

2 Kings 6:1-23

An Axhead Floats

6 The company of the prophets said to Elisha, "Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. ² Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to meet."

And he said, "Go."

³ Then one of them said, "Won't you please come with your servants?"

"I will," Elisha replied. ⁴ And he went with them.

They went to the Jordan and began to cut down trees. ⁵ As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axhead fell into the water. "Oh no, my lord!" he cried out. "It was borrowed!"

⁶ The man of God asked, "Where did it fall?" When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float. ⁷ "Lift it out," he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it.

Elisha Traps Blinded Arameans

⁸ Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, "I will set up my camp in such and such a place."

⁹ The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: "Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there." ¹⁰ So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places.

¹¹ This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, "Tell me! Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?"

¹² "None of us, my lord the king," said one of his officers, "but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom."

¹³ "Go, find out where he is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: "He is in Dothan." ¹⁴ Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city.

¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked.

¹⁶ "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, "Strike this army with blindness." So, he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked.

¹⁹ Elisha told them, "This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for." And he led them to Samaria.

²⁰ After they entered the city, Elisha said, "LORD, open the eyes of these men so they can see." Then the LORD opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria.

²¹ When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, "Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?"

²² "Do not kill them," he answered. "Would you kill those you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master." ²³ So he prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So, the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory.

Romans 8:31-39

More Than Conquerors

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

"For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“Lord, Open Our Eyes”

Please have your **Bibles opened** at **2 Kings 6** – that’s our focus.

You have an **outline**. Let me **pray**...

Intro

I came across this **nice little story** in my **preparation** this week:

*During **William Gladstone’s** time as **Prime Minister of England** (1868-1894)*

*There was a **street cleaner** who used to clean the streets near the Houses of Parliament in London. The street cleaner was familiar to those who attended parliament.*

*One day the **street cleaner was missing from his usual work** and a Christian worker inquired after him and eventually found where he lived. The Christian worker tracked the cleaner down - living in a little attic room with barely any furniture.*

The Christian worker asked the cleaner if he ever got lonely and if anyone visited him.

*The man said “**Mr. Gladstone visited me**”*

The Christian worker was amazed and asked if he meant Mr. Gladstone, the Prime Minister.

*The man said “**Yes, Mr. Gladstone visited me and sat on that stool there and read the Bible to me**”*

*So here is **the Prime Minister of England** who **a million and one things to attend to each day** – and **yet he took time out to visit this street cleaner!***

This is a pale analogy of what our great God is like.

Lessons from the Axhead Story (2 Kings 6:1-7)

In the **story of the Axhead** in 2 Kings 6:1-7

[Slide 1-Axhead]

That's what God is like – he **cares about even our smallest needs!**

The **story** is *quite simple*

The company of **prophets** has **expanded** under the Prophet Elisha's ministry

And one of the **prophets** **suggests** chopping down some **poles** (trees) and building **a bigger facility** near the Jordan river.

Elisha **agrees** and is **invited to come along** with them – and he **accepts**.

One poor prophet has a **mishap** when he takes one swing too many with the iron axe and the **axhead** **flies off and ends up in the river!**

Whoops!

The **prophet's concern** is that the **axe** wasn't even his – he borrowed it - and it's not like he can pop down to Bunnings and buy a new one. A **new one** would have to made from scratch!

However, **Elisha is on hand** and performs yet another **miracle** – **throwing a cut stick into the water** – at the exact location where the axhead entered the water – and yay – **the iron axhead floated to the surface** – problem solved!

Such a **simple story**

Why is this story in the Bible - in amongst stories of Army Commanders with leprosy and stories about the activities of the Kings of Israel and surrounding nations?

What lessons can we learn from this simple story:

1. God is not just a God of the big picture – **he cares about our simple genuine “needs” too** – like lost car keys –like lost Bibles...
2. God also **makes provision for our future needs** – God knew what lay ahead for the prophet and his flying axhead – and so he arranged for Elisha to be on hand. Doesn’t God put people in our lives - just in time (J.I.T.).
3. There might just be a **spiritual lesson for us here** - **when we have lost our “cutting edge”**
 - Perhaps we need to **practice some self-evaluation**. The **prophet** chopping wood **may have lost his cutting edge** because he **hadn’t noticed the axhead was working itself loose** because **he was so busy swinging**. Perhaps we’re too busy swinging we don’t see we need repairs!
 - Which is why we sometimes need to **take a break** when we lose our “cutting edge” – and **take some time out to rest and pray**
 - Also, the axhead was borrowed – the **prophet was just a steward of the axhead** - and he would have to answer to the owner. Likewise, our gifts, talents, position, relationships and opportunities are not our own – **we are stewards of the gifts God has given us** – and we will have to answer to the Lord for all He has entrusted to us. Are we being good stewards of the gifts God has given us?

- When we have lost our 'cutting edge' **we must cry out for help** like the prophet did. The devil wants us to think we are on our own in times of trouble – but God has put people in our lives to help – and of course we have our Heavenly master to help us and we can pray for His help.
- And we also need to examine ourselves. Elisha asked the prophet 'where did it fall?' The prophet had to retrace his steps and pinpoint the exact location. **We need to take time to examine ourselves.** Where did we lose our cutting edge? When did we lose it? What should we do now? How can we retrieve it again? We can pray for guidance.

Let us be praying that the Lord will open our eyes to our spiritual needs as well as our physical needs?

(pause)

Lessons from the Blinded Arameans Story (2 Kings 6:8-23)

[Slide 2-Arameans]

Our second story sees **God working on a larger scale** – as He deals with the army of Israel's enemy - Aram (Syria) – who are in the process of attacking Israel

What strikes me about this story is that **God has provided Israel with the prophet Elisha**

What would have happened if Elisha hadn't been around when the prophet lost his axhead? And what would have happened if Elisha wasn't on hand to confuse the invading Aramean army?

But **God foreknew all that!**

So, we pick up the story in v8 – the King of Aram told his officers that he was going to set up his camp at a certain place

But – v9 – **Elisha** – the man of God – **informs the King of Israel** – **to beware of going to the place that Arameans are going to**

How does Elisha know that?

It's like he's got a Smart Phone – with “**Find My Friends**” App [[Check phone](#)]

And we see at the end of v10 – **time and time again Elisha was able to warn the King of Israel of the whereabouts of the King of Aram and his army**

The King of Aram thinks he has a **traitor in his camp**

But one of his officers nails the problem in v12 – “***But, Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom***”

How does Elisha know? We can only deduce that God is telling Him!

Anyway, the King of Aram has had enough and so he **orders his army to find out where Elisha is and go and capture him** – v13.

When the **Aramean army surrounds** the city of **Dothan** where Elisha is – Elisha's servant gets a shock when he opens the door at breakfast – v14 – to find the city surrounded

And the servant is in a panic – v15 – “***Oh no, lord, what shall we do?***”

Can't we be like that when we face a problem – we can go in to panic-mode first – and **forget that we're not in this on our own!**

But Elisha has a better perspective – look at v16

Elisha says to his servant: *“Don’t be afraid,” those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”*

What Elisha’s servant sees is the **“SIGHT”** of the enemy

What Elisha sees is **God’s UNSEEN PROTECTION.**

Elisha’s servant is thinking - **“physically”** and **“humanly”**

Elisha is thinking - **“spiritually”** and **“heavenly”**

Elisha knows that having a relationship with the One True God comes with a massive advantage and privilege – **God’s people have God’s unseen heavenly hosts!**

There are many stories of missionary villages being surrounded by invading native tribes but they don’t attack – because the natives see the missionary villages surrounded by angels – and so they clear off quick smart!

Isn’t that what Jesus said at His arrest – ***“Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?”***

(Matt 26:53)

Elisha’s comment – ***“those who are with us are more than those who are with them”*** echoes the Apostle Paul in our NT reading from Romans 8:31 ***“If God is for us, who can be against us”***

Both **Elisha and Paul** know - **they are in a spiritual battle** – but they also know - **they have God FOR them!**

As I’ve said in previous sermons – Romans 8:31 – ***“If God is for us, who can be against us”*** – has special meaning to me – as it was instrumental in me becoming a

Christian – at a time in my life when I was lost, broken and vulnerable and felt under attack. **This verse spurred me on!**

Back to **Elisha** – with the knowledge of the spiritual protection of God – **He prays two prayers**

1st prayer – v17 – **Elisha prays for his servant's eyes to be opened** – and the Lord answers – and the servant sees God's horses and chariots of fire. These are a **symbol of God's divine presence, protection and power**

2nd prayer – v18 – **Elisha prays for God to strike the Aramean army blind** – and the Lord answers!

This enabled Elisha to lead the confused and blinded Arameans to the city of Samaria where the King of Israel and his army were!

Imagine their surprise and terror when their eyes are opened – and **they are now standing in front of the King of Israel!** They would no doubt think they were done for!

The King of Israel is ready to kill them – after all Elisha has delivered them on a silver platter for him!

But no! **Elisha shows grace and mercy!**

Instead of killing the Arameans – **they are given a banquet** – and sent home in peace!

(pause)

Are we surprised **by Elisha/God's grace to the Arameans?**

Well – By definition - **God's grace is always surprising.**

We deserve death as the punishment for our sins

But instead – because of Jesus – we have **forgiveness** – and **eternal life** in Heaven to look forward – AND - we are invited to the wedding banquet of Jesus in Heaven where He is the bridegroom and we His Church are His bride (Luke 14:15; Rev 19:17; 21:9) – and we have **peace** with God!

What lessons can we learn from Elisha/God's dealings with the Arameans:

1. God **cares about His remnant believers** - in Israel – in Babylon – and in Australia – in Toukley - and He intervenes in human affairs as He sees fit
2. God **answers our prayers** – but we must of course pray!
3. **Our prayer should be that “*God opens our eyes that we might see His unseen protection and that we might understand we too are in a spiritual battle”***
4. Elisha and his servant **had to walk by faith even when they couldn't fully understand it.** Even if we haven't been shown the “unseen protection” we must walk by faith – not by sight! (2 Cor 5:7). **Our faith can overcome our fear** (Joshua 1:9; Ps 34:4; Matt 6:34; 2 Tim 1:6-7; John 14:27; 1 John 4:18)
5. **We must maintain an eternal perspective** – what we have on Earth is physical and temporary – **what we have in Heaven is spiritual and permanent.** That Heavenly reality begins once we are Christians – because our citizenship is Heaven – and the Apostle Paul says - *we are already participating in the Heavenly realms (Eph 2:5) when we were given a new life in Christ!*

Conclusion (Romans 8:31-39)

[Slide 3a-Heading]

To finish up then – both stories – **the axhead and the blind Aramean army** – show us - **we have a God who cares**

I'm not sure what each one of us is going through right now

Grieve – Sickness – Financial hardship – relationship problems – stress – mental health – whatever it is...

But our NT reading from **Romans 8:31-39** says:

We have a God who is for us – not against us (v31)

And the Apostle Paul's reasoning is – **if God didn't spare His own Son Jesus** – **but allowed Him to go to the cross for us**

Doesn't that show us how much He really cares for us and **that He won't stop caring for us?**

Paul goes on to say - if God cares that much – v33 – **no one can point a finger at us** - or v34 condemns us – because - **Jesus is already in Heaven sticking up for us as one of His!**

The devil and his mates might torment us individually – or try to wreak havoc in our church – and try to divide us

But Paul says - **NOTHING can separate us from the love of God that is found in Jesus.**

Not any sort of trouble - not any hardship – not persecution – not famine – not poverty – not war

None of this fazes Jesus because He loves us

So, Paul finishes up vv37-39 – which we'll finish with:

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let's pray.

Father God - I pray – "Lord, open our eyes"

Open our eyes to the truth that you care about the tiny details and the big picture

Open our eyes to see the UNSEEN

Open our eyes to walk by FAITH – not by SIGHT

Open our eyes to the DEVIL'S SCHEMES and the SPIRITUAL BATTLE we are in

Thank you that because of Jesus we are more than conquerors!

Thank you that because - you are for us, Father, no one can be against us and stand!

AMEN.