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Fear; Faith / 2 Kings 6:8–23

In [2 Kings 5](#) we are introduced to Naaman, the commander of the army of Aram. Though he was a great man in the eyes of many, and the Lord had used him to give Aram military victories, he suffered from one of the most dreaded conditions of the ancient world—leprosy ([2 Kings 5:1](#)). This disease often began with white patches or sores that spread over the body and, over time, left its victims with ulcerated skin, severe disfigurement, and sometimes even the loss of fingers, toes, or other limbs through infection. For Naaman, all his wealth, authority, and military success could not cure what no physician of his day could heal. One day, a young Israelite girl who had been taken captive by the Arameans and made a servant to Naaman's wife spoke of the prophet Elisha, believing that he could heal her master ([2 Kings 5:2–3](#)). The king of Aram sent Naaman with a letter to the king of Israel requesting his healing. When the king read the letter, he tore his clothes in despair, crying, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life?" ([2 Kings 5:7](#)). He knew such a miracle was beyond human ability.

When Elisha heard of the king's distress, he invited Naaman to come to him ([2 Kings 5:8](#)). Rather than performing an elaborate ceremony, Elisha simply instructed him to wash seven times in the Jordan River ([2 Kings 5:10](#)). At first Naaman was offended and refused to obey, believing Israel's rivers were inferior to those of Damascus ([2 Kings 5:11–12](#)). But after the encouragement of his servants, he humbled himself and did exactly as the prophet commanded. God honored his obedience, and "his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy" ([2 Kings 5:14](#)). Overwhelmed by God's mercy, Naaman confessed, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel" ([2 Kings 5:15](#)). Yet Naaman's remarkable conversion did not end the conflict

between Aram and Israel. The armies of Aram continued their raids, and King Ben-Hadad remained determined to conquer God's people. It is against this backdrop of ongoing hostility that we come to [2 Kings 6](#), where fear once again takes center stage—not because of disease this time, but because an entire army surrounds the home of God's prophet.

In chapter 6, the conflict between Aram and Israel continued. Each time the king of Aram met with his officers to plan an attack against Israel, the Lord revealed those secret plans to Elisha. The prophet then warned the king of Israel, enabling him to avoid the ambush time after time (2 Kings 6:8–10). Frustrated and bewildered, the king of Aram concluded that someone within his own ranks must be betraying him. In anger he summoned his officers and demanded, "Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?" (2 Kings 6:11).

His servants replied, "None of us, my lord the king... but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom" ([2 Kings 6:12](#)). Whether through Naaman's testimony or Elisha's growing reputation, the king had come to recognize that Israel's prophet possessed supernatural knowledge. Yet while he acknowledged Elisha's extraordinary ability, he completely underestimated the God who empowered him. Instead of asking what kind of God could reveal the secrets of a king's bedroom from miles away, he chose the only solution human wisdom could devise: eliminate the prophet. When he learned that Elisha was staying in Dothan, he sent horses, chariots, and a great army under the cover of darkness to surround the city ([2 Kings 6:13–14](#)). As dawn broke, Elisha's servant stepped outside and was met with a terrifying sight. The city was completely surrounded by horses and chariots. There was no avenue of escape, no possibility of victory, and no human reason to hope. Looking at the overwhelming force gathered against them, the servant cried out in panic, "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" ([2 Kings 6:15](#)). His fear was understandable. From a human perspective, the situation was hopeless.

When we face what seem to be mountain-sized problems, fear often settles over every part of our lives. Fear is that gut-wrenching, overwhelming sense of dread that grips the soul, dominating our thoughts and emotions from the moment we awaken until we finally lie down, only to endure a restless night filled with anxious thoughts and troubled dreams that leave us more exhausted than refreshed. Our fear is rarely confined to the present difficulty alone. In the midst of the storm, our minds begin imagining countless futures filled with pain, loss, and uncertainty [1]. We rehearse one worst-case scenario after another, desperately searching for a way of escape, yet becoming increasingly unable—or sometimes even unwilling—to see beyond the darkness that surrounds us.

As fear grows, it creates conflict within both our minds and our hearts. We begin to feel isolated, rejected, and utterly alone, as though no one has ever faced such trials before. Even attempting to formulate a plan to endure or overcome the situation can seem futile because every thought is overwhelmed by the anxiety that has stolen the peace of our souls. Our circumstances become so large that they fill our entire horizon. God's presence, His promises, and His power seem distant—not because He has moved, but because fear has narrowed our vision. It is not that we have abandoned our belief in God's sovereignty; rather, in that moment, the thought that God might intervene on our behalf seems almost impossible. We feel small, vulnerable, and completely exposed before an enemy that appears far greater than we are.

That is exactly where Elisha's servant found himself. Standing at the window that morning, he saw only an overwhelming army and concluded that all hope was lost. But the story is far from over. What happened next would forever change the way he saw both his circumstances and his God.

Faith Sees God's Presence

Even though all seemed lost to the servant, Elisha calmly replied, "Don't be afraid... those who are with us are more than those who are with them" ([2 Kings](#)

[6:16](#)). To a man overwhelmed by fear, such words may have sounded impossible. When we are caught in the middle of a storm of anguish, pain, or uncertainty, words of reassurance can almost seem patronizing. If you only knew the burden I am carrying... if you only understood the mountain standing before me... if you could see the maze of impossible choices that confront me, you would not speak so confidently. Fear convinces us that no one truly understands our circumstances and that every possible path ends in disappointment. Yet instead of rebuking his servant or delivering a theological lecture on God's sovereignty, Elisha quietly bowed his head and prayed.

2 Kings 6:17 NIV

And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

What a remarkable prayer. Elisha did not ask God to send help because God's help was already there. He simply asked God to remove the blindness that fear had produced. The servant's greatest problem was not the Aramean army surrounding the city; it was that fear had narrowed his vision until he could no longer see God's presence. His circumstances had not changed, but his perspective had. God had been there all along.

Confessing God's sovereignty is one thing; allowing our hearts to rest in that sovereignty during seasons of suffering is quite another [2]. Like Elisha's servant, fear often blinds us to the God who is nearer than we realize. We know the promises of Scripture, yet in the middle of the storm they can seem distant. Unlike the psalmist, we struggle to believe that "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" ([Psalm 46:1](#)). Our circumstances become so overwhelming that they fill our horizon, and we lose sight of the God who has never left our side. Yet this is precisely what Jesus invites every weary believer to remember:

Matthew 11:28-30 NIV

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

The God who surrounded Elisha with heavenly armies is the same God who draws near to His people today. As He did for Moses and the Israelites at the Red Sea, He still says, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today" ([Exodus 14:13](#)). Like Elisha's servant, our eyes must be opened to see what fear so easily conceals—that God is already present, already at work, and already providing the strength, protection, and grace we need. Nothing we face is unknown to Him, and nothing is beyond His sovereign care.

There is much we can learn from the great heroes of the faith who walked through storms for which there were no human solutions. Consider King Jehoshaphat. When a vast coalition of the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites marched against Jerusalem, this godly king who had labored to lead Judah back to the Lord was understandably alarmed and afraid ([2 Chronicles 20:1–3](#)). Yet instead of allowing fear to consume him, he turned his eyes toward God and prayed, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You" ([2 Chronicles 20:12](#)). Because his confidence rested in God's sovereignty rather than in Judah's military strength, he was able to hear and believe God's reassuring words: "Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's" ([2 Chronicles 20:15](#)). How desperately we need to hear—and believe—those same words whenever fear seeks to overwhelm our souls!

The same confidence is seen in the lives of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Living in exile under they were commanded to bow before a golden image or face execution in a blazing furnace ([Daniel 3:1–7](#)). Humanly speaking, there was no escape. Yet their faith was anchored not in the certainty of deliverance, but in the certainty of God's character. Standing before one of the most powerful rulers on earth, they boldly declared:

Daniel 3:17–18 NIV

If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and He will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if He does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

What remarkable faith! Their confidence was not based upon the certainty of escaping the furnace, but upon the certainty that they belonged to God. He was their refuge, their portion, and their greatest treasure. Therefore, they knew that neither kings nor flames, neither life nor death, could separate them from the love of God. As the Apostle Paul would later write, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come... shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" ([Romans 8:38-39](#)).

The same truth sustained Elisha's servant. The armies of Aram were real. The furnace was real. The coalition against Jehoshaphat was real. Yet in every case, God's presence proved greater than the crisis. Fear had focused their eyes upon the size of the enemy, but faith fixed their eyes upon the greatness of God. When the Lord opens our eyes, we begin to see that we are never abandoned, never forgotten, and never left to fight alone. It is often in the darkest valleys, when fear tells us there is no hope, that God most clearly reveals His presence, strengthens our faith, and conforms us more fully to the image of His Son ([James 1:2-4](#)). The circumstances may not change immediately, but our vision does—and when our vision changes, fear begins to give way to faith.

God Demonstrates His Power

As the army of Aram advanced toward Elisha's humble dwelling, the prophet showed no trace of panic. Rather than reaching for a weapon or devising a plan of escape, he simply prayed that the Lord would "smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness" ([2 Kings 6:18](#), KJV). Immediately God answered his prayer. Though the soldiers could still walk and converse, the Lord blinded them so that

they no longer recognized where they were or even whom they were following. With remarkable calmness, Elisha went out to meet the very army that had come to capture him and said, "This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek" ([2 Kings 6:19](#), KJV). The irony is profound. The soldiers unknowingly placed themselves under the guidance of the very prophet they had been sent to arrest. Trustingly they followed him as he led them several miles south to Samaria, the fortified capital of Israel. Once they were safely inside the city, Elisha prayed again, asking the Lord to open their eyes ([2 Kings 6:20](#)). Instantly their blindness was removed, and they found themselves standing in the midst of Israel's capital, surrounded by the very people they had come to conquer. In a matter of moments, the hunters had become the hunted, and the mighty army of Aram stood completely helpless before the God they had underestimated.

Fear gives way to hope when we remember God's mighty acts of sovereign power. Throughout Scripture, God repeatedly demonstrated that no enemy, no obstacle, and no circumstance is too great for Him. Again and again, He delivered His people when every human solution had failed. When the children of Israel found themselves trapped between Pharaoh's army and the Red Sea, the Lord instructed Moses to stretch out his staff. The sea parted, Israel crossed safely on dry ground, and the waters returned to destroy their enemies ([Exodus 14:13-31](#)). When Joshua faced the seemingly impregnable walls of Jericho, victory did not come through military genius but through obedient faith. At God's command, Israel marched around the city for seven days, and when the priests blew their trumpets and the people shouted, the mighty walls collapsed ([Joshua 6](#)).

The same God reduced Gideon's army from thirty-two thousand men to only three hundred so that no one could claim the victory belonged to human strength. Armed only with trumpets, torches, clay jars, and faith in God's promise, Gideon's men watched as the Midianite army was thrown into confusion and turned their swords against one another ([Judges 7](#)). Likewise, on Mount Carmel, Elijah stood alone before 450 prophets of Baal. While Baal

remained silent despite hours of desperate cries, the Lord answered with fire from heaven that consumed not only the sacrifice but also the altar, the stones, the water, and even the dust ([1 Kings 18](#)). In every generation, God proved that the battle belongs to Him and that His strength is made perfect where human strength comes to an end.

The greatest demonstration of God's power, however, is found in Jesus Christ. During His earthly ministry, even the demons obeyed His commands ([Mark 1:27](#)). The winds and the waves submitted to His voice. Disease fled at His touch. Death itself yielded to His authority. Then, through His own resurrection, Christ conquered humanity's greatest enemy forever. As the Apostle Paul triumphantly declared, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?... Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" ([1 Corinthians 15:55, 57](#), KJV). Since Christ has conquered the greatest enemy of all—death itself—then every lesser fear must bow before Him. The armies of Aram, the Red Sea, the fiery furnace, the lions' den, sickness, persecution, and even death cannot have the final word. Because Christ lives, believers can face every fear with confidence, knowing that the ultimate victory has already been won. The God who surrounded Elisha with horses and chariots of fire is the same God who reigns today, and His power has not diminished in the least.

God Accomplishes His Purpose

When the king of Israel realized that the fate of the Aramean army rested entirely in his hands, he eagerly asked Elisha, "My father, shall I kill them? shall I kill them?" ([2 Kings 6:21](#)). Considering the years of raids, bloodshed, and continual threats from the king of Aram, his response is understandable. Here stood one of Israel's greatest enemies, now completely helpless. Human wisdom would have concluded that this was the perfect opportunity to eliminate a dangerous foe once and for all [3]. Yet Elisha's response revealed that God's

purposes are often very different from our own. The prophet refused the king's request, explaining that these men were not to be executed but shown mercy. Rather than preparing swords, he instructed the king to prepare a great feast. The weary soldiers who had expected death were instead given bread and water, invited to eat and drink, and then sent home in peace ([2 Kings 6:22-23](#)). The Lord was more interested in preserving life than taking it [4]. Perhaps Elisha also understood that destroying Ben-Hadad's army would provoke even greater retaliation against Israel [5]. Whatever the reason, the outcome speaks for itself. Scripture records that "the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel" ([2 Kings 6:23](#)). God's wisdom accomplished what military victory never could. Mercy produced a peace that vengeance could never secure [6].

There is a profound lesson here for every believer. We often pray for God to remove the circumstances that frighten us, and sometimes He graciously does. Yet there are other times when the valley remains, the burden continues, and the object of our fear is not immediately taken away. In those moments, God's greater purpose is often not first to change our circumstances, but to transform our hearts. He teaches us that lasting peace is not found in controlling every situation but in trusting the One who controls every situation. Elisha did not deny the reality of the danger; he simply refused to let fear dictate his response. Because his confidence rested in God rather than in military strength, he was free to show mercy where others demanded revenge [7]. The same transformation takes place in us. When our identity shifts from "I must protect myself" to "God is my refuge and my defender," fear begins to lose its grip. We are no longer driven by self-preservation or retaliation but by the love of Christ. Instead of reacting in anger, we are able to respond with kindness, gentleness, and mercy, trusting God to accomplish His purposes in His way and in His time [8]. In doing so, we reflect the character of the One who showed mercy to us while we were still His enemies ([Romans 5:8-10](#)) [9].

Conclusion

As Elisha's servant looked out from that humble house, all he could see was an overwhelming army. From his perspective, defeat was certain and escape was impossible. Yet the greatest reality was not the army surrounding the city, but the God who surrounded the army. The servant's circumstances did not change when Elisha prayed. The Aramean army did not disappear. The danger remained. What changed was the servant's vision. God opened his eyes to see what had been true all along. How often is that true in our own lives? Fear narrows our vision until all we can see is the diagnosis, the financial burden, the broken relationship, the uncertain future, or the impossible decision before us. We know God's promises, yet in the middle of the storm they can seem distant. Like Elisha's servant, we do not always need God to change our circumstances first—we need Him to open our eyes to His presence, His power, and His sovereign care.

Throughout Scripture, God has repeatedly demonstrated that He is greater than every fear His people have ever faced. He parted the Red Sea. He brought down the walls of Jericho. He defeated the Midianites with only three hundred men. He walked with His servants in the fiery furnace. He shut the mouths of lions. He calmed the storm. Demons obeyed His command, and through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, He conquered sin, Satan, and death itself. As the Apostle Paul triumphantly declared,

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?... But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." ([1 Corinthians 15:55, 57](#), KJV)

If Christ has conquered our greatest enemy, then every lesser fear must bow before Him. The God who surrounded Elisha with horses and chariots of fire is the same God who reigns today. His power has not diminished. His promises have not failed. His presence has not departed. Therefore, when fear comes—and it will—remember who rules. "The LORD hath prepared his throne in the

heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" ([Psalm 103:19](#), KJV). Before you focus on the army before you, fix your eyes upon the God who sits upon the throne above you.

Then remember that you do not face life's battles alone. The Father is for you. Christ intercedes for you ([Romans 8:34](#)). The Holy Spirit dwells within you ([John 14:16-17](#)). And Jesus still extends the same gracious invitation He gave long ago:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." ([Matthew 11:28-30](#), KJV)

My prayer for each one of us is the very prayer that Elisha prayed for his servant: "Lord, open our eyes." Open our eyes to Your presence when we feel alone. Open our eyes to Your power when we feel weak. Open our eyes to Your purposes when we cannot understand Your ways. And when fear asks, "What shall we do?" may our hearts answer with the confidence of Elisha:

"Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." ([2 Kings 6:16](#), KJV)

Footnotes

[1] Mark Steven Filkey, *Fear Must Not Win: Finding Peace, Confidence, and Courage in Challenging Times* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2022).

[2] Robert L. Jr. Hubbard and Robert K. Johnston, "Foreword," in *Psalms*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 209.

[3] D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 600.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Jesse C. Long, *1 & 2 Kings*, College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub., 2002), 336.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Christine Helmer, ed., *The Global Luther: A Theologian for Modern Times* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 75.

[8] Scott Harrower, *God of All Comfort: A Trinitarian Response to the Horrors of This World*, Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 188–189.

[9] June Hunt, *Biblical Counseling Keys on Reconciliation: Restoring Broken Relationships* (Dallas, TX: Hope For The Heart, 2008), 14.