

Those Who Are With Us Are More than Those Who Are With Them (2 Kings 6:16)

Christian Fellowship Retreat in PA June 23-25, 2017

I. Who are We, and Why are We Here?

- a. Welcome. Gathering this weekend started as a small idea of having a weekend retreat for our Boston-area house church in PA, to meet with Mahlon Fisher's family and a few friends, and kind of grew on its own (out of our control). This is something new for all of us here.
- b. People gathered from different places, different church backgrounds (Anabaptist, Restoration Movement, evangelical Protestant), yet have amazingly similar convictions.
- c. My original suggestion for 'theme verse' for this gathering:
 - i. "David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. So when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. And everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him. So he became captain over them. And there were about four hundred men with him." (1 Samuel 22:1-2, NKJV)
 1. Most people here know either *David Bercot*, or *David Adams* (who Pouyan Gharavi refers to as "Second David")
- d. What we have in common (I think, most of us)
 - i. Deep desire to put into practice *all* of the commands of Jesus, all the New Testament teachings. That includes teachings that were widely embraced as part of the orthodox faith in the early church, but which are unpopular in many Christian circles today, for example on:
 1. Authority and inspiration of Scripture
 2. Importance of obeying the teachings of Jesus, and persevering in that, if we are to be saved
 3. Nonresistance and war
 4. Conversion and the new birth (involving faith, repentance and water baptism)
 5. Being a Christian is a different way of life, marked by total commitment to Jesus (not simply believing a set of doctrines)

6. Women and men's roles in the church
 7. Duty to evangelize our friends, neighbors and the world
 8. Discipling relationships
 9. Head covering (and uncovering)
 10. Permanence of marriage (and what the Bible teaches regarding divorce and remarriage)
 11. Modest dress and moving away from worldly adornment
 12. Shunning materialism, striving to live simply and below our means so that we can be generous in helping the poor and advancing the work of the kingdom
 13. Separation from the world and dangers of worldly influences, remembering that without holiness, no one will see the Lord
 14. Staying unified by making it a top priority to Biblically resolve conflicts as they come up.
 15. Having a disciplined church that is willing to put out of fellowship and out of communion those who are in serious and unrepentant sin. Yet also realizing that the church will be imperfect. As Jesus taught in the parables of the Dragnet and the Wheat & Tares, some within the kingdom here on earth will be rejected by God in the end.
 16. Weekly participation in the Lord's supper, recognizing that this is something more than just a symbolic memorial
 17. Striving for unity among all Christians, whenever and to what extent that is possible (without compromising on what is true from Scripture)
 18. Avoiding extra-Biblical rules and against creating man-made barriers that get in the way of unity and genuine holiness
- e. Today, even in churches that hold to many of these teachings, anyone who by just reading their Bible comes to hold to the full range of Christ's teachings (like the early church) is typically considered: dangerous, not following the 'party line', arrogant (going against the collective wisdom of their denomination and its teachers/ leaders) or a maverick.

II. Those Who are with Us – Outnumbered in 2 Kings

- a. (Read **2 Kings 6:8–13**, NKJV) “Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel; and he consulted with his servants, saying, ‘My camp will be in such

and such a place.’ And the man of God sent to the king of Israel, saying, ‘Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are coming down there.’ Then the king of Israel sent someone to the place of which the man of God had told him. Thus he warned him, and he was watchful there, not just once or twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was greatly troubled by this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, ‘Will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?’ And one of his servants said, ‘None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.’ So he said, ‘Go and see where he is, that I may send and get him.’ And it was told him, saying, ‘Surely he is in Dothan.’”

- i. Story starts like President Trump’s first term. Secret conversations by the top guy are being leaked to his enemies. Who is responsible for the leaks?
 - ii. Elisha is the culprit; spiritual weapons more effective than the NSA in picking up high level information. Through the supernatural power of God, Elisha is tipping off the king of Israel regarding the strategy and moves of the Syrian king’s army.
 - iii. Syrian king sends out an army to track down and capture Elisha.
- b. (Read **2 Kings 6:14–15**) “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?’”
- i. Natural reaction when you are outnumbered and surrounded: fear. It certainly appears that they are on the losing side of the upcoming battle.
- c. (Read **2 Kings 6:16–18**) “So he (*Elisha*) 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. 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.”
- i. Elisha was confident because he was able to see something that his servant could not yet see.
 - ii. Elisha saw the spiritual hosts of heaven, generally not visible to people, beyond the vast army of the king of Syria. It gave him a great

confidence that the Syrians had no chance; the Syrians were completely outgunned by God's massive spiritual firepower.

- iii. Remember that just two angels had reduced Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding area to ashes.
- iv. Also, when Jesus was taken captive by the multitude who came to him at night with swords and clubs, from the high priest, Jesus told one of his disciples, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" (**Matthew 26:52-53**, NKJV)

III. Conclusion and Take-Aways

- a. We are in the midst of an intense spiritual battle. It is not just people we are fighting here. Paul reminds us, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (**Ephesians 6:12**, NKJV)
 - i. Who do you think Satan will hit the hardest? (If you were on his side, where would you be focusing your efforts? Who potentially poses the greatest threat to his kingdom?)
 - 1. Evangelistic churches that are 'all offense but no defense' converting people but not actually pulling them out of the world?
 - 2. Conservative churches that are 'all defense but no offense', who are living wholesome lives separate from the world but not effectively reaching the hundreds of millions of lost people in cities all over the world?
 - 3. Or those who are serious about advancing ALL of the teachings, pulling people out of the world and then teaching them to obey all the teachings of Jesus, including the unpopular ones?
- b. One of the oldest tricks in the book to shut people down is peer pressure and intimidation. "How can you and your tiny group be right and ALL OF US important religious leaders (with their numbers, degrees, positions, titles) be wrong?" This is a numbers game to intimidate and discourage you by telling you that you are alone and outnumbered. You are told that you and your small group of friends can't possibly be understanding and reading the Bible right!
- c. However, we are not alone.

- i. If we are righteous, and if we are living lives that are pleasing to God like Elijah, Elisha, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat, Daniel and his 3 friends (including not prideful, arrogant, divisive, or hypocritical), then we will have forces at our disposal through prayer that others cannot touch. Two of us will be able take out a large army.
- ii. One of the great benefits of studying history is to get an appreciation of what the historic faith is, that was once for all entrusted to the saints. **(Jude 1:3)** Like Elisha, we need to 'turn the tables' on those who try to intimidate us by saying we are small in numbers (outnumbered by them). For example:
 1. In head covering discussion, I was told that those who were with me were greatly outnumbered by the respected teachers within the denomination I was a part of. My response: I proposed that we invite 20 people into the room: one representative from each of the 20 centuries of the church, and ask them about head covering. Nineteen would be in agreement with me, while one (representing the 20th century) would be divided and confused. Among these 'invited guests', my opponents would be outnumbered 19-0!
 2. On the subject of war and nonresistance, once again those who claim that Christians can participate in the military and fight in the government's wars claim that we nonresistant kingdom-oriented Christians are in a small minority among Christians today. However we can remind them that in the early 300's, when bishops from all over the world gathered at the Council of Nicaea, they agreed that any Christian who voluntarily joined the military after becoming a Christian should be put out of the church (reference: *Canon 12, Council of Nicaea*). In that crowd of bishops, once again, it is *actually our opponents who would have been vastly outnumbered!*
 3. There are more and more of us. As we band together, plant churches, spread the teaching and build a network of brotherhood, and put these things into practice, it will become harder and harder for people to marginalize us. We have all the most powerful weapons at our disposal.
 4. This is not a numbers game. Having a majority on your side certainly is no indication that we are on the right track. However, let us take comfort that we are not alone, and we are growing in numbers; not as a result of some wonderful strategy, but people in dispersed places are all reading the same book, taking it at face value, and putting the pieces

together. Also, we can see that the earliest Christians came to the same conclusions, for the same reasons.

- d. We hope that this weekend will provide a great opportunity for all of us who are seeking to restore all the kingdom teachings of the New Testament to get encouragement from knowing that we are not alone. May we build greater unity, learn from one another and catch a vision for greater ways that the kingdom can advance in our lifetimes!