

Open your eyes

Reading: 2 Kings 6:1-23

Text: 2 Kings 6:16

Very often we over-estimate the enemy. In 1991, in United States' first attack on Iraq following their invasion of Kuwait, the US, along with allied forces, quickly completed their military objectives. Some of the people, therefore, felt misled by government officials. The government replied that their intelligence services(情报部门) had vastly over-estimated the Iraq's military.

In the Old Testament, we see this happening again and again in Israel. God's people are told they should have nothing to fear. But Israel does not listen and start measure external things like the enemy's number, their weapons, their experience.

We often do the same. We see the powers of wickedness in the world, and see how vulnerable (脆弱的) the Church is. What is going to happen? Or we become discouraged with a particularly ingrained sin (根深蒂固的罪) --and we over-estimate its strength.

God would have some facts reinforced in our minds so that we do not overestimate the power of the enemy and we do not fear. God gives His people gracious and mighty protection, and that demands a response of faith and humility.

1. God Spies on the Enemy's Whereabouts

The religious setting: The story in 2 Kings 6 takes place in the northern 10 tribes of Israel, which were governed by the king in Samaria. Jehoram is king and (3:2-3) *he did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not like his father and mother; for he put away the sacred pillar of Baal (巴力的祭坛) that his father had made. Nevertheless he persisted in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin; he did not depart from them.*

The northern 10 tribes of Israel had rejected God, yet God proves He is still God, and that if they turn to Him they will find mercy.

The political setting: The king of Syria makes war against Israel.

The story: The way the Syrian king decided to make war with Israel was to launch surprise attacks (突袭) on Israel. But something kept happening. There would be Israel's army! *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? (11)*

But one of his servants said, *Its none of us, O king. But Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.*" Elisha, the prophet of God (上帝的先知)! He told the king of Israel exactly where the Syrian king would make his next attack.

The explanation: Elisha knew because God told him. God told him because God loved His wayward (任性的) people. God was acting on their behalf against their enemies. God was spying on the enemy in order to spare His people Israel, to keep them from harm so that they might see that He is God and that He knows all things--even what the king is thinking while lying on his bed at night.

2. God Surrounds the Enemy's Army

The story: The Syrian king is troubled and angry. So the king says: *Go and see where Elisha is, that I may send and get him* (13). They tell him, *Elisha is in Dothan*. The king sends a great army, horses and chariots.

This tells us that he was scared of God. *I must send a lot of men against that God!* But it also tells us that he was foolish. If he was wise, he would bow to the Lord God who rules the nations and confess Him Lord. But the Syrian king was not wise, but a fool who instead shakes his fist at God. The king thinks he actually has a chance against the God of Israel!

The army surrounds the little city of Dothan. Dothan was a city up in a mountain on the west side of the Jordan, a little north of Samaria. Early in the morning, the prophet's servant got up and went out, he saw the fields and forests full of Syrian horses and chariots. Surrounded! He shakes awake Elisha, *Alas, my master! What shall we do?* (15) *Elisha is unafraid*. He answers, *"Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them* (16). Elisha prays: *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* (17).

The explanation: Fear welled up (涌现) in the servant's heart because he is looking at the situation through man's eyes alone, and not by the eyes of faith. If he had remembered who the covenant God of Israel was, he would have had the confidence of Elisha. But he looked at the Syrian armies. But then his eyes are opened and he sees the great armies of God! He is the *Lord of hosts* (万军之耶和华), who does whatever He wills, and no one can stop Him.

God opens his eyes, and caused him to see. One cannot believe and see unless God opens the eyes. One cannot truly understand all reality in this world, unless God gives faith. Faith gives sight and causes us to see what God reveals of Himself.

3. God Sabotages (破坏, 阻挠) the Enemy's Plans

The story: The Syrians had come to arrest and escort Elisha back to their king. But what happens? As they come to him, Elisha prays to Jehovah: *Strike this people, I pray, with blindness. And God struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.* (18) God opened the spiritual eyes of Elisha's servant to see, but He takes away the sight of these Syrians.

Following that, Elisha tells them that he will lead them. He said: *This is not the way, nor is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek."* But he led them to Samaria (19). Elisha leads them helpless to the king of Israel. There, according to Elisha's request, the Lord opened their eyes and they saw they were inside of Samaria and surrounded again.

The explanation: The Lord turned upside down their plans! Kings and princes might make war against God and His anointed and seek to break their bonds and free themselves, but they cannot prevail. They plan and take counsel, and He surprises them at every turn. He closes the eyes and they do not see. They are led wherever He wants, though it is entirely against their will and their counsel. He opens their eyes and they see with dismay (沮丧、惊愕) that all their efforts only moved them further away.

The application: We need to see this God and who He is. He did all these things not

against His people, but for His people, for their protection. God calls us to faith, to believe in Him with confidence. We are to believe in His strength. He is protection for His people, for He is the Almighty, a Warrior for His people, who is omniscient (knows all things), omni-present (everywhere present), and omnipotent (all-powerful). Like Elisha's servant, may our eyes be opened, and may we see by faith, the greatness of God. Perhaps our eyes have not been opened, and we need to see Him for the first time. We need to bow before Him and confess our sins to Him.

As believers, we need to believe in His ability in the midst of our trials (试炼). When your health fails you, pray that the Lord would open your eyes to see His sovereign powerful hand in this. When you have to walk carefully in sensitive relationships, remember God who holds all things in His hands.

And when we look at this world, and all the dismal (凄凉的, 悲惨的) things that take place, the persecution of our brothers and sisters increasing, the way politicians and media and people in general can just approve with ease so many horrid things--we must remember that God has set Christ as King upon His throne, and He is ten thousand times more powerful than all our enemies.

4. God Spares the Enemy's Lives

The story: The Syrians blindly walk into the middle of Samaria, the capital city. The king of Israel is excited at what has happened: *"My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?"* (21) But God's mercy is greater than man's. God says through Elisha--Feed them, give them water, that they may eat and drink go to their master (22).

The explanation: God shows mercy to a people who are not His covenant people--how much greater His mercy to His people who come humbly unto Him and put their trust in Him? In this whole story, we see a God who is abounding in kindness and mercy to people who are so undeserving (不配的) --to Syrians and to Israelites.

The application: We see how we should *not* respond to God's mercy by the negative example of King Jehoram. He was excited at what God will do for him, but he will not submit to this God, nor offer thanks and praise to Him. He is an unbeliever, who readily takes what God will give him, as if he deserves it, but does not take a moment to consider, who is this Almighty God, who has done this astounding thing. He does not humble himself before this great, powerful, awesome God.

So too, it is possible that we behold the great salvation God has given to us in Christ Jesus. How He has made a spectacle of the powers of evil on the cross. Christ was hung on a cross and He appeared vulnerable, shamed, and cursed to the world. But by that victory He defeated sin, Satan, and death. He rose for the justification (称义) of all His elect, and ascended to Heaven to rule over that same world.

How must we respond? We ask the Lord to open our eyes. And we bow before this King! We ask forgiveness for presumption (傲慢) and ingratitude (忘恩负义) like Jehoram. We give thanks to the Lord for His protection, and hide ourselves in Him! *In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times; you people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge (避难所) for us. Amen.*