

Sermon 24: God's Merciful Work in an Apostate Nation: 2 Kings 6:8-23

Text: 2 Kings 6:8-23

Setting: Constant Conflict: 6:8 "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..."

- Elisha was Israel's prophet for around 50 years.
- During those years, the nation experienced constant turmoil and spiritual confusion.
- The events described in **2 Kings 5-6** likely took place during the reign of Jehoram, the son of Ahab and Jezebel.
- During that time, Syria was one of Israel's primary enemies
- Namaan's healing was an example of God's grace on an individual level, but it did not change the trajectory of either nation.
- The warfare described in this passage was an irritant not an organized conquest like what is described in the next section of the text.

God's Grace: 6:9-10 "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..."

- Though Jehoram was a wicked king, God still extended His grace.
- He used these instances to spare the people and to validate Elisha's ministry as a true prophet.
- On several occasions, God intervened for Israel's good despite their generally apostate condition.

The folly of presumption: 6:11-15

- **The Syrian king was convinced he had a traitor in his inner circle: 6:11** "Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?"
- **His servants disclosed the true source of the leak: 6:12** "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..."
- **The king's solution was to kidnap the prophet: 6:13-14** "And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told 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..."

- **Elisha's servant did not understand the irony of the king's plan: 6:15-16** "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. 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..."

Divine Providence: 6:17 "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..."

- **If human wisdom and strength were the determining factors, Elisha and his servant were in serious trouble.**
- **The Syrian king and Elisha's servant did not consider the complete picture.**
- **Elisha prayed that his servant could see what he saw.**
- **God is the LORD of Hosts:** Though we may not see what He is doing, we can always trust Him with the invisible and the unknown.
 - **1 Samuel 17:26** "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"
 - **1 Samuel 17:46-47** "This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand...that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands..."
 - **Psalms 34:6-9** "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him..."

Divine irony: 6:18-19

- **Elisha prayed God would temporarily blind them: 6:18** "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..."
- **In their blinded state, he led them into the Samaria: 6:19** "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 ye seek. But he led them to Samaria.
- **When their sight was restored, they realized they were completely vulnerable to the enemies they had harassed: 6:20** "And it came to pass, when they were come into 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..."

Temporary reprieve:

- **God commanded the king to show them mercy: 6:21-23** "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..."
- **God used this event to provide a temporary reprieve: 6:23** So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel..."

Basic Lessons:

- **Lesson 1: God actively works in lives even when they fail to acknowledge it:** Israel was in a disastrous state, yet God worked through men like Elisha for their good.
- **Lesson 2: He gives people opportunities to witness His power and ways:** Two nations' kings and the people around them did not acknowledge the LORD, yet they had opportunities to witness His power.
- **Lesson 3: There is more going on in the world than what we can see:** There is an active spiritual realm and what happens in the realm matters far more than people realize:
- **Lesson 4: He works through the prayers of His people:** The passage mentions Elisha's prayer three times
 - He prayed when his servant needed to acknowledge God's active work in the spiritual realm.
 - He prayed when the presumptuous enemies needed to be restrained.
 - He prayed when their enemies needed to see their vulnerable situation.
- **Lesson 5: He consistently treats people better than they deserve:**
 - He intervened for Israel's king and his good.
 - He intervened for Elisha's servant.
 - He showed mercy to the Syrian soldiers.
 - He extended mercy to Israel, though they were generally apostate.