

MIGHTY EYE OPENING FLASHBACKS
(THE GOD OF ANGEL ARMIES IS BY OUR SIDE)
II Kings 6:8-23 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Flashbacks are often of critical importance, as we tell a story. Flashbacks are an interruption of chronological sequence by the interjection of events from an earlier occurrence. We seldom relay all the information we need to chronologically, as we tell a story. When we come to II Kings 8, two chapters ahead, we will find Elisha's servant Gehazi standing before King Joram, the son of Ahab. Gehazi's greed, lust, and covetousness resulted in God's judgment of him with leprosy coming on him back in II Kings 5. Jeremiah apparently sought to tell all the miracles in the ministry of Elisha, but he did not always arrange them chronologically. King Joram would never have allowed a leper to testify before him. Thus, we know for sure, the appearing of the servant Gehazi before King Joram, in II Kings 8 was a flashback that happened while Gehazi was Elisha's servant, some time before God struck him with leprosy. I am inclined to believe this account today as well, in II Kings 6, that doesn't name Elisha's servant, may also have been a flashback—and that this servant in II Kings 6 was also Gehazi. It sounds like a flashback, saying, "Once when the king of Syria was warring against Israel."

For years, in America, believers have believed the lies that the only places we can turn are to worldly techniques, therapies, and programs. Those programs are bankrupt. All of them have failed us. Our only hope to win our battles against the enemy is the all sufficiency of Jesus Christ. When we look to Jesus in prayer and we meditate on His Word, God the Holy Spirit will often open our eyes to what we have missed as we have surveyed the vistas in our lives. As we study this incident in the life of Elisha, he faced a major crisis one morning. He was surrounded by a foreign army that intended to take him captive and probably kill him. Elisha's servant went out the door that morning, looked up, and saw a horde of Syrian soldiers, with horses and chariots. Rightly the servant surmised these soldiers weren't paying a social call! He ran back inside crying, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" How many of us have walked out our front door in the morning to confront an army of horses and chariots ready to capture or kill us?

Maybe that hasn't happened. What has happened to us? Most of us know what it's like to be suddenly confronted with life-threatening problems, circumstances, traps, some we have either willingly or tragically fallen into, things are beyond our control. We can relate to this servant's panic in this crisis. In studying this account in Elisha's life, God is opening eyes and closing eyes. These five prayerful, eye-opening insights (1) can turn the world upside down for us and others, (2) can reverse our natural understanding of what we see, (3) can give us faith to believe

God will answer what is impossible, (4) can defeat our enemy and spoil his plans, and (5) can humble us before our holy God to obey His voice alone.

GOD GIVES PRAYERFUL, EYE-OPENING INSIGHTS THAT CAN TURN THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN FOR US AND OTHERS. (I.)

Notice the amazing way God used Elisha's walk with God to warn those he loved, even evil king Joram so that the king of Syria was blocked from destroying Israel. v. 8-14. God is omniscient. He knows everything. He is the Possessor of all wisdom. The Lord knew what the Syrian king, Ben-Hadad II, was planning to do and He revealed it to His prophet, His prayerful, faithful servant. Elisha, in turn, told the Israelite king, Jehoram or Joram. Benhadad began blaming his own troops for a leak, a spy in his camp. Nevertheless, Ben-Hadad's servants told him, the prophet Elisha even "tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom"—v. 12. Did you know that God sees, hears, knows, observes, watches, and nothing is hidden from him? Hebrews 4: 13 is clear—"And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account." Intelligence experts for thousands of years have labored to be able to bug a room, but the CIA's abilities are like tiddly-winks to God. Ben Hadad II also foolishly thought he could send troops to Dothan to surround Elisha and take him captive. What was he thinking? If Elisha knew what he said to his wife in his bedroom, v. 12, didn't he know Elisha would also know in advance about his troops coming to surround his house in his city? Elisha knew king Benhadad II was coming, and he had plenty of time to hide himself if he was afraid, but Elisha was a prayerful, meditative man of God that began to learn God's mind. He knew God wanted to solve his dilemma in a way that would teach this enemy king some hard lessons about who He was. God is always working to show Himself to the world—to make us realize afresh that He is God and we are not.

Hillary Scott wrote a song I love, called "Thy will be done." Part of the words speaking to the Lord are, "I know You think of things I could never think about It's hard to count it all joy Distracted by the noise Just trying to make sense Of all Your promises Sometimes I gotta stop, Remember that you're God And I am not, Thy will be done." Our God knows and sees everything. Why are we so foolish as to try to keep our thoughts secret, let alone our words, and what we do? We can hide nothing from Jesus. His Word reveals to us what we need to know about how to deal with every-last one of our problems in life, whether major or minor. We can go to Him for the wisdom we lack. James 1: 5 is ours for the asking. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." So, you want your eyes opened to Godly insights that will revolutionize your life, that will turn your world upside down? Do you want insights into the enemy's plots? One of the devils greatest plots is to have us be

bold enough to deal with sin, and then not bold enough to forgive those who have truly repented of sin. In I Corinthians 5, Paul rebuked the Corinthian church for tolerating incestuous sin in their fellowship. He commanded them to put the man out of the church membership—to deliver him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his soul might be saved in the Day of the Lord. The church in Corinth got the message. They booted the man out boldly, but when he truly repented, the church faltered in forgiving him--II Corinthians 2: 1-11. Paul had to command them to forgive the man and comfort him, lest he be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Paul commanded them to forgive, “so that we would not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes and designs.” Do you want to see the devil turn and run? James 4: 7 tells us, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Beloved, our battle is not just against the Syrian army. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6: 12, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” Paul and Silas in Thessalonica had spiritual Elisha power. The city officials were afraid. In Acts 17: 6, they said of the apostles, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.” Oh, dear Lord, give us prayerful Godly insight that can warn those we love of the enemy’s every trap so we too with Elisha and the apostles can turn Sweetwater County, Wy upside down. Secondly,

GOD GIVES PRAYERFUL, EYE-OPENING INSIGHTS THAT CAN REVERSE OUR NATURAL UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT WE SEE. (II.)

Notice v. 15-16-God gave Elisha open eyes to see that those with him were more than those in the Syrian army who surrounded him where he lived in Dothan. We read, “When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” Elisha said, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Thank you, Pastor Kevin for having us sing, “Whom Shall I Fear,” that Chris Tomlin worship song. “You hear me when I call You are my morning song Though darkness fills the night It cannot hide the light Whom shall I fear You crush the enemy Underneath my feet You are my sword and shield Though troubles linger still Whom shall I fear I know who goes before me I know who stands behind The God of angel armies Is always by my side The one who reigns forever He is a friend of mine The God of angel armies Is always by my side My strength is in your name For you alone can save You will deliver me Yours is the victory Whom shall I fear Whom shall I fear I know who goes before me I know who stands behind The God of angel armies Is always by my side The one who reigns forever He is a friend of mine The God of angel armies Is always by my side And nothing formed against

me shall stand You hold the whole world in your hands I'm holding on to your promises You are faithful You are faithful Nothing formed against me shall stand You hold the whole world in your hands I'm holding on to your promises You are faithful You are faithful You are faithful I know who goes before me I know who stands behind The God of angel armies Is always by my side The one who reigns forever He is a friend of mine The God of angel armies Is always by my side.”

Beloved, I tell you, this year has been a year of spiritual warfare for all our pastors, for all our church. These past 5 weeks have been intense spiritual warfare. But I tell you afresh. Hear me. “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us, are more that those who are with them.” There is another world out there. If we could see into this room, this sanctuary right now, we might well see the devil’s forces, but we would see God’s armies of angels. Back in late 1981, when we worshipped at 90 Second Street, in the little white church with the bell we have outside, there was a move going on, it was a planned spiritual coup. On man told me after church— this church is going to split wide open. This is a flashback. I noticed a well-dressed thin man walk into the church and sit on the aisle in one of the few open spots. The church was packed out. The thin man wore a black suit with a white shirt and a black tie. He sat five pews back from the platform. After the service, he was one of the first men out the door. He shook my hand and said, “We know what is going on here in this church, and God is going to have the victory. Don’t be afraid.” I never ever saw him again. That night I asked the people if any of them spoke to a visitor in a suit in the morning service. They looked at me as if I had lost my mind. I asked, “Tell me, any of you if you saw him.” It seemed like an age went by, and a little lady in the back, Midge Ford said, “I saw him.” I asked her what he was wearing, and she told me to a tee, and told us all where he sat. I got chills up and down my spine. God had made an angelic house call to our church in late 1981. We had entertained an angel unawares. Hebrews 13: 2. Thirdly,

GOD GIVES PRAYERFUL, EYE-OPENING INSIGHTS THAT CAN GIVE US FAITH TO BELIEVE GOD WILL ANSWER WHAT IS IMPOSSIBLE.

(III.) Notice v. 17 that Elisha prayed in faith for his servant to see what his servant could not see. He prayed for his servant to see what God alone can see, and is humanly impossible to see, unless we see through prayer by faith. Listen to Elisha’s prayer in v. 17. “O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.” So 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.” In the “Global Prayer Digest” (09/91) told about a medical missionary to Africa who was speaking at his home church in Michigan. He told how he had to travel by bicycle through the jungle to a nearby city for supplies. It was a two-day trip that required camping overnight at the halfway point. When he got to the city, he would go to the bank, get money,

and buy medicine and supplies to take back. On one trip, he saw two men fighting. One had been badly injured, so the missionary treated his wounds and witnessed to him about Christ. He returned home without incident. On his next trip to town, the man he had treated came up to him and said that he knew the missionary was carrying money and supplies. This man and some friends had followed him into the jungle. They planned to kill him and take his money and medicine. But just as they were ready to move into his campsite, they saw that he was surrounded by 26 armed guards. When the missionary heard this, he laughed, and he said that he was all alone out at that jungle campsite. But the man insisted, “No, not only I, but also my five friends saw and counted 26 guards. We were afraid and left you alone.” At this point in the church in Michigan, a man jumped to his feet and asked, “Can you tell me the exact day this took place?” The missionary thought for a moment and was able to give the exact date—he couldn’t forget. The man said, “When it is night in Africa, it is morning here. That morning I was preparing to go play golf. As I was putting my golf bag in my car, I felt the Lord leading me to pray for you. This urging was so strong that I called the men in this church to meet here and pray for you. Would all of those men who met with me on that day, please stand up?” All together, the missionary counted the men. 26 men were standing! Fourthly,

GOD GIVES PRAYERFUL, EYE-OPENING INSIGHTS THAT CAN DEFEAT OUR ENEMY AND SPOIL HIS PLANS. (IV.)

Listen to II Kings 6: 18-20. Elisha knew that if God can open blind eyes, he can also blind open eyes. Elisha saw that God could not only heal the leper, Naaman, but he could make Gehazi have his leprosy for coveting the riches Naaman had. Without fear, Elisha faced the Syrian soldiers, he calmly prayed, “Lord, please strike this people with blindness.” So, God struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha, who calmly asked God to strike them blind, as he led them to the capital city of Samaria 12 miles south of Dothan, where they were then surrounded by Israel’s army, inside the gates of Samaria, the capital of Israel. Then, inside the gates of Samaria, Elisha prayed again, “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. What miracles God wrought, first blinding the Syrian army so they followed Elisha 12 miles from Dothan to Samaria and they entered the city of Samaria, inside the gates where they were trapped inside. You say, “That’s some praying.” No, that’s our mighty great “I AM!”

I want to share a few lines of a song Jake Hess sings, “Prayer is the Key to Heaven, but Faith unlocks the Door.” The song was written some 60+ years ago by two men, Samuel T. Scott and Robert L. Sande. “Prayer is the key to Heaven, but faith unlocks the door; Words are so easily spoken, but prayer without faith Is like a boat without an oar. Have faith when you speak to the Master, that’s all he asks

you for; Prayer is the key to Heaven, but faith unlocks the door.” How many times have you prayed, For something big or small? How long did you have to wait, or did the answer ever come at all? Words are mere expressions of thought, and nothing more. Believing is what really counts, beloved, and faith is what unlocks the door. Have faith when you speak to the Master, that’s all he asks you for; Prayer is the key to Heaven, but faith unlocks the door.” Fifthly,

GOD GIVES PRAYERFUL, EYE-OPENING INSIGHTS THAT CAN HUMBLE US BEFORE OUR HOLY GOD TO OBEY HIS VOICE ALONE.

(V.) I want you to notice II Kings 6: 21- 23. Here stood this Syrian army. You have to feel sorry for them—blinded by God through the prayer of Elisha, then miraculously their eyes were opened too late to be able to run. Now they weren’t surrounded by God’s angels, but for the second time, they were surrounded by an army, this time king Joram’s Israeli army. What happened here is touching, compassionate, and it won the battle with kindness rather than killing. Read it again with me. “As soon as the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, “My father, shall I strike them down? Shall I strike them down?” He answered, “You shall not strike them down. Would you strike down those whom 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, King Joram, with his palace cooks, prepared for them a great feast, and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel.” By God’s revelation to Elisha, his reply to the king took the matter out of king Joram’s hands. If Joram had defeated this Syrian army and brought them into his city, this Syrian army would have been butchered, and slaughtered. Who captured these soldiers? God used Elisha to capture them, and so king Joram did right to ask Elisha for permission to kill them. Elisha, by God’s grace, the capturer of the Syrian army decided these men would not be prisoners of war. They would be Elisha’s guests, and guests of king Joram. By eating together, they saw this for what it was as a gift from the God of Israel.

It was a time of breaking bread that made a covenant of peace. And it worked. The Syrian armies no longer made raids on the borders of Israel. What a lesson of how God fights His battles. Is God after killing, after bloodshed, anger, gossip, lying, manipulation, bitterness, riots, lootings, abuse, conflict, and divorce? Jesus in the sermon on the Mt. said, in Matthew 5: 7, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” When God, opens up the eyes of the wicked, even they can act in love. What happens when God opens our eyes as believers? God will overturn our plans, promises, understandings, and our wills. He will plant His decisions in our hearts. In place of revenge will be compassion. In place of our resistance will be His will and our obedience. Lord, open our eyes. Amen and amen.