

2 Kings 6:1-23

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles, go and be to the book of 2 Kings, 2 Kings chapter 6, 2 Kings chapter 6. 2 Kings chapter 6, we're going to focus on verses 1 through 23 this evening.

2 Kings chapter 6, verses 1 through 23. The Word of God says, Now the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, Behold now the place before you where we are living is too limited for us.

Please let us go to the Jordan, and each of us take from there a beam, and let us make a place there for ourselves that we may live. So he said, Go. Then one said, Please be willing to go with your servants.

And he answered, I shall go. So he went with them, and when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water, and he cried out and said, Alas, my master, for it was borrowed.

Then the man of God said, Where did it fall? And when he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw it in there and made the iron float. He said, Take it up for yourself. So he put out his hand and took it.

[1 : 12] Now the king of Aram was warring against Israel, and he counseled with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. The man of God sent word to the king of Israel, saying, Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Arameans are coming down there.

The king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God had told him, and thus he warned him. So he guarded himself there more than once or twice. Now the heart of the king of Aram was enraged over this thing, and he called his servants and said to them, Will you tell me which of us is for the king of Israel?

One of his servants said, No, 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. So he said, Go and see where he is, that I may send and take him.

And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. He sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city.

And his servant said to him, Alas, my master, what shall we do? So he answered, Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. Then Elijah prayed and said, O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.

[2 : 28] And the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. When they came down to him, Elisha prayed to the Lord and said, Strike this people with blindness, I pray.

So he struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. Then Elisha said to them, This is not the way, nor is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek. And he brought them to Samaria.

When they had come into Samaria, Elisha said, O Lord, open the eyes of these men that they may see. So the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw, and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.

Then the king of Israel, when he saw them, said to Elisha, My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them? And he answered, You shall not kill them. Would you kill those you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow?

Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master. So he prepared a great feast for them. And when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master.

[3 : 32] And the marooning band of Arameans did not come again into the land of Israel. 2 Kings 6, verses 1-23. As we make our way through the books of 1 and 2 Kings, even 1 and 2 Chronicles, that is, when we get into the historical writings of the Old Testament, we do not need to consider the events happening in chronological order.

That is, sometimes these events are recorded for us more for the historical element than their chronological order of events. In the chapter previous to this, we have encountered Naaman, the captain of the king of Aram's army.

And we have seen his coming and being cleansed through the word of Elisha as he dipped into the Jordan River seven times. We do not have to conclude that these events, which we record in this chapter or are recorded for us in this chapter, follow those events.

And the reason we say that is because it would have been really kind of crazy for the king to ask where Elisha was since one of his captains has just returned back from his house.

But rather, what we are seeing are some of the actions and works and miraculous deeds done by the prophet Elisha. With Elisha, we have the introduction of the prophetic ministry of wonders and miraculous deeds.

[4 : 53] Elisha continues that. Though we have seen they are really a continuation of one another, but they are very different in character. Even different in how they do these matters and to what extent they do them.

Elisha's prophetic ministry of miraculous deeds is more an act of judgment. That is, he is the prophet of fire. He is always calling down fire. If you remember, there is the showdown on Mount Carmel where their offering is consumed by fire.

There is the captain of the 50 and the 50s who come up to him and he is calling down fire. Elisha is calling down fire all the time. His is a ministry of a displayed judgment.

Elisha, on the other hand, while he serves as an instrument of judgment, we also see that he is an instrument of care and concern and compassion and all these realities.

And those are things we will see this evening. I want you to see the character traits of godliness. Character traits of godliness. Keeping in mind our historical setting because we want to make sure that we take these things within context.

[6 : 00] We know that Elisha is ministering in a community and in a time when godliness is not much sought after by the majority of the population. That is, he is in the northern kingdom.

The northern kingdom will soon fall. We will get to that very quickly in the book of 2 Kings. And we will see how the Assyrian Empire comes in as God's judgment tool. They are without excuse for their falling because the judgment has been pronounced to them through Elisha and displayed in power.

And care and concern has been shown through Elisha in his ministry as well. And then when judgment comes, they are without excuse for their rejection. Because if we are honest with one another, we see that they not only rejected the judgmental power of God, they also are rejecting the concern of God.

They are rejecting the ministry of Elisha as he ministers to them in a very public fashion. These events are not recorded for us so that we can sit there and go, oh wow, look at all these good things that Elisha did.

They are not recorded for us in the word of God so that we can put Elisha upon a pedestal. Because we understand when we read scripture, we don't set any man upon a pedestal. Rather, what we are seeing is God working through an individual at a point in time in history for a purpose.

[7 : 18] God has put Elisha in the midst of an ungodly culture and is exhibiting very godly character traits. He is living out godliness amongst very ungodly individuals.

Elisha has shown that God can judge. Elisha shows that God does care. It is really both hands being dealt here.

God is a God of love, but he is also a God of righteousness and holiness. Therefore, he is also a God of judgment. The same God of love is a God of judgment because it is a very unloving matter to look over sin and not judge them.

We understand it. We see both sides of this in the two prophets of Elisha and Elisha. But I want you to see in particular here is we just see three traits that are really being reflected through these deeds as character traits of godliness lived in a very ungodly society.

We've already mentioned them, but we'll flesh them out a little bit. The first one we see is the trait of concern. Elisha was a man of concern. And we see these matters which seem to be so insignificant, yet we understand their significance because they reflect the individual.

[8 : 32] The very first thing that we notice is it says, Now the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, The place where we're sitting is too small for us. Now, in context, if we were to look at this, that wasn't the house that was too small.

It was the gathering where Elisha would sit before them and instruct them and teach them that had become overcrowded. So we would say it's kind of like their meeting hall. And the sons of the prophets here are saying, We need a bigger place to meet so that we can dwell there when you come and you instruct us and you teach us.

Now, if we just pause for just a moment right here, we can begin to see the concern of Elisha. Elisha was a man of judgment. Elisha's ministry was also a ministry of isolation and separation, right?

He did not have a lot of people around him. As a matter of fact, one of the things that we noticed with Elisha is simply after Mount Carmel, when he fled from Jezebel and her threats, then he went and he left his servant somewhere and went a little further and laid him under a juniper tree and wanted to die.

And then God had to bring him all the way to Mount Horeb or Mount Sinai. And he was isolated and alone. And he said, I alone am left. There's no one else besides me. And God has to remind him that he is not alone.

[9 : 40] There were still 7,000 who had not yet bowed the knee or kissed the prophet Baal. But Elisha then goes and he commissions Elisha who is with him. So now we know that he has at least Elisha with him, but we don't see anything else other than that.

By contrast, we see Elisha taking time to instruct other people, so much so that the instructions have become so overcrowded, they need to enlarge their gathering place.

Now this is important because this is a very ungodly society, right? The majority of the northern kingdom have rejected at least the true worship because it has taken place from the throne room down.

They have instituted the golden calves. The Baal and the Asherah groves are there. What we see, and we can't just say it's isolated to the throne room. We have to know that this is more than just a throne event because it's never the government's fault.

We understand that this is the people's responsibility because do not miss the reality that God's judgment is upon the people, not just the king. If it was a king issue, God could have judged the king himself, but yet God judges the people, and they are led away into captivity, right?

[10 : 46] God is not so as to unfair. As a matter of fact, he declares in his word that each man would pay for his own sins. So when we see the judgment that falls upon the northern kingdom, that it is the majority of the people here who have rebelled against godliness.

Yet in the midst of that rebellion, we have the sons of the prophet and Elisha being concerned enough that he is instructing them in the way they should go. We see concern because even though society is getting bad, he's not isolating himself.

Now we're not casting stones or wagging the finger at Elijah because sometimes there are Elishas that God calls to live in isolation. But we also know that there are Elishas that God calls to instruct others and to grow up into mature individuals.

And we see that he's concerned enough to teach them and to instruct them, and he's concerned that they would have a place to meet. So they want to go down to the Jordan River, understanding that that's where the majority of the trees grow, and they want to cut down trees.

It's a pretty cool picture for a guy who likes trees and likes harvesting trees. I kind of like that. So they want to cut some trees down and bring some beams back and build them a good, what I would consider, timber frame structure, right?

[11 : 54] They're going to build it so that they can get together and they can gather and they can learn. They ask Elisha to come with them, and he goes, he accompanies them. And then we have this odd occurrence about the axe head falling into the Jordan River.

And we look at this and we say, why is it there? We can really, we're not trying to over-spiritualize the text, but we need to understand this as well, that the gifts of miraculous powers given to the prophets are not given to them just for their discretionary use, that they can use it however they want to, right?

It's not like they're practitioners of magic, that they just do these events to draw attention to themselves. That is, God empowers them through the Spirit to do deeds which are supernatural, because God is a supernatural God.

So he is intentional in what he does. This raising of the axe head, the iron floating, is simply there to show us. Because notice the correlation, alas, my master.

We'll see another account where he says, alas, my master. What we notice is Elisha is concerned about the people he's with. So much concerned that the Lord uses him even to bring an axe head to the top of the water so that it can be returned.

[13 : 08] It's really just this moment of humanity, right? Where we're seeing that he is concerned about the people around him to the extent that he lets God use him to meet very temporal needs.

It's astounding, really. When we ask ourselves, why is this even in Scripture? We don't need the sunken axe head that's brought back because he threw a stick in the water to verify or validate the prophetic ministry of Elisha.

There are other things that do that. We've already seen Naaman being cleansed. We've already seen the woman who was barren having a child. We've already seen that child being raised after he passed away, after he died.

We've already seen enough validation. We've already seen where he saw Elijah being carried away by the chariots of fire. We've already seen all of these realities. Yet what this does for us is shows us that for God's usefulness of him, he did not stop being concerned with the individuals near him.

And he took the time really just to be involved in their personal life. And he was concerned enough to meet this temporal need through God's empowerment. We see this concern later on in the next episode, which we will get to in a matter of two other issues.

[14 : 25] But we see it here when they're in the city and the enemy is around them. Don't pay too much attention to that in just a moment. But notice this second, alas, my master. We notice the concern of Elisha in that he does not ask God to remove the enemies.

Rather, he asks God to open the eyes of his servant. Rather than saying, oh, God, take the enemy away. We'll get to that in just a minute. Flesh it out. He says, God, open his eyes.

Why? Because Elisha is concerned that his servant would see spiritually rather than physically. So even in the midst of something as mundane as cutting down trees, he was concerned for the individual.

And also in the midst of what we would call a crisis, he took time to be concerned for the individual. Meeting both their physical needs and their spiritual needs, oh, Lord, show them.

The first thing that we notice about godliness in an ungodly society is when individuals are concerned about those around them.

[15 : 33] So we see Elisha's concern. Number two, the second character trait we see of Elisha is he is a man of conviction. He is a man of conviction.

Again, we cannot help but compare him to his predecessor, Elijah, simply because he asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. He wanted that. He took Elijah's mantle upon him, and the Lord used him in that ministerial role.

And yet we notice here in this second occurrence, now the king of Aram was warring against Israel. Again, we don't know that these things necessarily happened chronologically, but it was during this time that Elijah, rather than fleeing from the conflict, stood strong.

He continuously warned the king of Israel, whereas Elijah, when he sent a word to the king of Israel, it really wasn't good news, right? Elisha sent word to the king of Israel and would let him know.

Again, we're seeing how God uses individuals of different personality types for the same purpose, right? Elijah declares to the king, you're wrong, you're wrong, you're wrong. God's going to bring judgment.

[16 : 43] Elisha declares to the king, God cares, God knows, and God is evident, and he's here. Both declarations of God's judgment. We understand this, right? Different personality types, different ministries, if you will, but the same occurrence.

The kings are without excuse, and we understand this. So Elisha continuously warns the king of Israel, so much so that the king of Aram thinks that one of his own soldiers is giving him information.

We notice here how God is so mildly using him. His servants said, no, king, Elisha knows the very things you talk about in your bedroom. He has such connection with the Lord God that he knows these matters, and over and over again.

So the king is longing to find him. They find out where he's at. He's a dolphin, and they surround the city. Here it is. We begin to see the conviction of Elisha. Now let me ask you, and we're not hypothetically talking here.

We just want to talk in context of scripture. If Elisha knows where the armies of the enemies are going to camp, to the extent that multiple times he can tell the king of Israel to avoid going there, do you not think that he would also know they're coming to Dothan?

[17 : 54] And yet he went to bed. Elijah, on the contrast, heard an empty threat from the king's wife Jezebel, whom he had just seen God defeat on Mount Carmel, and ran away.

Again, we're not casting judgment, but if there's any wonder that Elisha gets a double portion of Elijah's spirit, we begin to see it here. Surely he knew that they were coming.

He had repeatedly warned the king of Israel to avoid certain places. He knew matters that were being discussed in the king of Aram's bedroom. So when they're discussing this, somehow or another, I just seem to believe he had to know.

And yet he went to bed. His servant gets up the next morning. There's all these horses and chariots surrounding the city. And rather than fleeing, we begin to see Elisha's conviction here because he stays put.

He has guarded the king. He has told the king to avoid certain places. Yet he will not avoid this place because he is a man of conviction. He understands the reality here.

[19 : 05] When his servant walks out and sees the horses and chariots and all these matters, he says, Alas, my master, we read in the text, they're upon us, they're upon us. But notice the conviction of Elisha.

He says, greater are those who are with us than those who are with them. See, Elisha understands that we are not limited by the things which we see.

He is a man that understands the reality that if God is using him and moving through him, that at that moment, he is untouchable. So, I really believe, I think Warren Wiersbe said it as well, but I think it was one of the first five sermons I ever preached.

And it was long before I ever knew Warren Wiersbe said it because at that time, I had no Bible commentators. I had no study books. I had nothing but scripture. And they are not good sermons. So, though some of them are on recording, I will never let anyone listen to them.

As a matter of fact, some of my early sermons are in this building, but you will never find them. Okay? The reason they're in this building is so that I know where they're at. They're not that good.

[20 : 13] But one of my first five sermons, I believe, was titled The Untouchables. And the fact that we are untouchable until God is through with us as long as we're walking in the will of God.

Elisha was under that conviction. The reality that though the enemy surrounded him, those who were with him were greater.

See, he did not just see chariots of fire when Elisha was taken away. He saw chariots of fire everywhere he went because the God who carried away Elisha was also the God who was walking with Elisha.

Right? It matters. Past experiences are Ebenezers as Samuel would say. And we even sing a song, Here I raise mine Ebenezer. The reason that is so good, those stones of help are reminders to the present realities that we face.

The circumstances around him looked chaotic. It did not look good. He was not moved by circumstances. Rather, he was moved by conviction. And the conviction settled his heart to the extent that he could demonstrate concern.

[21 : 20] Again, we notice he takes the moment to pray for his servant all the while the enemies are coming against him. He does not run away from them. As a matter of fact, he approaches them.

He is a man of conviction that also understands the reality that God will hear a simple prayer. He approaches them and he prays, Oh Lord, close their eyes or let blindness fall upon them. And he is so convinced and convicted of the reality that God will hear that prayer that he moves towards them until he does.

We see here that Elisha is a man of convictions. It is the settled reality that God is ultimately in control of everything that happens. And that's a hard thing to handle at times but it's a reality in which we need to stand because too often we believe that the presence of the enemy dictates the happenstances or the occurrences but it is the settled reality that God is always in control.

Conviction does not remove the enemy but allows us to face it. We notice even in the midst of this concern and this conviction that it didn't take the enemy out of the picture but rather it was the empowerment that Elisha needed for himself and others in the presence of the enemy.

Too often we say, Oh God, would you remove the enemy? Oh God, would you take away the problem? When more times than not our prayer ought to be Oh Lord, help me to focus on you in the midst of the enemy and in the midst of the problem.

[22 : 58] There is that great verse there in Romans chapter 8 which we read so often and we've looked at it before that God is for us that if God is for us who can be against us and Paul begins to list all these realities of this can't take us out, this can't take us out, this can't take us out and trials and tribulations and hungers and thirst and famines and all these perseverances but there's that one word that we miss sometimes and it's that word in that in all these things God walks with us.

See, Paul didn't avoid those things, Paul lived under the conviction that in those things that the God who was walking with him was so much greater than the circumstances that opposed him.

Elisha was a man of conviction and that conviction allowed him to walk boldly. Now, the third and final thing that we notice and it's striking in our context here that not only was Elisha a man of concern for those near him, he was a man of conviction when the enemy was approaching him, we also see that Elisha demonstrated the character trait of compassion.

God answers his prayer. Blindness, temporary blindness falls upon the soldiers of Aram. He leads them, he says, I'm not the one you're looking for, this isn't the place you want to go because you're a marooning band of Arameans, right?

So he leads them a few miles down the road and he takes them inside Samaria, Samaria is the capital city of the northern tribes. He takes them inside the city gates and when they're in the midst of Samaria, he prays, oh Lord, open their eyes.

[24 : 47] Now put yourself in that position. You're a band of soldiers of the Arameans and you find yourself standing in the midst of Samaria when you open your eyes. That's certain death because the reality is during those days, again, this isn't more than likely, these events took place prior to the coming of Naaman or if it was after it was a number of years after the coming of Naaman.

This band had been going in and out of the land of Israel. This band had been trying to kill men from Israel. This band had been people who were attacking Israel and now they find themselves literally standing in the middle of Samaria with the men of Israel around them.

We notice the king's question. He says, my father, which by the way is striking because we see the respect that the king of Israel has for Elisha, probably because of the number of times that Elisha had warned him of these same men and where they would be camped at.

He refers to him as my father. This is a good place to stop right here and say, just because we respect godliness doesn't mean we're godly. This king respected this godly individual Elisha, but it does not mean he was a godly individual.

But he does at least respect him enough that he asked this question, my father, shall I kill them, shall I kill them? The repetition is, what should I do? Normally we would kill them.

[26 : 28] Shall I kill them or what should I do with them? Elisha, we see his demonstration of compassion. He says, you shall not kill them.

Would you kill those you have taken captive with your sword and with your bowl? In the English, the original is kind of lost. The force of the original is, don't kill them.

You didn't catch them, why would you kill them? It was the Lord who brought them to you. You didn't go out with your sword and your bowl.

You didn't fight a battle. You didn't take them captive in the midst of war. They were brought to you. Don't kill them. Instead, Elisha says, now these are their enemies.

Set bread and water before them. Let them eat, let them drink, and send them back. Now the king takes it a little step further, says he provides a great feast for them.

[27 : 28] And after they have eaten, and after they have drunk, he sends them back to their master. That is a clear demonstration of compassion. It is love for the enemy.

These were not repentant Arameans. These were people who came with the intended purpose of catching Elisha and probably killing him when they brought him back to Aram.

But yet this compassion not only brings them to a place of humility and humbleness but also meets their needs in that moment and then allows them to leave. This is godliness being displayed to the watching world.

And we notice it ends with and the marooning band of Arameans did not come again into the land of Israel. Evidently this compassion had an impact. Evidently this compassion and this godliness changed their perception.

You say well wait a minute pastor we read verse 24 we start talking about when they're in war again right again not necessarily chronological many years might have passed but what we know clearly from the word is that that marooning band never came back.

[28 : 53] Why? Because the compassion of godliness shown to them in their moment of weakness. We don't know what the Lord did with those individuals but we do know that compassion was shown them through a godly individual in the midst of an unlikely time.

What was certain death to them it's godliness because the reality is that God finds us while we are yet sinners warring against him seeking to push all godliness away from us and in the midst of our battle against godliness he finds us he humbles us he surrounds us and then he provides for us he meets our greatest needs in that moment I think too often we try to convince ourselves that we clean ourselves up to the father no the reality is the father is running to us when we're in the midst of all of our ugliness we're blinded by our own weaknesses and we're blinded by our own distastefulness we're blinded by everything about us that was so unpleasant and yet in the midst of that the scripture says while we were yet sinners Christ died for us he comes to us he calls us he leads us into the presence of the one who can judge us and is there in the midst of the one who could judge us he says now father let's provide for them he feeds us he cleanses us he washes us he redeems us and he restores us it's compassion this is why

Christ has called us to be people of concern conviction and compassion this Sunday if the Lord allows us to tarry and we're allowed to be here we will look at 2 Corinthians chapter 10 I've already begun to prepare for that message and Paul speaks of the battle lines being drawn and how different it is to fight on the side of godliness than it is the side of worldliness we see Elisha doing it here he's a man of concern he's a man of conviction and he's a man of compassion and it changed his circumstances for the good 2 Kings chapter 6 verses 1 through 23 thank you brother so Thank you.

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