

Spiritually Effective

2 Kings 6:1-23

June 13, 2010

The context of 2 Kings 6 is that Elisha was at that time the main prophet of the Lord in the northern kingdom of Israel. Perhaps you remember that just before Elijah was taken up to heaven Elisha had asked for a double portion of the spirit of Elijah. The story then unfolded as we saw Elisha walking in the spirit and power of Elijah.

In 2 Kings 6, there are two stories of great importance for our study. These accounts demonstrate the power of God on Elisha, but they also give us great spiritual application for our own lives today as well.

Both stories have to do with potentially terrible tragedies, but each of these is answered by the hand of God moving through Elisha. God demonstrates that He is mighty to save. But there's much more to it than that. Yes, God is mighty to save, but he also gives great spiritual insight so that we can grow in the learning of it.

The first story is centered on one of the schools of the prophets that Elijah had established near the Jordan River. From verse one we read that the place where they were living was too small for them and they wanted to expand the school of the prophets.

First, we should appreciate the fact that this was a spiritually dark time in Israel. They had gone from one bad king to another until finally they got to the worst king of all, Ahab, who had married that wicked woman Jezebel. Ahab's sons who reigned after him were not much better.

So, in a spiritually dark time, the sons of the prophets needed to expand their school. That right there should be

encouraging for us. We are certainly in a spiritually dark time today and it's getting darker, but the Spirit of God is still moving on those whose hearts are turned toward Him.

The sons of the prophets invited Elisha to go with them to the Jordan River where they hoped to cut down some trees and carve out some beams for the building of a new and larger school. While they were hard at work, one of their axe heads flew off the handle and was lost in the Jordan River.

I. Don't Lose Your Cutting Edge

- The axe head is the power of the instrument. Without that, it's just a stick of wood, without power, and without effect.
- In the scriptures, and the Old Testament in particular, there are many symbols that teach of greater truths. Wood in the scriptures is a picture of the flesh.
- Jesus died on a wooden cross, Paul spoke of the deeds of the flesh as wood, hay and straw that would not survive the judgment of fire.
- But this plain stick of wood with an ax head attached to it can become very powerful.

Illus - Many years ago when I was a youth director, we decided to do a fundraiser for a retreat by having the kids chop wood. We soon discovered just how powerful a stick of wood was with an axe head attached to it.

A. Don't neglect your spiritual gift

- An axe head doesn't fall off all at once, it loosens up a little at a time, bit by bit, and then finally, after neglect, it flies off.

- Even if you are doing and doing and doing spiritual things, you have to maintain your relationship to the Lord.
- Paul gave some great spiritual advice to his young son in the faith Timothy...

1 Timothy 4:14-16, Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the elders. Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things.

- There was a Christian song several years ago that ministered to me with this same message. *“Oh Lord, take your plow to my fallow ground. Let your blade dig down in the soil of my soul. For I become dry and dusty and Lord I know there must be richer lines below. For I’ve been living in Laodicea and the fire that once burned bright I’ve let it grow dim.”*
- Paul gives a similar admonition to the church in Galatia...

Galatians 3:3, Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being perfected in the flesh?

B. Where did you lose it?

- When he came to Elisha and cried out, “Alas, my master! It was borrowed!” Elisha responded by asking, “Where did it fall?”
- In other words, “Where did you lose it?” Has something happened in your relationship to the

Lord? Were you once on fire, but no more? What happened? Where did you lose it?

- Jesus gave great insight into what can happen when he gave the parable of the sower and the seeds. A sower went out to sow and as he sowed, some fell on the road, other seed fell on rocky soil, other seed fell among the thorns, and other seed fell into the good soil.
- Later, the disciples asked for the meaning of this parable and so he explained to them in Luke 8...

Luke 8:11- 15 The parable explained.

- When Jesus speaks to the church at Ephesus in the book of Revelation he gives us great insight as well.

Revelation 2:4-5, “But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first;”

- King David of Israel knew something about the necessity of returning to the Lord which is why he wrote in the Psalms...

Psalm 51:12, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and renew a right spirit within me.

- “Do the deeds you did at the first,” is a great insight for us. If the worries of this world are choking the life out of you then you need to remember that Jesus promised to walk with you through every trial in trouble.

John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

C. Reach out and take hold of it

- Elisha cut off a stick, and threw it into the Jordan, and made the iron float. But then he said, “Reach out your hand and take hold of it.”
- There was something for the man to do. God did the miraculous work of it. The power is truly His. But there is something for us in it as well.
- "How much more will God give the Holy Spirit to those who ask?" Jesus said. He wants you to ask, he wants you to desire the things of God; to seek and to knock.

Matthew 7:7-8, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”

Illus - When the Israelites were ending their 40 year journey in the desert and were ready to cross the Jordan River to enter into the land that God had promised them, they had to first step foot into the river before the river would be open for them.

- There is in this an understanding of how much we need the strength of God in our lives. There are some people who think, "I can handle it myself. I don't need the power of the Spirit in my life." That would be like thinking that a man could cut down a tree with just the handle of an ax.

Zechariah 4:6, “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of hosts.

II. We Need Spiritual Insight

- The next story that follows also demonstrates the great power of God working through Elisha, but speaks to another important spiritual truth that we need for our lives today.
- The story gives insight into the nature of spiritual warfare.
- Certainly an aspect of spiritual warfare was the training that God was giving to the sons of the prophets to increase their faith in the power of God. That was a lesson lived out before them with the floating axe head we just studied.
- But another spiritual insight comes to us here so that we would understand that we are in a spiritual battle, and that we should strengthen our faith in the midst of it.

A. Greater is He who is in us

- The king of Aram sent an army to surround the city of Dothan in order to capture Elisha. When Elisha's servant woke up early in the morning, behold, the city was surrounded with horses and chariots. “What shall we do?” He exclaimed.
- Elisha responded with a spiritual foundational truth, “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”
- In light of the spiritual condition of things happening today, this is a spiritual truth we must absolutely understand. We are seeing before our

eyes the arising of many enemies; these are not just enemies of our country, but these are enemies of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- There are several scriptures that we need to have in our hearts to understand spiritual warfare.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5, For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God.

1 John 4:4, You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

Romans 8:31, What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

- These are truths which we must absolutely understand. What did Jesus say? *“If you abide in my Word you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”*

Illus - I was teaching at a pastor’s conference in Africa about the victory that we have in Christ. During the Q & A session afterward one of the pastors brought up the case of a Christian man who had walked through an area known to be inhabited by demons...

- The truth is that God is not only sovereign over the spiritual realm; he is sovereign over kings and rulers of this earth.

Isaiah 40:21-31 It is He who reduces rulers to nothing.

B. God opens eyes that are spiritually blind

- There is an interesting parallel that unfolds in the story. Elisha's servant has his eyes opened to see into the spiritual realm.
- The army of Aram is given spiritual blindness and follows Elisha into the city of Samaria, the capital of northern Israel.
- It's interesting that in one case eyes are opened so that the servant can spiritually see then in the other case eyes are closed, a reflection of their spiritual condition. But they do not know that they are blind; that is a powerful truth itself.

Revelation 3:17-18, “You do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. I advise you to buy from Me... eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.”

2 Corinthians 4:4, The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

- The men follow Elisha into Samaria. There, their eyes were opened, but what is it they received? They received a lesson in the grace of God.
- For what Elisha instructed the king to do was to prepare a great feast for them; and when they had eaten he sent them away to their master.

Psalm 34:8, O taste and see that the Lord is good;