

Eyes Opened to Reality
(II Kings 6:8-23)
By Randy Wages
2/1/09

Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. **Introduction:**

In our text for today we will review the story of the prophet Elisha in which we see two separate occasions where God opened the eyes of the characters in this story so as to enable them to discover a reality that they were oblivious to apart from His divine intervention. Accordingly, I've titled this morning's message "Eyes Opened to Reality."

II. (Read II Kings 6:8-23 with commentary as it is read)

III. Spiritual significance:

A. Like Paul, we here at Eager Avenue Grace Church are "***...determined not to know anything among you save <except> Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.***" I.e. we are determined to preach the Gospel and yet we desire to consider and weigh the entire counsel of God revealed herein. So how are we to reconcile what may seem like competing objectives as we remain determined to set forth the gospel while at the same time we do not want to bypass or overlook Old Testament stories such as this?

B. Well, we know from Christ's own testimony that these Old Testament scriptures concern Him and we see that fact throughout the Old Testament, often in pictures and types. But if the picture or type being asserted is truly valid rather than just one more opinion from the vast smorgasbord of religion, then we should apply this rule (as I intend to do so today): We shouldn't derive our doctrine from our own interpretation of a biblical story or historical account, but rather we interpret the stories by the clear doctrinal passages that set forth the specific message of this book or the Gospel, the doctrine of Christ and how God saves sinners in and by Him alone.

IV. Application to Spiritual Israel or As we consider God's dealings here with the Israelites and the Syrians through His prophet, Elisha, what does this reveal to us concerning God, and ultimately His Son, Jesus Christ? To begin with let's consider several truths concerning God that are exemplified by today's text.

A. Omniscience of God ó

1. As typified by the God-given power that He bestowed upon His prophet, Elisha, referred to in our text in verses 9, 10, and 15 as “the man of God”. Here we have pictured the attribute of God’s omniscience ó He knows all. Note in vs. 12, the Syrian king’s servant described how Elisha knew even what was spoken in the privacy of his own bedroom. Just as this was unsettling to the King of Syria and prompted him to go after Elisha, it is truly unsettling to a sinner if we contemplate how God knows our every thoughts ó particularly if God is pleased to reveal to us the extent of His holiness and the perfection He requires.
2. And as we consider God’s omniscience (that God knows all), let us ask, can there be any obstacle to the salvation of any for whom Christ died that an “all knowing” God could not foresee? How ridiculous, for this God not only foresees and knows all ó our sovereign God determines all ó declaring the end from the beginning.

B. Omnipotence of God ó

1. Secondly, God’s people’s eyes are opened to the reality of the infinite power of God, His omnipotence. (Reread vs. 17). I believe that this manifestation of the presence of angels, God’s ministering spirits, in the form of an innumerable host of horses and chariots of fire, is indicative of God’s almighty power. We see dimly with the eyes of faith, but with those eyes, God’s sheep (spiritual Israel) should and do take great comfort to the extent we keep in view in Whose mighty hand our entire destiny rests.
2. In Hebrews 1, the superiority of Christ over angels is set forth, and there in vs. 14, the scripture says of angels, “***Are they not ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.***” God has at His disposal all power and might and He engages that on behalf of all the heirs of salvation. And He has provided and employs these ministering spirits toward that end.
3. As the servant’s eyes were opened to God’s reality, he saw there was no reason to fear for as Elisha had asserted, “***...they that be with us are more than they that be with them.***” Their overwhelming numbers are representative of how God is all powerful and cannot fail. In Hebrews 12:22 we read, “***But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.***”
4. And we see that God’s sheep in particular have angels in God’s employ ministering to us. As the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 34:7: “***The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.***” And hereby we recognize not only His omnipotence, but His omnipresence as well.

5. Turn a few pages back to II Kings 2. Here we read of Elijah being caught up in the whirlwind. Look at vs. 11 (read). Here we see (as in chapter 6) the same manifestation of God's power present in the ascension of Elijah, Elisha's predecessor. Many take this as an indicator that angels are employed in ultimately carrying all of God's saints into heaven. Regardless, it is a reminder of the absolute certainty that all for whom Christ lived and died will likewise be carried into heaven's glory with such power that cannot be thwarted. As Christ said in John 6:39: ***"And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."*** It's sure and certain for He cannot fail.
6. The point is, the reality is, *if God be for us, who can be against us.*" (Rom. 8:31).
7. And for all of the heirs of salvation to whom this innumerable company of angels minister, their eyes are opened to the reality of the sure and certain salvation to be found in Christ *ó* for God is powerful enough to save each and every one of the objects of His everlasting love.

C. The Inflexible Justice of God *ó*

I believe that this manifestation of God's angels as horses and particularly as chariots of fire encompassing them is a picture of the consuming fire of God's inflexible justice (as fire often depicts the just wrath of God).. Now as such, how can one look forward to Christ's second coming as One who will come in strict justice? They can't love His coming unless they see justice has been served in Christ of whom the hosts of angels sang, ***"...peace on earth..."*** *ó* seeing this peace is made in His satisfaction.

D. The Provision of God is revealed to all those whose eyes are opened to God's reality:

1. It is interesting that in our story today, we first have the example of how God, through Elisha, gave eyes to see His reality to one, (i.e. - Elisha's servant), while initially blinding others, the entire Syrian army. And in consideration of this, we're reminded of the truth set forth by Christ in John 9:39 where He said, ***"...For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not <, > might see; and that they which see <, > might be made blind."***
2. But I also want us to consider that the Israeli servant of Elisha was not the only one whose eyes were ultimately opened to a new reality. In the story of how God, after blinding the Syrian army, restores their sight, we are reminded of how God likewise gives spiritual sight to all those for whom this miraculous blessing has been purchased *ó* the heirs of all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, Jew & Gentile alike.

3. In seeing valid pictures in both cases, (i.e. ó with both the Israelite servant as well as the Syrian army), we are reminded that all ó the religious (typified by the Jews) and the non-religious (typified by the Syrians) ó are both blind to God's reality (all having sinned). And as such it requires a miraculous opening of the eyes of our understanding for anyone to behold the reality of the provision God makes for His people in Christ ó an enlightenment that begins with what the scripture refers to as being born again ó being given spiritual life.
4. First note that Elisha prayed and in keeping with that prayer God smote the Syrian army with blindness. Well, so it is with all of humanity, smitten by the fall. As Romans 5:12 reads, ***"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"*** And coming into this world physically alive, but spiritually dead, we too lack the faculties of spiritual life ó we come into this world as blind men ó blind to the glory of God revealed in the face (person and work) of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6).
 - (a) Eph 5:8, referring to believers, the children of God, it reads: ***"For ye were sometimes <meaning in times past> darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:"***
 - (b) Col. 1:13-14, speaks of God, ***"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: ¹⁴In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:"***
5. Be turning to Isa 59. Note how the Syrian army groped and blindly walked to find their way to the man of God, Elisha. We can surmise that the eyes of their understanding (if not also their physical eyes) were definitely obscured as they were smitten. And likewise, all of us come into this world spiritually blind, having been smitten by the fall.
6. The prophet Isaiah in Isa 59 described this blindness that is common to all (including God's elect) until God miraculously gives them the faculties of life whereby they see. This description from Isa. 59 actually begins in vs. 1, but for now, look with me beginning down at vs. 8 where it reads: ***ó⁸The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. ⁹Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. ¹⁰We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men...*** <without the faculties of life, including spiritual sight whereby we behold God as He is uniquely revealed in Christ as both a just God and a Savior>. And so we see how our natural fallen nature can be likened to the smitten Syrian army as the man of God, Elisha leads them into Samaria, into the very midst of the kingdom of Israel.

7. Now flip over a few pages to Isa 65 where in vs. 1, God, speaking through the prophet says, ***“I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. ²I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts”*** And so it is with all who find salvation in Christ. They like the Syrian army have their eyes opened to find themselves translated into the kingdom, the kingdom of God’s dear Son. What mercy and grace to have God intervene on behalf of rebellious sinners such as we to deliver us out of darkness into the marvelous light of His gospel of grace ó all of this while we sought Him not, while we walked in the way that seemed right to us, but a way that ultimately ends in eternal death and destruction (Prov. 16:25) for all who persist thereon ó on that broad road that leads to destruction.
8. Having been ushered into the kingdom, the eyes of the Syrian army were opened (II Kings 6:20) and new realities were made known unto them. These gracious discoveries for those whose spiritual eyes are opened to God’s glorious Gospel that sets forth how salvation is conditioned on Christ alone, based upon His imputed righteousness alone include the following:
- (a) God was there all the time (just as the one they sought, but could not see, Elisha, had ordered their steps into the middle of Samaria). God’s word teaches us that He has a people chosen unto salvation in Christ from all eternity ó rebellious children who are brought from darkness to light to behold Him as He is.
- (b) We have absolutely nothing to do with our arrival in this kingdom. We had no more to do with even procuring the merit we needed (His righteousness) than the Syrians had in being taken captive and delivered into the midst of Samaria.
- (c) And we discover that if judged on our very best efforts, (even our sincere interest in spiritual things) we deserve to be destroyed, just as the King of Israel desired to smite the Syrians because they deserved it! They had laid in ambush seeking to destroy Israel, akin to how we all start our religious journeys sincerely imagining that salvation is conditioned on the sinner and that in direct opposition and rivalry with the only righteousness that would satisfy our holy God ó the perfect satisfaction which Christ alone made. As enemies of God, attempting to stand before His bar of justice pleading our own merits and having imagined that salvation is conditioned on the sinner in any way or to any degree, we too deserve nothing but destruction.

- (d) But the eyes of God's sheep are opened to discover that they've been taken captive. II Cor. 10:4-5 describes spiritual warfare and says that the weapons thereof are "...*are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;*) ⁵*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and* <what is the result> *bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*" ò.. God forbid that í <we>í *should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...*" (Gal. 6:14). Have you been brought into this captivity ó every thought that would exalt itself against the knowledge of God having been cast aside so as to see how your entire hope is to be wrapped up in the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ?
- (e) Lastly, we discover what a great provision has been made for those who have been taken captive into His kingdom ó adopted into His family. We discover our sins were fully put away as Christ alone met every requirement and condition of our salvation in His life and death on the cross.
- (f) As we saw earlier in vs. 23, the king did not merely give them bread and water, but it reads that he "...prepared great provision..." for them. With the eyes of God-given faith, we discover the untold riches of His mercy and grace ó of the blessings of heaven beyond our comprehension. What a provision has been made by the life and death of our Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ.

V. Closing:

Some of you, like me, wear corrective lens or glasses. I know that as a young boy, when my parents discovered I needed glasses and upon getting my first pair, I was amazed to see the definition of the leaves on trees as we drove home from the optometrist. Until you're able to see better, you don't even recognize that you are impaired ó that you were blind to some things.

Well, today I ask, òIs there òsomebody youö out there who has been groping about in darkness, never having seen before with the eyes of God-given faith the Gospel of grace wherein we discover our blindness and not only the folly (but even the evil) of having imagined that we, the sinner, played some causal role in our own salvation ó blind to the vanity of seeking to be saved based upon something other than or in addition to the merit of the finished work of Christ alone ó i.e. His righteousness made mine by God's free imputation or accounting of it to me.

Well, here's a note of encouragement. Today, God has providentially caused you to hear (at least with the physical ear) the Gospel that is the power of God unto salvation for therein is His great provision of the righteousness of God revealed. My prayer is that He will lead you into Samaria so to speak of into His very kingdom and open your eyes to see the great provision made for His children of for each and every one of those for whom Christ came to this earth, lived and died.

May your eyes be opened to this reality!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself of the Bible.

Randy Wages