

“There Are More on Our Side Than on Their Side?”

II Kings 6:8–17

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Prayer:

O Lord, we are ready to listen. We pray You would overmatch our resistant ears with Your transforming Word. Lord, some of us come today in fatigue, lacking in enthusiasm, disillusioned having lost hope, sarcastic, feeling not much at all but just numb. The only thing that will move us is Your Word, illumined and empowered by Your Spirit. We know that no one can bring us up out of this except You and You alone. The medicine that we need the most is You, more of You and Your Word. Plant Your Word in us. Help us stand long enough before the mirror of Your reality so that it transforms us, our view of self and life, when we finally see it and don't let us walk away forgetting what we have seen. You have done it before, do it again, Lord for Your living Word is what we need to hear – that two-edged sword that scapples its way into our very thoughts and intents. O how we need You, bring us better thoughts and greater intent. Pierce us today with a healing cut that cures our sadness for we hear too many other voices that misdirect us and hurt us in the process. Here and now let us hear Your Word, that Word that is living and makes us alive and with calm the storms of our life and the tempest of our minds. Give us the greater measure of peaceful shalom. We ask this humbly in the name of our Lord and Savior, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

As we look at II Kings 6, I encourage you after this study to read the preceding chapters to get even more context to what we will be looking at today. II Kings 6:8–19 says [8] *Once when the king of Syria was warring against Israel, he took counsel with his servants, saying, “At such and such a place shall be my camp.” [9] But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, “Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are going down there.” [10] And the king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God told him. Thus he used to warn him, so that he saved himself there more than once or twice.*

[11] And the mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled because of this thing, and he called his servants and said to them, “Will you not show me who of us is for the king of Israel?” [12] 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.” [13] And he said, “Go and see where he is, that I may send and seize him.” It was told him, “Behold, he is in Dothan.” [14] So he sent there horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city.

[15] When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” [16] He said, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” [17] Then Elisha prayed and said, “O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.” So 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. [18] And when the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed to the LORD and said, “Please strike this people with blindness.” So he struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha. [19] And Elisha said to them, “This is not the way, and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.” And he led them to Samaria.

May God give us understanding of His Word today.

Oh say can you see, not by the dawn's early light, but can you see? I have been wearing glasses since the 4th grade. My 4th grade teacher noticed I was squinting and couldn't see the board very well, she mentioned it to my parents and I made a trip to the eye doctor. I had to get glasses and the next day when I went to school, one of my childhood friends said 'four eyes, four eyes, four eyes.' I was okay and I wore those glasses until I started playing a baseball catcher in little league and then traded the glasses for contact lenses, because it's hard to wear glasses when you have a catcher's mask on. Then I wore contact lenses all the way through high school but did occasionally wear the glasses some too.

Fast forward 30 years and the problem then became, not my eyes but my arms. Some of you might laugh because you know what I mean. I got to wear I couldn't tell which screw driver to use for the screws I need to use. Being the cheapskate I was, I just figured I keep wearing the glasses that I had and just go to the pharmacy to get me some reading glasses. Sometimes I would wear my readers and regular glasses at the same time and my teenage kids would make fun of me, but it was the only way I could see close up and out there. I finally went and got new glasses known as progressive lenses, which is just a fancy word for and invisible bi-focals. That is what I wear now. I still sometimes have to adjust them on my nose to see certain things.

There are two problems that still persist that require corrective lenses. Some of you can identify with what I'm saying about my glasses and this study is about spiritual corrective lenses. Just as we need corrective lenses to see more clearly physically, we need our spiritual vision corrected as well and that is what this text of Scripture in II Kings is about. When it comes to vision it's not what we see that is the problem but it's what we don't see and that is also true of this text. First, it's about what we so often don't see and that is the reason for the question mark in my title of this study.

The purpose of my study is for you and I to erase that question mark for there are more on our side than on their side. I want you to see that, believe that and live like that and that is what this text holds before us today. Elijah's servant didn't see that there were more on our side than their side and sometimes we don't either, actually often times we don't see that. We certainly don't live like we believe that either.

Paul House wrote a fine commentary on I and II Kings. This story is just one of many that illustrate this truth I want to show you. II Kings fits within a context. Solomon at the front end of I Kings, exile at the end of II Kings and the question this raises is, how can you start so well and finish so poorly? Solomon and his kingdom started out really well and then we see this deterioration that gets worse and worse in the culture and the nation and that is where II Kings picks up this story. II Kings is about a new way of seeing, not just this text but even in the first few stories of this book show us how God's reality of upside down becomes a right side up way of looking at things. I'll give you some examples.

II Kings 2 is a story about kings. By the way, there aren't even names in that story and that's one of the interesting things because Elijah is always called by name except when he is referred to as the man of God or the prophet. We know who the kings are but they don't have names in these stories. Elijah and Elisha have names. Kings go down to see Elisha. Think about that? Does the real power reside with the kings or with Elisha? Does it reside in the power of the kings or in the power of the King of Kings? That is what this story answers. Yes, geographically they may have had to go down but there's an illogical statement being made here. Here are two kings of a nation and they have to go down to see the prophet of God.

In II Kings 4 predators are about to take a widow's two sons as slaves until Elisha shows up and makes want plenty, makes famine feast, makes not having enough to eat more than enough and then some. Go read the story. In II Kings 5, Naaman a general with leprosy, how does he find out where to get hope? He found out from a little Jewish girl who was his servant. In God's reality small is big and what we think is the bottom side is actually the top side. God invites us through these stories to look at our lives, at other's lives and our world in a very different way. There is a great power above kings, generals, armies and even above predators. The problem is, we don't see that and certainly too often we don't live like we believe that. So my intent and more specifically God's intent for us in understanding this text of Scripture goes something like this.

Here is what Spurgeon so well says about this text; "We would have you, dear friends, receive what no education can ever get you, what no graduation at any university can ever bestow upon you; we want you to obtain what no years of experience or of study can achieve; we want you to possess what no imitation of other people will gain for you; we want you to experience a change which only the Lord the Himself can work in you." It is a new way of seeing that gives us a new way of living. As pointed as Spurgeon's quote is, Spurgeon misses the point but gets the application. I hate to say that for who am I to criticize Spurgeon but stick with for a minute.

Spurgeon thinks of the passage as to how our eyes are opened to salvation and certainly this text could teach us about that. Certainly, God has to open our eyes to our spiritual condition and to His glorious provision if we're going to be saved. We are spiritually blind before God saves us. God must enlighten our eyes to see our sinful nature and to see His gracious provision for our sin in Christ, but this text is about a new way of seeing, not in terms of salvation, but I believe it is a text about our sanctification. It's about even after coming to Christ there are still blind spots and we still need corrective lenses. Are you still with me? Again, there are more on our side than on their side.

The matter of spiritual eyesight is all through the Bible. I want to give you some of these examples. There are more than I have time to share but the first one I want to share is in Genesis 22. This is where Abraham faces the ultimate test of sacrificing his son, the child of the promised covenant, and as Abraham raises the knife to kill his only son, he not only hears the voice of the angel of the Lord, stops and also sees a ram stuck in the thicket by its horns. God literally provided Abraham a sacrifice and that becomes a reflection of God providing Himself as a sacrifice for us. Abraham not only saw the ram that would become the substitute but he names the place Yahweh Provides and the Hebrew could just as easily be translated Yahweh Sees. Abraham saw because Yahweh Sees, God sees.

Another example is from Jeremiah 5:21-24 which says [21] "*Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not. [22] Do you not fear me? declares the LORD. Do you not tremble before me? I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it. [23] But **this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart** (referring to God's own people); they have turned aside and gone away. [24] They do not say in their hearts, 'Let us fear the LORD our God, who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain, and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest.'*"

This is a very pivotal text because this a text that Jesus picks up on in this in Mark 8. He has just fed 5,000 with a small lunch and then He does it shortly thereafter for 4,000 and then the Disciples get in a boat to go with Him across the sea as Jesus tells them to beware of the leaven

of the Pharisees. They are thinking ‘we didn’t bring any bread’ referencing Jesus talking about leaven, so they didn’t get it. They were worried about people getting fed and Jesus made a little bread into a lot and they began to argue with one another about not having bread as Jesus says to them ‘why are you arguing about having no bread? Do you not understand even yet? Are your hearts too hard to take it in?’ Then He quotes this passage from Jeremiah from Mark 8:18, *[18] Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?* I’d like to show you another example.

It’s in Ephesians 1 where Paul is praying for the church at Ephesus which implies he is praying for believers. Here is his prayer from Ephesians 1:16–21 which says *[16] I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, [17] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, [18] **having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you**, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, [19] and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might [20] that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at his right hand in the heavenly places, [21] far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*

I go from Scripture to Scripture showing you that we who are already God’s people who still need a lens change. We need to go to who Spurgeon calls the Great Optometrist and that is God Himself. He is the One who really knows how to correct vision. There is more on our side than on their side. In the II Kings text the servant didn’t at first see it but later he did see it. The servant saw the danger but didn’t see the deliverance until the eyes of his heart were enlightened. This passage is not about salvation although it certainly applies, it is mostly about our lives being more and more in tune with God and His doing in our world. It is not about the power of armies but about the power of prayer.

Yes, this is the passage where the title of the movie Chariots of Fire comes from and if you have never seen the movie, it is worth the watch and is based on this text. The eyes of the body were opened and with them the servant saw the danger but the servant needed the eyes of his faith to be opened and with those new eyes he could see the protecting hand of God, the clearer side of the sovereignty of God and the power of heaven. The more we see that the less we hear the troubles of earth. The more we see the glory and providence of God, the less we fear the troubles of earth.

So how do we get that new way of seeing? I hope I have convinced you that we need that. It’s a simple formula but that’s why it’s so hard. I say this in my counseling of others, ‘obedience is simple and that’s why it’s so hard.’ The text makes it abundantly clear that we to get this kind of seeing we pray and we don’t just pray for ourselves but for others too. This servant got his new eyes because Elisha prayed. Who in your life do you find yourself saying either out loud or inside your head, ‘they just don’t get it’? Perhaps it’s a child, grown child, a spouse, a parent...and it’s a true diagnosis that they don’t get it. Then we end up lapsing more into complaining than we do into intercession for them. Are you praying that someone’s eyes will be open? If you get into counseling, you will get real dependent on that because many times that’s just your only hope of getting through to them – for God to open their eyes. You can keep giving them the Word of God and sooner or later God has a way of breaking through.

I read this recently – some would dismiss answered prayer as nothing more than coincidence but someone wisely responded, ‘that could be so but all I know is the more I pray

the more coincident seemed to happen.’ Are you praying for your eyes to be opened and for other’s eyes to be as well? In order to get these corrective lenses, we pray, show up, slow down and stay longer. Even though we might show up on the Lord’s Day we don’t show up before the Lord in our private lives during the week. I have to confess that I need that and I have really gone after it. I believe that is the foundation of Biblical counseling – is the Word being used to open people’s eyes to see differently about themselves and the world they live in. I am committed to that tooth and nail but I’m confessing that I just don’t practice it too well.

Recently I took some vacation and I said to my wife, Laura, ‘I’m going to lean in and get more Word in my life.’ I bought a new Bible which is something I haven’t done in a long time and I put it by the chair I like to sit in and followed the advice I give to people all the time – to put the Word in your way so you can’t get past it. I took a day where I read quite a bit in the morning, at lunch and at night but I was also on vacation in which it’s a little easier to do that then. Here is what hit me at the end of that day. As I sat and thought about everything I had read, it would be a stretch to say I read it for 90 minutes. How much Word is in your way? In your life? Do you want to see the hillside full of the armies of God and the chariots of God? If you do you must pray, read and immerse your mind, marinate your thinking in Scripture. Do you have a secret place to do this? So you visit it often? Do you show up there regularly?

I like what Kevin Ott says about ‘the secret place,’ where we meet with God, read His Word and pray. Ott says ‘Success in the secret place is not reaching a certain emotional epiphany each time we’re with God. Success is not walking away with a sense of righteousness and patting ourselves on the back because we did the right things. Success is simply showing up.’ The moment you have taken the first step to spend time with God to be alone with Him, your time in the secret place is already a success.

Slow down. Read more on less. I give this advice a lot and try to practice it myself. Sure, I would like for you to read the whole Bible and read it through every year and to know the grand story of God’s redemption. I want you to know about Creation, the fall, redemption, consummation which are four great things that run theologically through all of the Scriptures. I would love for you to see the expanse of that but sometimes we just need to meditate on verse or one Psalm and let it be the one we read over and over again in one particular leaf. There needs to be a time where we go deep. We slow down.

I love what Spurgeon said about John Bunyan. I used this in an article I wrote recently. Spurgeon said read anything of Bunyan and you will see it is almost like reading the Bible itself. He had read it until his very soul was saturated with Scripture and though his writings are charmingly full of poetry, yet he cannot give us his Pilgrim’s Progress – the sweetest of all of his poems – without continually making us say ‘why this man was a living Bible.’ Prick him anywhere for his blood is bibline. If Spurgeon didn’t have a word, he would just make one up. Spurgeon was saying that the Bible was in Bunyan’s blood. The very essence of the Bible flows from him. Bunyan could not speak without quoting a text of Scripture for his very soul was full of the Word of God and Spurgeon then says, ‘I commend his example to you.’ Spurgeon also says we should stay longer.

I have been growing vegetable plants at my house and have had to spray a few times because the creepy crawlers keep getting on them to eat the leaves off. If you don’t stay on top of that they can eat up some stuff in a hurry. Spurgeon was a keen observer of nature and used that in most of his sermons. He was a pastor, theologian and a scientist too. He was a keen observer of the created order. This is what Spurgeon says in that same quote, ‘Oh that you and I might get to the very heart of the Word of God and get that Word into ourselves, as I’ve seen the

silkworm eat into the leaf and consume it, so ought we to do with the Word of the Lord – not crawl over its surface but eat right over it until we have taken it into our inmost parts. It is idol to merely let the eye glance over the Word, to recollect the poetic expression of the historical facts, but it is best to eat into the very soul of the Bible until it lasts. You can talk in Scripture language. Your very style is fashioned upon Scripture models and what is better still your spirit is still flavored with the Word of God.’

Pray, show up, slow down and stay longer – if you do that you will start seeing things very differently. For there is more on our side than on their side. We have to recognize back to Mark 8, by the way. The Disciples didn’t see what was going on with the bread and this is the chapter where Peter finally gets it right about who the Christ is. They finally see Christ for who He is and they affirm it but before that Jesus heals a man. He heals him in a certain way for us to see that our blindness sometimes goes away progressively because when Jesus touched this man’s eyes he could see a little more clearly. Mark 8:23–25 says [23] *And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Do you see anything?”* [24] *And he looked up and said, “I see people, but they look like trees, walking.”* [25] *Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.*

It wasn’t that Jesus couldn’t have completely healed him the first time but He did it again. He touches Him again. Touch us again Lord. Do you want to see more clearly? Do you want to see that there are more on our side than on their side? Then pray, show up, slow down and stay longer. Even when we do these things we still seem to have to be reminded of it over and over again and the Bible reminds us of this reality. Fast forward a hundred years from II Kings and Hezekiah says to the people during a time of great peril when the city was being besieged, ‘Be strong and courageous, don’t be afraid or discouraged because of the King of Assyria over his mighty army for there is a power more greater on our side.’

There is also another from I John 4:4 which says [4] *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* There are three main characters in II Kings 6, two kings and one prophet. Elisha is the only one who has a name and knows what real power is. The one serving God is the one with the real power. Elisha only has the Word of God and the Spirit of God on his side. The kings have armies that could bring political revolution but Elisha has the power of personal transformation on his side.

Political revolution – personal transformation. Stick with me here for a minute. It seems to be getting more and more this way, about every four years it seems we believe political revolution is more important than personal transformation. We wring our hands even in the mid term elections. I’m not telling you that’s not important because it is, but we have to start looking at this very differently. As I read history, for I have taught and read history, real change so often comes by those who have been personally transformed, who vote and run for office, but personal transformation is where the real power is. Changed people change the world. Changed people see that there are more on our side than on their side and that requires a lens change.

Elisha knew which was better and more powerful, but do we and do we live as if it is so? Hebrews 11:1 says [1] *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* We are always looking for the evidence and I’m not saying that all of us look out onto the hills of our lives and it seems like we are surrounded, because we are. The lens change was not about not seeing the enemy, the lens change was about seeing the help, seeing the deliverance. It wasn’t that the servant didn’t suddenly see the army of Assyria, it’s just all of

sudden now he began to see the army of God and the chariots of fire. And that changes everything.

It changes how we think, live and how we treat each other. It changes how we vote, it changes everything for it's a new reality. It's the bottom side that God flips up and says this is the right side so stop thinking like the world. God would say to us today, please know, understand and even when you don't see live your life like there are more on our side than on their side. Say it, pray it, believe it and go live it. Let's pray.

Prayer:

There are more on our side than on their side. God, help us believe it and go live it. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.