

**2nd Kings: 6: 8-23 – “Lord, I Pray, Open His Eyes”, Message # 11 in the series –
“Elisha and the Prophets”, A Bible Study conducted by Pastor Paul
Rendall on October 17th, 2018, for those gathered at his home.**

The miracles which were given by the Lord for Elisha to do, to show all men His sovereign control of human history continue on in these verses. Our God is a God of miraculous doings at many points, but people do not by nature see it. We will see here in these verses that God had to open the eyes of the understanding of Elisha’s servant so that he might see the truth about how God guards His people. And we see also from this passage that He can also strike men with blindness to accomplish His good purposes, to keep them from further sin against His messengers, and cause them to be at peace with His people. Truly, we have much to learn about the ways of God. And so, this evening I want us to give our attention to the 3 miraculous things which Elisha was enabled to do by God’s power, to preserve and protect His people and establish the truth of His faithfulness to them.

1st of all – The miracle of supernatural discernment. (verses 8-12)

We see here that the king of Syria was making war against Israel, and he was making his plans and consulting with his servants; telling them the place where he would set up his camp, and since the Lord did not want him to succeed in killing the king or winning in his war against them, He communicated this information to Elisha, His prophet, and Elisha was able to warn the king and thus prevent a disastrous defeat from taking place. He warned the king because God had given him this supernatural knowledge of Ben-Hadad’s plans to lie in wait to kill the king. I think that we need to understand several things here. Elisha was shown by God his responsibility to the king of Israel. He was to be a spokesperson from God to him, to warn him of the danger that he was in. In our day, there are no longer prophets receiving direct revelation from God as we find Elisha was here. But still, it is the responsibility of preachers of the word of God, and especially pastors, as God’s providence would so order it, and circumstances would bring it to their attention, to warn government officials of their danger from the strategies of wicked men who are being influenced by the Devil.

In this case, it was Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria, who was a danger to king Jehoram. The name of king Jehoram is not even mentioned here, anywhere, all through this passage, because although he listened to the warning of Elisha in regard to the danger to his body, he did not listen to him in regard to the danger to his soul, which thing he should have been able to have seen from the goodness and kindness shown to him in this warning him in regard to the earthly danger to him. A king must rule in righteousness and judge with righteous judgment. But he needs discernment, and moral and spiritual discernment is only learned from God. But this was something that Jehoram did not do.

Look over to Romans chapter 2, verses 1-6. “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.” “But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.” “And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same that you will escape the judgment of God?” “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” “But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who render to each one according to his deeds.”

This man Jehoram, we see, took heed to the earthly warnings of Elisha concerning his bodily welfare. But this goodness of God in common grace, to give him wise discernment in this matter of his earthly danger was not improved upon by him, to consider that it was God who held his life and his soul in his hands. It says in verse 10 of our text in 2nd Kings 6 – “Then the king of Israel sent someone to the place of which the man of God had told him, and was watchful there, not just once or twice.” In other words, he was warned over and over again. He thought about the warning and acted upon it. This matter that we are talking about here, of the great and supernatural discernment which

was given to Elisha ought to have been marveled over by Jehoram in the sense of the words spoken by the Lord Jesus in Luke 12: 1-5 – “In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, ‘Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.’ “For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.” “Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed the housetops.” “And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” “But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!” Jehoram should have looked to his own hypocrisy; that he was trying to lead God’s people while he himself tolerated and promoted idolatry to a great level, in the land? He ought to have repented. What was spoken by Ben-Hadad in the dark, in an inner room, had been proclaimed in the light and on the housetop of the king of Israel.

Jehoram was the son of Ahab, that wicked king of Israel who would not listen to the Lord’s voice to him, through Elijah the prophet. In chapter 3, verse 1, we read – “Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years.” “And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, but not like his father and mother; for he put away the sacred pillar of Baal that his father had made.” “Nevertheless he persisted in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin; he did not depart from them.” So, what we have here is an unbeliever who in some ways repented of his father’s gross idolatry, but in other ways he maintained it and kept it up. I think that the application to ourselves is that we should not be fooled into thinking that a man is a good man or a Christian man just because he gives up some forms of idolatrous worship. If he promotes any forms of idolatrous worship, he is not to be followed in regard to worship, and God’s preaching servants have the responsibility to warn them for their good and for the good of the nation.

Turn with me over to 2nd Timothy 4, verses 1-5 – “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word!” “Be ready in season and out of season.” “Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears from the truth, and be turned to fables.” “But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” This is the ministry to which pastors in our day are called to. And it includes preaching to those who may be professed believers, but are really not acting like a true believer, or are really an unbeliever. A pastor is called to preach in such a way that all of these categories of people are addressed, and that includes kings. Elisha’s ministry was not to a believing king, but it was to an unbeliever who thought that he knew the Lord. I know that this is the case because later on in the last verse of chapter 6 of 2nd Kings, the king says, “Surely this calamity is from the Lord; why should I wait for the Lord any longer?” He was actually planning on killing Elisha, because he saw Elisha as the problem as to why Israel was experiencing a famine and why some of the people were so hungry that they were eating their children. We will study that later.

But, I am saying, that in all generations, there have been times when God’s prophets and preachers and pastors have needed to warn kings and other professed believers, who are in positions of authority of their dangers from foreign powers, and their danger in not heeding God’s messenger in regard to spiritual truths and realities which will bring them down not only from their position in government, but down to hell as well. The time may come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but the man of God will have said and done what God would have him to do, if he is faithful. In the case that we are studying tonight, we see that God miraculously gave Elisha the ability to discern what the king of Syria’s plans were, and told him to warn Jehoram so that he would not be killed by Ben-Hadad, and he would thereby see how good and merciful and kind the Lord is to men like him who are deceived. Ben-Hadad also ought to have been able to have drawn the appropriate conclusion that God was watching over Israel and its king, to protect them, when he was informed by his servants that

Elisha the prophet was able to know the words that he spoke in his bedroom and thereby warn the king. See how great is our God in his being able to give to His servant Elisha the ability to know these things. The heart of Ben-Hadad was troubled, but it was not humbled by this knowledge. It takes the grace and mercy of God for any man to come to that place.

2nd – Let’s think together about the miracle of the Lord’s opening this young man’s eyes at the request of Elisha. (verses 13-17)

Verse 13 – “So Ben-Hadad said, ‘Go and see where Elisha 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, there was an army 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.”

Here we find Ben-Hadad thinking that if he can send a whole army to arrest Elisha, then surely he will succeed in catching Elisha. He sent them by night so that Elisha wouldn’t suspect anything until too late. They surrounded the whole city of Dothan so that he would not be able to escape. The young man with Elisha, when he saw this army was dismayed, as he rightly should have been, if God was not watching over Elisha. He says – “Alas, my master!” “What shall we do?” Elisha’s answer surprises him. “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” You can see here how young or fearful Christians should be addressed in situations where they are overwhelmed with all that is coming against them. They should be told not to fear; that they should have a calm heart, remembering that God is with them and that He is well able to help them. Isaiah 41: 10 – “Do not fear for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God.” “I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” “Behold, all those who were incensed against you shall be ashamed and disgraced; they shall be as nothing, and those who strive with you shall perish.” “You shall seek them and not find them – those who contended with you.” “Those who war against you shall be as nothing, as a nonexistent thing.” “For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you.’”

This is how to counsel them so that they will be fixed on what the Lord will do for them, and what He will provide, in the way of defense against the world, evil men, and the Devil. His help will be more than what the world, evil men, and the Devil can bring to them. How many times, when Jesus was ministering to those with little faith, he said – Do not fear. Here, there was no reason for this young man to fear because the angels were gathered there; the mountains all around them were filled with horses and chariots of fire all around them. These were not literal horses and chariots of fire, but they were most definitely the actual and literal spiritual manifestation to this young man, of what it looked like when the curtain of the spiritual realm was drawn back, and he was then able to see what was happening in the spiritual realm in relation to their predicament.

I want you to see that Elisha prayed in relation to this young man’s being able to see these things clearly; to look behind the curtain into the spiritual realm, and to see all that God was doing for them, to keep them and protect them. Let us be those who pray for those with little faith, that they will have their eyes opened to all of what God is doing to keep them from evil. Turn with me over to Psalm 121, verses 1-8. “I will lift up my eyes to the hills – from whence comes my help?” “My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” “He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber.” “Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” “The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.” “The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.” “The Lord shall preserve (protect) you from all evil; He shall preserve (keep) your soul.” “The Lord shall preserve (guard) your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.” What wonderful promises are these! We ought to claim for ourselves, and speak of

them to every Christian who is weak in faith, and lacking courage. Romans 15: 1 – “We who are strong ought to bear with the weaknesses of the weak and not to please ourselves.”

3rd – The miracle of Elisha’s prayer that the Lord would strike the army of Syria with blindness, and then asking for their restoration later on. (verses 18-23)

“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.” It is evident that Elisha prayed this way because God directly inspired him by the Holy Spirit with a plan to deal with these men. It involved his asking God to smite them with blindness; a prayer which God immediately answered. They were not struck with complete blindness, but they could not see anything at all clearly. They were disoriented and without means to do anything except be led about by others. Then Elisha calmly told them that this was not the way, nor was this the city; that they should follow him, and he would bring them to the man whom you seek. He was very simply telling them that they needed to be brought the place where they could rightly see what kind of a man he was. And so he led them to Samaria, and after they arrived, he asked God to open their eyes; to take away the blindness that He had struck them with. And so, the Lord did. And they saw that they were in Samaria, it says.

God had determined that these sinful men needed to be led into a state of earthly blindness, so that they might really understand what kind of a man Elisha was. He was a man who, according to God’s purpose in this particular situation, would show mercy and grant help to his enemies. It should remind us of the situation of the blind man in John chapter 9, when Jesus confronted those unbelieving Jews who did not like Jesus giving his sight to him. He said in John 9: 39 – “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may be made blind.” “Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, ‘Are we blind also?’ “Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ “Therefore your sin remains.” This army of men being ordered to get Elisha and take him captive or to kill him, had to be blinded, before they could see the spiritual truth. When the king of Israel, who evidently quartered his troops in Samaria, saw this whole army of blind men, he said to Elisha – “My father, shall I kill them?” But Elisha says to him – “You shall not kill them. Would you kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow?” Prisoners of war, in other words? It would have been a cruel and unrighteous way for them to have been treated. No, he says to king Jehoram, “Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.”

Let us understand in closing, that this is the way to treat our enemies and those who would persecute us. Turn to Proverbs chapter 25, and verses 21 and 22 – “If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for so you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the Lord will reward you.” Matthew Henry says: “...as Elisha did to the Syrians that came to apprehend him,” 2nd Kings 6: 22. What encouragement we have to do so. (1.) It will be a likely means to win upon them, and bring them over to be reconciled to us; we shall mollify them as the refiner melts the metal in the crucible, not only by putting it over the fire, but by heaping coals of fire upon it. The way to turn an enemy into a friend is, to act towards him in a friendly manner.” (2.) However, we shall be no losers by our self-denial: “Whether he relent towards thee or no, the Lord shall reward thee; he shall forgive thee who thus showest thyself to be of a forgiving spirit. He shall provide for thee when thou art in distress (though thou hast been evil and ungrateful), as thou dost for thy enemy; at least it shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, when kindnesses done to our enemies shall be remembered as well as those shown to God’s friends.”

I have read somewhere that in those days, in that cultural context, that if you wanted to help someone who did not have fire for themselves, and lived a short distance away, you would take coals from your own fire and place them into a container that would hold it, and that the person who was being helped would put that on his head and carry it back to his own dwelling place. Whether that is true or not, we are thinking of it here in the sense of giving help to an enemy so that he would come to

be ashamed of his own intent of hatred and change his own attitude when he sees that you have loved him, when he did not deserve to be loved. This is how enemies can be changed to be friends when this kind of love is displayed. This is what happened in this situation. And thus, the marauding bands of the Syrians came no more into the land of Israel.