

# We Grasp the Reality of Our Situation

2 Kings 6:8-17 • 2024-08-04



We use satellites for so much these days: communication services, weather information, navigation devices. The modern world as we know it couldn't function without those large pieces of scientific achievement constantly hovering and circling above us. Each satellite is really used for one main thing, relaying information. It is interesting to see just how satellites were first used. They weren't used to tell if you'll have good fishing weather for the weekend. The first satellites did go up to collect and share information. But the information was the one thing everyone wanted to know in the late 1950s: military information. The big question that both the United States and Soviet Union raced to answer was "What sort of position and force does the other side have?" What drove two nations to launch scientific objects into space over 50 years ago? It was the fear of an enemy attack.

We all like to know what we are up against and what position our enemies hold. After all, doesn't our security rest in knowing their power and plan of attack? What about God's Church? There is certainly much to fear and much up against God's Church. When we realize just what we are up against, we realize how fearful the situation appears for us. What are God's people to do when driven to fear by the devil's attacks? A similar question was asked by a servant of Elisha. If Elijah was a prophet powerful in word and deed, his successor, Elisha, was nothing less. He received a "double portion" of Elijah's spirit when he saw Elijah taken up into heaven in a whirlwind. He inherited a lofty role. In his time Israel faced much uncertainty, a lack of power, and lack of following God's direction. But Elisha was sent to open their eyes.

We read in 2 Kings how Elisha literally provided protection for the people. By the power of God's omniscience Elisha gave the King of Israel a strong military advantage. Whenever the king of Aram would decide to ambush and attack Israel, Elisha gave just the needed military info. He told the king of Israel exactly when and where to expect the attack! How is that for a military information system? The king of Aram would direct his troops saying, "Tomorrow, form an ambush at the edge of this city around that bend in the road," and Elisha would direct the King of Israel, "Tomorrow he's going to form an ambush at the edge of this city around that bend." Compare that to modern satellite information! Elisha knew the when and where of each attack ahead of time.

The King of Aram eventually determined that his ambushes' failings were not due to a spy in his midst, but the working of a prophet named Elisha. He decided to go after Elisha. Let's pause for a second to note the foolishness of his plan! Here a man predicting every move the enemy makes. Now the enemy supposes he can capture Elisha?! But this is how it is with the enemies of God. They hear about the power and working of the Lord, but that still doesn't stop them from fighting against him. And despite the foolishness of it all, a siege was set against God's prophet while he was in the city of Dothan. The servant of Elisha got up early that particular morning to find a distressing sight! Imagine looking out beyond the city you are in to see it surrounded by a hostile army. And I'm sure he knew that this old town of Dothan wasn't under siege because it was a strategic military location. They were there to get and destroy one person: his master Elisha. "Ah! What are we going to do?" he cried to Elisha, no doubt fearing the worst. All he could see was that there was no way out. All he could see was the reality of the situation.

According to what we see, there is much to fear in the Church's battle against the enemy! We may not be great prophets like Elisha, but all of us in God's Church are under the enemy's radar. We are on the battlefield whenever we preach the Word of God, whenever we give glory to Jesus, and whenever we seek to live to God's glory.

And we see how poorly matched the fight is! It seems like we are far outnumbered by those who work against God's kingdom. Have you ever felt like you were almost alone in a room when trying to direct people to Jesus and his Word? One Christian speaks the Word of God and a hundred speak against the word of God. And whenever we try to give glory to Jesus, we see our opposition is an army of those in this world living lives that dishonor God! One Christian strives to live a life honoring marriage. But for every faithful Christian a hundred more people seem to be disregarding marriage as they practice what is so harmlessly referred to as 'cohabitation.' Here we see one living according to God's gift of sex, there you see countless more supporting a perversion of human sexuality. One college student wants to honor God, they are surrounded and mocked by those who do not. It often appears that those who support Jesus Christ and his Word are far outnumbered by those who speak against Christ in word and action.

And we see the attacks for the devilish ambushes that they are. We even warn God's people by telling them about the enemy's traps. "Watch out! Satan will attack in such and such a way!" But many have wandered from the camp and stand ready to be devoured and destroyed by the ambush of the unbelieving world. What about God's church? Is it to crumble while it is surrounded by troops that trample those who share his Word?

I've met no small number of Christians living in fear for their children who live surrounded by the devil's attacks, surrounded by troops under his control and command. Along with these parents are a good number of teachers, pastors, grandparents, and siblings that fear the enemy against them and their fellow Christian brothers and sisters. This is the reality of the situation! We who belong to Christ are outnumbered and surrounded. All this makes one feel there is a lack of security, power, and God's direction in this world! How is a mere single human being able to stand against demons and

Satan?! God is omnipotent. This is true. We know and confess that to be a fact. Yet the opposite often seems to be true. It seems like God has left us, his people, surrounded by the enemy. The servant of Elisha knew who was on his side. Yet he was fearful from what he saw. He saw that they were surrounded. He cried out in fear as he saw the hills full of hostile enemies, "What shall we do?"

We see defeat and we react according to what we see. But this is a reaction of the sinful flesh that doubts God's workings. Blind we are according to our sinful human nature. Something must change if we are to have any comfort, any consolation when all we see is driving us to react with fear? When all we see is God's Church losing the battle, when all we see is the enemy surrounding us, when what drives us becomes what we merely see and wanting to focus on only what we see we fear. We fail to trust. And we desperately want to know the answer to "just how much should we fear?"

We must admit that on our own we can't stop fearing defeat. We can't be secure and at peace based on what we see. But there is more to see than our enemies' position! We hear the Word of our God recorded in 2 Kings 6: *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, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes so 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.*

Elisha prayed that God enlighten his servant. "Lord, open his eyes so he may see." Elisha's servant saw what we can usually only see by faith. The hills were not just surrounded with horses and chariots of the enemy. They were surrounded with horses and chariots of fire—the angles of God encamping around Elisha. Wouldn't the same God who reigned down fire to consume a band of man against Elijah also be ready and able to destroy this crowd that threatened his prophet? What shall we do when we feel surrounded by those who oppose us and God? "Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are greater than those against us." This is a truth, a reality that we see not on our own, but with faith. By his Holy Spirit God has opened our eyes. For every Christian there stands God's promise: "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him." (Ps 34:7) If this were not true, we would long ago have perished at the hands of God's enemies. "Those who are with us are greater than those against us." This is the reality! God does not lie! For everyone one who trusts in the Lord there are many more surrounding them to uphold them!

We have seen how our God will not allow his Church to stand alone and in defeat. This is how he works: God brings the victory, even out of what seems like defeat! Satan and all the spiritual powers of evil already stand defeated by him! You can't see it, but the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, sent in Jesus' name, teaches you all things. And he had made known what God has done for you.

It seemed like a loss. He was surrounded by his enemies. A carefully planned out attack brought him to this place of defeat by his enemies. His followers were surrounded too. "Oh, Lord, what shall we do?" "Lord, shall we strike with our swords?" Peter asked. "Put them down," Jesus said. And he went to face the battle without weapons or aid.

The enemies of God mocked him and laughed. The band that surrounded him taunted him in his loss. "Save yourself." And in what seemed like a defeat to all who watched, God forever accomplished the defeat of all our enemies. How was a mere single man able to stand against demons and Satan himself? By the man, our Lord Jesus Christ. God did not send an angel to win the day. The Son of God himself came in human flesh to defeat all our enemies. True man, true God. And on the cross he forever destroyed the enemy. There is no guilt, no sin, no accusation of Satan or man that God hasn't forever removed. There is no trap, no pit, no deviation from God that Jesus hasn't forever forgiven by his taking our place on the cross. There is no enemy, no demon, no crowd that can pull us out of this love and protection in Jesus who took our place and who now lives and reigns forever in victory. He made a public spectacle of Satan by triumphing over him by the cross. It was on the cross that Jesus made clear that God wins the victory, even when all appears to be defeated. We see how our God works: He brought victory out of what the world only saw as defeat. He rose to life! There is no one and nothing, neither angles, nor demons, not even the gates of hell can withstand our Lord.

As the army surrounded him Elisha rightly said, "Don't be afraid." The disciples were rightly told even before that seemingly great defeat of the cross, "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid." These words of comfort remain for God's church. No surrounding ambush or enemy can overturn Jesus' triumph. "Don't be afraid."

Where should you turn when you fear the attacks of evil? Turn to Scripture! You won't believe your eyes! We don't need a military intelligence team to tell us our position. We have the Word of God! I feel helpless at times. I feel overwhelmed at times. I feel outnumbered. But I pray: God open my eyes to see your victory. In Christ and his Word that victory is told! Will not he who crushed Satan on the cross be with me each moment of each day as a member of his church? When I see fellow believers hard pressed by the enemy and the unbelieving world, I pray: Lord open their eyes to see your powerful triumph in Christ. God, open the eyes of all your people to see and focus on Jesus' victory over Satan. There is no lack of security, power, and no lack of God's direction. The Holy Spirit opens our eyes to God's victory, his powerful triumph over his enemies. We grasp the reality of our situation. We see the enemy's ambush. But the Spirit reveals God's safekeeping.