time we come now to the sixth chapter Elisha has a new servant Gehasa was no longer able to serve with

Elisha and Elisha has a new servant he is not named for us he is brought before us here just a young man he would be one of the young men who attended the schools of the prophets and we read here that at this time there was conflict between Israel and Syria and often the king of Syria would lead raiding parties across the border into Israel and these border raids by the king of Syria would try to set ambush after ambush in order to try and catch the king of Israel he was their special target the king of Israel but by the time the Syrians got to where they were going the king of Israel would have moved away here in verse 8 onwards one such occasion is what is reported to us then the king of

Syria warred against Israel and took counsel with his servants saying in such and such a place shall be my camp but then we are told in verse 9 and the man of God that is Elisha sent into the king of Israel saying beware that thou pass not such a place for thither the Syrians are come down and the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of and saved himself there not once but twice by the spirit of God Elisha knew exactly what the king of Syria was planning and he would inform the king of Israel of the movements of the Syrians so that the king would take special precautions and the raiding parties of Syria were foiled it is interesting that despite how often the king of Syria's plans were foiled because here we're told it wasn't just once but at least twice perhaps even more he still persisted to try again he kept on trying and isn't that symbolic of what is true regarding your own archenemy you may think that you have foiled his plan but do not be complacent for your enemy is persistent just like the king of

Syria he will consistently attack wherever he can and he looks for our weaknesses and that is where he begins his exploits to bring us down to try and destroy us if you have had victory over one temptation don't let down your God for the enemy of your soul will try again and again he is persistent just like the king of Syria was now what protected the king of Israel from these Syrian exploits well the same that will protect me and you from our arch enemy and that is to give heed to the warnings of

God through his word God warned the king of Israel through his servant Elisha and you must give heed to the warnings of God through his word God by giving heed to the word of God through his servant Elisha the king of Israel was delivered why is there so much failure in my life and yours is it not because we do not give heed to the warnings we let the word of God slip away by this time the king of Syria was convinced that there was a traitor within his camp therefore the heart of the king of Syria was so troubled for this thing and he called his servants and said unto them will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel then one of his servants replied none my lord or king but

[23 : 46] Elisha the prophet that is in Israel tell the king of Israel the words that thou speak as in thy bed chamber now how did the servant come by this information I don't know but let us remember the man who was sealed of his leprosy Neymar he was a commander in chief of the Syrian army but after he was sealed and converted he goes off the scene we don't hear anything else about him but could there not be the possibility that he shared his experience with the servant of the Syrian king because the authority of Elisha was not something that was hidden we see that with the little maid that was taken into Naaman's household after one of the Syrian raids she is unnamed but she witnessed for God and she was the one who instigated for

Naaman to visit Elisha that he would recover from his leprosy by whatever means the servant knew that the power of God was with Elisha however as soon as the king knew who the culprit was he sets up another plan and he gave the order go and spy where he is that I may send and fetch him now when you look at it here is a man who has come to know that Elisha knows everything that he is doing even the thoughts and deeds in his bed chamber Elisha knows and yet see how irrational is his thinking here go and spy where he is that I may send and fetch him a very irrational move by the king of

Syria when he has just been informed by his servant that Elisha knew what the king spoke in his bed chamber but that's always the way sin is sin is irrational and he was told that Elisha was in Dothan and the king of Syria sent horses and chariots and a great host a mighty army and they came by night and they surrounded the city and when the servant of Elisha got up in the morning he saw the city surrounded with the army of Syria with horses and chariots and you can just imagine him running to his master Elisha and he says alas my master how shall we do the servant is not saying this half heartedly he is saying this with great emotion and with great intensity things are looking bad and hopeless what he sees troublesome he feels threatened and he feels defeated but let us think for a moment how does

Elisha respond Elisha was calm and composed and he says to his young servant fear not for they that be with us are more than they that be with them what effect these words had on this young man we are not actually told but these words were uttered by a man who was full of knowledge conviction and confidence regarding what he was saying heard and that may have been conveyed in some way to this young man who was now so troubled and his master Elisha was so calm and composed notice that Elisha gives a reason for the young man not to be afraid

For they that be with us are more than they that be with them. If you may say, he's using the words of Paul in the New Testament, where Paul says, if God be for us, who can be against us?

[28 : 36] The way that Elisha and the young man responded to the situation that confronted them brings before us a situation of weakness and strength.

Elisha and the young man saw the same scene, and yet their response to it was so different. The young man was taken up completely by what he saw, and that left him filled with fear, and he already felt defeated, and that was his weakness.

But Elisha, by faith, was able to look at the same scene, but he looked beyond what he saw, and that was his strength.

There are times when it is easy to be dismayed and discouraged and afraid and feel defeated by all the trials and tribulations that are common to mankind.

But for the Christian, there are added to these common trials, the spiritual opposition that you face from without and within, the daily hostility and the daily struggles from indwelling sin in your life.

[29 : 53] And there is no doubt that we must recognise the danger. Peter says, Your adversary, the devil, is as a roaring lion walking about, seeking whom he may devour.

Paul speaks of the wiles of the devil, and brings to our attention that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

So he informs us and warns us, commands us, Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.

The Syrian army surrounds Dothan, and both the young man and Elisha recognises the danger. But they dealt with it in different ways.

The young man was much taken up by sight. He looked at the things which are seen. He looked at the circumstances, and he forgot God.

[31 : 04] He forgot to look to God. While Elisha looked at the same things, but by faith he looked beyond the things which are seen, to the things which are unseen.

The young man was beginning to faint. Why? Well, we read in Proverbs 24, If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

Elisha was not afraid, not because he was unaware of the danger, but he was by faith following that, which Moses had given, the instructions that Moses had given for godly warfare, in Deuteronomy chapter 20, where Moses said, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies.

Let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them. For the Lord your God is ye that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.

Elisha was applying the words of Psalm 27, Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear, the war should rise against me, and this will I be confident.

[32 : 26] You see, if we look at our circumstances, and recognise our danger, and leave God out of the equation, then we shall be weak.

But if we look at our circumstances, and bring God into the equation, then we shall be strong. And that is what Elisha was doing.

He was looking at the self-same circumstances, that the young man looked at. But the young man left God as out. But Elisha took God in.

He looked at the same circumstances. But he took God into those circumstances. Elisha prayed, and he said, Lord, I pray thee open his eyes, that he may see.

And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses, and chariots of fire, round about Elisha. Some people will ask, Elisha see this sight for himself, and as a result, wanted the young man to see it.

[33 : 34] Well, for myself, I don't think that Elisha saw the sight and the physical sense, as the young man saw. Because Elisha looked at the situation that confronted them from God's perspective, or as Paul says, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Or, as it is said of Moses in Hebrews chapter 11, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. And that is the situation that we have here with Elisha.

He endures. He looks at the circumstances. He looks at the dangers. He is aware of the dangers. He is aware of the strength of the Syrian army.

But he endures. As seeing him who is invisible. He doesn't need to see this army with his physical eyes, the army that the young man saw.

He doesn't need to see that army with his physical eyes, because he believes. He knows that they are there.

[34 : 51] He knows that they are there, although he doesn't see them. He knows that that army is there. Because he believes.

The young man's problem was really unbelief. The young man's problem was that he was so taken up by what was seen, the circumstances, and he forgot God.

There are situations where God accommodates our weakness. And this is one of them, where he accommodates the weakness of this young man, and therefore this man, young man, saw this mighty army that was around Elisha.

He was aware of the Syrian mighty army, but he was made to see another army, the army of the Lord of hosts, that was around Elisha.

The situation here reminds me of another situation in the New Testament. When the disciples told Thomas that they had seen the Lord after the Lord had risen from the dead, Thomas said, except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

[36 : 24] Days after, the Lord again appeared, and Thomas was there. And the Lord said to Thomas, Richard, at thy finger, and behold my hands, and Richard, at thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believe ye.

And Thomas answered and said unto him, my Lord and my God. Now listen to what the Lord said to him. Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed.

Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. Elisha believed. He had not seen, but he believed.

When David tried to count the heavenly host, he found it impossible. In Psalm 68, he says, the chariots of God are 20,000, even thousands of angels.

David knew that this mighty host stands ready to protect every believer. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and deliver of them, he says in Psalm 34.

[37 : 30] The writer to the Hebrews says, of the ministry of angels, are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

So what this young man saw was not unusual. It's not unusual for God's army to be around his people.

They are always there. What was unusual was for this young man to see it with his physical eyes. We should not crave after those things.

But the Lord is gracious, and there are times when he wills to accommodate our weakness by giving to us that which is not the usual way.

faith strengthens man, not because man doesn't face reality, but faith knows greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

[38 : 42] Elisha faced reality. He knew the strength and the threat of the Syrian army was real, but he believed that there was a greater army surrounding him.

There was that temporal reality of what he could see, but there was also that spiritual reality which Elisha could not see, but he believed.

The young man was given by God to see that spiritual reality accommodated his weakness by granting to him to see that spiritual reality.

You know, there are many examples given to us in the Bible of those who in moments of crisis leans upon the fact that whatever happens, the Lord is there.

And you may be today facing hardships, facing some circumstances, maybe a health issue or whatever. And you wonder, is God here?

[39 : 51] But God is there. Whatever happens, if you're a believer today, God is there. There is that well-known encounter between David and Goliath.

And what did David say? The Lord saveth not with sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord's. whatever will happen to me as I face the giant Goliath, the battle is the Lord's.

He is there. And so he went forth to meet the enemy as seeing him who is invisible. Sometimes God in his providence from our perspective seems to be absent.

absent. He seems to be absent at times when we really need him. This place where the prophet was, Dothan, it is only mentioned twice in the Bible.

Here and the other incident is a way back in Genesis chapter 37. and there we find recorded for us the place where Joseph was thrown into the pit where he was sold to the Ishmaelites who brought him down to Egypt.

[41 : 21] And as he is thrown into the pit and although he pleaded with his brethren they gave him no heed until the Ishmaelites came and they took him out and sold him down to Egypt.

And you could say, well at Dothan where are the angels? Where is this protection? Where is God? What about the promises? In Egypt Joseph does the right thing when he was tempted to sin.

And where does that land him? In a dungeon in irons. Where is God? Where is God's protection?

What about the promises? Yet God was there. And on reflection this is how Joseph interprets that.

He says to his brethren, so now was not you that sent me hither but God. God sent me hither to deliver you with a great deliverance.

[42 : 37] Whatever happens we must believe that God is there working out his own purpose to his glory. You know in Genesis 39 if you read that chapter we find written there and the Lord was with Joseph and he was a prosperous man and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian and the Lord was with Joseph and further down in that same same chapter it says but the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

The Lord was with Joseph in the house of his Egyptian master although it led him to the dungeon and in the dungeon the Lord was with Joseph as he gained favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

Stephen in his speech he says in the book it's recorded in the book of Acts chapter 7 and the patriarchs moved with envy sold Joseph into Egypt but God was with him.

God was with him. Whatever happens we must believe that God is there working out his own purpose to his glory.

That was the strength of Elisha. That is why Elisha said to the young man fear not fear not for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

[44 : 35] And as we go forth then today let us remember these words and let us remember whatever may however it may look from our perspective that from God's perspective he is always with his people.

He is always there. He is around them and with them before them behind them he is always there.

And as it was through regarding Joseph and the Lord was with Joseph so the Lord is with his people. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. We give thanks unto thee O Lord that we have thy blessed