

Lessons from the Life of Elisha, Part 7: The Blind See (2 Kings 6:8-23)

I. Read 2 Kings 6:8-23

- a. Chuck did a tremendous job covering the first half of this story at our June retreat in Pennsylvania. I commend that lesson to you, found on our website at www.walking-by-faith.org.
- b. We will focus on one major theme today: blindness and receiving sight. This is a huge theme in Scripture. We will only scratch the surface!

II. Recap of Story

- a. By God's power, Elisha is revealing where the King of Syria was attacking Israel. The king learns this so he brings "a great army" to capture Elisha in Dotham. Surrounds the city. Elisha is in big trouble.
- b. Elisha's servant wakes up in the morning and sees this great army, which has surrounded the city. He is terrified. Asks Elisha: "O master, what shall we do?"
- c. Elisha answers: "'Do not fear, for those who are with us are greater in number than those who are with them.' Then Elisha prayed, and said, 'Lord, open the eyes of the servant and let him see.' And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he was now able to see, and he beheld the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." (2 Kings 6:16-17)
- d. These men had two very different reactions to the same situation.
 - i. Both were in Dotham. Both saw the enemy's army surrounding the city coming after them.
 - ii. Yet their reactions were completely different. (One terrified and desperate; one confident and at peace.) Why?
- e. These two men were seeing two very different things!
 - i. The servant saw only the Syrian army. Terrifying.
 - ii. Elisha saw the Syrian army, but also saw God's army, with chariots of fire. This was not even a fair fight!
 - 1. The servant did not see fully.
 - iii. Elisha sees things as they truly are. Therefore he is unfazed by the "danger." There was no danger, when God has your back with chariots of fire!

f. What can we learn from Elisha?

i. Elisha's prayers are powerful and effective.

1. He prays that his servant's eyes can be opened, and God opens the servant's eyes, and he sees.
 2. We have seen Elisha's prayer life before. The Shunammite's son had died. She comes to him desperate.
 3. "Elisha went into the house, and there was the child, lying dead on his bed. He went into the room and shut the door against the other two, and prayed to the Lord." (And the boy raised from the dead.) (**2 Kings 4:33**)
 - a. Jesus tells us to do the same thing: "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (NKJV, **Matthew 6:6**)
 4. Elisha certainly learned to pray from his master Elijah.
 - a. James, Jesus' brother, tells us: "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced fruit." (**James 5:16-18**)
 5. Why were these men's prayers so powerful?
 - a. They are poor, scrounging for food, no place to lay their heads, always helping others.
 - b. They are righteous, shunning temptation, rejecting the false security of wealth, faithful to God, praying earnestly, fervently.
 - c. Remind you of anyone?
 6. Can we learn to pray like Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus?
- ii. Elisha has great compassion for his servant.
1. "Do not fear, for those who are with us are greater than those who are with them." (**2 Kings 6:16**)

2. This is not a rebuke. This is kindness, encouragement – he “puts courage into” his servant!
 3. Followed up with prayer for his servant.
 - a. Takes the time to pray to God so that his servant can see.
 - b. (Could have left his servant in a terrified place, God’s army was there, was going to protect them. Elisha not too busy to take time to help and strengthen his servant.)
 4. Elisha’s servant’s response (to the Lord opening his eyes): His fear turns to awe, laughter, joy, relief, gratitude, worship, devotion – probably all at the same time!
- g. Now things get really intense! “Then the Syrians marched toward him....” (**2 Kings 2:18**)
- i. The Syrians are blind, do not see the Lord’s army and chariots of fire.
 - ii. How is this going to end? Things are getting real!
 - iii. What would I have done? Run? Rouse Israel’s army for battle? (fight chariots with chariots, swords with swords)
 - iv. No, Elisha is not only unfazed, but has a very different weapon up his sleeve. No chariots, no swords, instead, he prays to his God. He asks his God to strike them with blindness; and God does.
- h. Elisha then leads them away from Dotham and takes them right into Samaria, where the King of Israel is with his army. They are trapped, sitting ducks, doomed, and they don’t even know it.
- i. Again, Elisha prays: “‘Lord, open their eyes and let them see.’ Thus the lord completely restored their ability to see. And behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.” (**2 Kings 6:20**)
 1. Before we talk about the Samaritans, who are in huge trouble, let us not lose sight of Elisha’s powerful and effective prayer.
 2. 3X he prays: He prays for his servant to see, he prays that the Syrians will be blind, he prays that the Syrians will see – God answers each and every time.
 3. May this stir us to greater prayer! He is a man, just like us. May we be convicted and stirred to pray prayers to a powerful God who desires to work amongst His people to accomplish his purposes.

4. Robert, recently prayed that he could get a job that is part-time (x hours), work partly at home, pays x amount, that is doing something meaningful... and more. Goal: to make enough money to cover his expenses, but have time to serve God and do His work.
 - a. Robert was asking for prayers, and praying secretly for the things he was asking His loving Father for.
 - b. God answered the prayer. How happy this must have made God. How easy for Him as well.
- i. Back to Samaria. The tables are totally turned. The warring Syrians are now captured. They started it. It is about to end. This is perfect for Israel.
 - i. Question: "Shall I strike and kill them?" (Time to retaliate, they have been bringing raiding parties, warring against us, taking our people captive. Time for retribution. Put this enemy to death.)
 - ii. Answer: "You shall not kill them." Instead, give them food and water. They go beyond, and throw them "a feast"! They eat, drink, and are released to go.
- j. This is totally bizarre and makes no sense! This is foolish! Look at the next verse (**6:24**), the Syrians come back and war against Israel.
 - i. Israel totally blew it by not destroying their enemy when they had the chance. Yes, foolish, unless you are God.
 - ii. There are, indeed, times in the Old Testament that God brought judgment (the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, Jericho). Just like many times in the New Testament he brings great judgment and speaks of the intense judgment to come.
 - iii. Yet, there are many times in the Old Testament, just as there are in the New Testament, where we see God's great compassion for his people and his enemies.
- k. God loves his enemies.
 - i. He healed Naaman when he obeyed by washing 7 times in the Jordan River. Naaman, the commander who was bringing raiding parties against God's people.
 1. (A foreshadowing of the free gift of forgiveness offered to the Gentiles who repented and turned to God, believe in Jesus and are baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.)
 - ii. Elisha, God's prophet, commanded to feed and give water to the

Syrians, God's enemies. The Syrians are given a feast, and released.

1. Jesus, the Prophet, freed us from bondage, even while we were his enemies.
 2. Jesus goes beyond this. Invites his followers to join in a regular feast, as we break bread together over the Lord's supper.
 3. He tells us in **John 6**: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."
 4. Jesus also tells us that when he returns, his faithful followers will be called to join him at a great feast: "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" (**Rev. 19:9**)
- iii. A few other examples from Scripture: God's enemies become His beloved, faithful people through 1) a mighty display of God's power, 2) going from blindness to seeing, 3) being forgiven!
1. The Jews in Jerusalem at Jesus' death:
 - a. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (**Matthew 23:37**)
 - b. "'What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?' They all said to him, 'Let Him be crucified!'" (**Matthew 27:22**)
 - c. At Pentecost, Holy Spirit descends with great power. People certainly in awe.
 - d. "'Therefore let all the house Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both lord and Christ.' Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'" (**Acts 2:36-37**)
 - e. They are baptized, sins forgiven, washed away. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - f. "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and

having favor with all the people.” (Acts 2:46-47)

- g. They were spiritually blind. Didn’t understand that the man before them was the Son of God. They killed Him. Then they see the power of God. They learn (they see) that they killed Jesus. They are in big trouble!
- h. But God’s response is mercy, forgiveness, compassion. Their blindness turns into sight, through the mercy and kindness of God. Their fear and trembling turns to joy and gladness.

2. Paul (Saul of Tarsus)

- a. Present and approving when Stephen was stoned to death. (Acts 7:58)
- b. Read Acts 9:3-19
- c. Saul is so confident. Persecuting the Christians. Spiritually blind as to what he is doing.
- d. God/Jesus confront him in their glory – a bright light from heaven. He is then physically blinded.
- e. “Why are you persecuting me?” “Who are you Lord?” “I am Jesus.”
 - i. Paul is in big trouble.
 - ii. “So, he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord what do You want me to do?’”
- f. Does God nail Paul? Strike him dead? Retaliate for the deaths and persecutions and evil he has brought against the Christians?
- g. No. God is just like he was in 2 Kings with the Syrians. Jesus offers Saul forgiveness. He is baptized and his sight is restored (physically and spiritually).
- h. Saul’s fear turns to joy and courage. He becomes a “chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.” (Acts 9:15)”
- i. The early Christians were very serious about following Jesus’ teaching and imitating His example as to loving their enemies. (This is an area I was blind to for many years in the church, as a Christian. I missed these Scriptures. Also, this was not talked about in the Restoration Church I attended.)

- i. "He bids us to 'love our enemies, bless them who curse us, and pray for those who despitefully use us.' And He says: 'If anyone strikes you on the cheek, turn to him the other also; and if anyone takes away your coat, do not hinder him from taking your cloak also.'" (Clement of Alexandria, c. 195, 2.293)
- ii. "An enemy must be aided, so that he may not continue as an enemy. For by help, good feeling is compacted and enmity dissolved." (Clement of Alexandria, c. 195, 2.370)
- iii. "We do not train our women to be Amazons to manliness in war, for we wish even the men to be peaceable." (Clement of Alexandria, c. 195, 2.420)
- iv. "If, then, we are commanded to love our enemies (as I have remarked above), whom have we to hate? If injured, we are forbidden to retaliate, lest we become just as bad ourselves. Who can suffer injury at our hands?" (Tertullian, c. 197, 3.45)
- v. "Is the [military] laurel of triumph made of leaves, or of corpses? Is it adorned with ribbons, or with tombs? Is it wet with ointments, or with the tears of wives and mothers?" (Tertullian, c. 212, 3.101)
- vi. "Our religion commands us to love even our enemies, and to pray for those who persecute us." (Tertullian, c. 212, 3.105)
- vii. "... Celsus urges us [Christians] 'to help the king with all our might, to labor with him in the maintenance of justice, and to fight for him. Or if he demands it, to fight under him or lead an army along with him.' To this, our answer is that we do give help to kings when needed. But this is, so to speak, a divine help, 'putting on the whole armor of God.' And we do this in obedience to the commandment of the apostle: 'I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all men; for kings, and for all who are in authority.' So the more anyone excels in godliness, the more effective the help is that he renders to kings. This is a greater help than what is given by soldiers who go forth to fight and kill as many of the enemy as they can. And to those enemies of our faith who demand us to bear arms for the commonwealth and to slay men, we reply: 'Do not those who are the priests at certain shrines...keep their hands free from blood, so that they may offer the appointed sacrifices to your gods unstained hands that are free from human blood? Even when war is upon you, you never enlist the priests in the army. If, then, that is a praiseworthy custom, how much more so that – when others are engaged in battle – Christians engage as the priests and ministers of God, keeping their hands pure. For they wrestle in prayers to God on behalf of those who are fighting in a righteous cause, and for the king

who reigns righteously. They pray that whatever is opposed to those who act righteously may be destroyed.

Our prayers defeat all demons who stir up war. Those demons also lead persons to violate their oaths and to disturb the peace. Accordingly, in this way, we are much more helpful to the kings than those who go into the field to fight for them.... we fight on [the king's] behalf, forming a special army – an army of godliness – by offering our prayers to God....”

III. Lessons for Us

- a. Let's open our eyes to the wonder and power of God. Let's have faith like Elisha, to see things as they truly are (not like the servant who only sees the enemy).
- b. Let's acknowledge we were blind and can still be blind!
 - i. “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” **(2 Cor. 4:3-4)**
 1. God lifted the veil from our eyes when we came to Christ. Let us rejoice! Never forget our blindness.
 2. The god of this age has blinded unbelievers. Let's recognize the enemy and what we are up against.
 - ii. As Christians we can be blind! Sometimes it takes a “loving rebuke” to recognize our blindness.
 1. Jesus wants to vomit the church in Laodicea out of his mouth because “you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked – I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” **(Rev. 3: 17-19)**
 2. Paul's wonderful example with the blind church in Corinth. 1 Corinthians, a love letter to reason, plead, and correct the church, help them regain sight.
- c. Remember, God will bring judgment, but he is also compassionate. He desires to bring healing and forgiveness. (like with the Syrians, in Acts 2, like Paul's conversion)

- i. Jesus came to proclaim recovery of sight to the blind. This is God's heart. (**Luke 4:18**)
 - ii. God's desire is to feast with us at His banquet table.
- d. Let's imitate the prayer life of Elisha, Elijah, and Jesus.
 - i. Paul writes that he does "not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened...." (**Eph. 1:16-18**)
 - ii. Let's remember that this is a spiritual battle and we have to fight with spiritual weapons.
 - iii. Let's go into our rooms, shut the door, and pray to God in our secret place and see what He does!.