

Chariots of Fire

2 Kings 6:8-23

I. Introduction: I

I. **2** Life is tough! **Job 14:1**: “Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.”

A. Problems caused by sin (Gen. 3:17-19).

B. Problems common to all (\$\$, relationships, health, old age, Eccl. 12:1-8; vanity, **Eccl. 2:17**: “So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind.”; **Eccl 9:11**: “I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise, nor wealth to the discerning, nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all.”).

C. Problems peculiar to Christians (1 Pet. 3:1-2: spouse not a Christian; 1 Pet. 4:3-4: Worldly people think we’re strange for not wanting to engage in worldly behavior.; 2 Tim. 3:12: persecution).

2. Problems can cause despair! **Job 10:18-22**: “Why then have You brought me out of the womb? Oh, that I had perished and no eye had seen me! 19 I would have been as though I had not been. I would have been carried from the womb to the grave. 20 Are not my days few? Cease! Leave me alone, that I may take a little comfort, 21 Before I go to the place from which I shall not return, To the land of darkness and the shadow of death, 22 A land as dark as darkness itself, As the shadow of death, without any order, Where even the light is like darkness.”

3. Despair = danger:

A. Carnal solutions:

(1) Finances: second job, overtime, overseas work (Heb. 10:25).

(2) Relationships: loneliness can lead to unhealthy relationships (Matt. 19:9; or wrong person).

(3) Ultimate “solution”: suicide.

B. Abandon our faith:

(1) Doubt God’s care

(2) Total apostasy

4. We need a godly strategy to prepare ourselves for really hard times! Turn to God’s word! **1 Pet. 5:7**: “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”; **Psa. 34:15**: “The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry.”

5. Good examples in helping us develop this strategy are found in the Old Testament; an incident recorded in the life of the prophet Elisha (2 Kgs. 6:8-18). Historical background:

A. Elisha was Elijah’s successor (2 Kgs. 2).

B. The incident takes place about 850-840 B.C. during the time of the Divided Kingdom.

C. Elisha is prophesying to the Northern Kingdom (Israel) ruled by Ahab’s evil son Joram.

D. The primary foe of Israel is Syria ruled by the wicked king Ben-hadad.

E. Syria is carrying out “guerilla” warfare against Israel to terrorize and undermine their govt.

F. However, God, through His prophet Elisha, is frustrating Ben-hadad’s plans.

G. God uses Elisha to reveal Ben-hadad’s raiding plans.

H. Ben-hadad becomes totally frustrated and seeks to kill Elisha.

6. **3** Read text: **2 Kgs. 6:8-18**. Our lesson is entitled “*Chariots of Fire*” and we want to briefly consider three main points:

II. Discussion:

I. **4** We’re Surrounded By The Enemy:

A. Elisha and his servant were surrounded by their enemies.

- (1) So are we as in this sin-sick world filled with evil, problems, difficulties, and death!
- (2) Satan is relentless! 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Jn. 2:15-17; Jas. 4:4
- (3) Then on top of all this is the constant pressure of false teachers and false teaching: **1 Jn. 4:1**: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”; **Eph. 4:11-14: v. 14**: “that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,”

B. Elisha’s servant asked the question all ask when troubles press hard: “*Alas...what shall we do?*” (vs. 15) Remember, in such times we’re in danger of:

- (1) Turning to carnal means to “solve” our problems.
- (2) Or, even abandoning our faith.

C. So it is absolutely critical we recognize we live in a dangerous world spiritually speaking; recognize we must constantly be making preparations for “hard times.” *If we fail to prepare we are preparing to fail!*

D. Only one answer...Christ!

- (1) Salvation is only in Him! Acts 4:12
- (2) Only source of true peace and safety! Matt. 11:28-30; Phil. 4:7
- (3) **5** Thus, we must do **all** that is required to “put on Christ” and bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5):
 - (a) Initial obedience in becoming a child of God (Gal. 3:26-27).
 - (b) Then we must put on whole armor of God to defeat Satan (**Job 1:9-10**: “So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? I O Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side?”; **Eph. 6:11-18**: gird waist with truth; breastplate of righteousness; shod feet with gospel of peace; shield of faith; helmet of salvation; sword of the Spirit; all prayer and supplication).
 - (c) Obedient to Christ (Heb. 5:9; Matt. 7:24-27).
 - (d) Love Him (Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 2:3-5).
 - (e) Run the race of faith with patience (Heb. 12:1-4; 2 Tim. 4:7-8).
 - (f) Fervent personal Bible study and prayer (Heb. 4:15; Matt. 4:1-11; Jesus was a man of prayer! 1 Thess. 5:17; Lk. 18:1-8).

2. **6** God Is Greater Than The Enemy:

A. Elisha’s servant was dismayed at the odds, because he didn’t include God!

- B. Even though the odds seem insurmountable, we can overcome if in Christ! **1 Jn. 4:4:** *"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."*
- C. As Elisha knew, we must realize there is more to the material universe than what we see, touch, smell, hear, or taste (**2 Cor. 4:16-5:1**).
- D. **7** Just as Elisha's servant could not initially see the "Chariots of Fire" we also can't always see God's providential care with our physical senses, but we have His assurance it's there if we:
- (1) Put our complete faith and trust in Him (**Isa. 45:22:** *"Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other."*; Jn. 6:68; **Heb. 7:25:** *"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."*; **Rom. 8:31-39**).
 - (2) *"seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"* (Matt. 6:25-33; **2 Kgs. 19:14:** Hezekiah *"went up to the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord..."*).
- E. God helps us handle every difficult situation if we walk by faith (Phil. 4:13; **2 Cor. 11:23-28**).
- (1) Doesn't mean the absence of pain, suffering, or even death (**Psa. 23:4:** still may have to walk through *"the valley of the shadow of death..."*).
 - (2) But, we have such grand assurances if we keep the faith (**2 Cor. 5:1:** *"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."*; 1 Cor. 15; 2 Tim. 4:6-8).

3. **8** God Will Deliver Us:

- A. **Trust:** *"So he answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.'"* (2 Kings 6:16)
- (1) We have great reasons to trust in God for His comfort, guidance, and strength: Isa. 40:1-31
 - ☛ God desires to comfort us (Isa. 40:1-2a),
 - ☛ He will make every problem manageable (Isa. 40:3-4),
 - ☛ His promise is sure (Isa. 40:6-8),
 - ☛ He will care for us tenderly (Isa. 40:10-11),
 - ☛ His ability to perform far surpasses our comprehension (Isa. 40:12-17; 21-26),
 - ☛ We have no basis for doubting His care and ability (Isa. 40:27-28),
 - ☛ He is *"able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think"* (Eph 3:20)(Isa. 40:29-31).
 - (2) Hence, let us commit Psalm 121 to memory and make it our motto.

*I will lift up my eyes to the hills —
From whence comes my help?
2 My help comes from the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.
3 He will not allow your foot to be moved;
He who keeps you will not slumber.
4 Behold, He who keeps Israel*

Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The LORD is your keeper;

The LORD is your shade at your right hand.

6 The sun shall not strike you by day,

Nor the moon by night.

7 The LORD shall preserve you from all evil;

He shall preserve your soul.

8 The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in

From this time forth, and even forevermore.

B. **Pray:** “And Elisha prayed, and said, ‘LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’” (2 Kings 6:17)

(1) Our prayers are effective if we do His will (1 Pet. 3:12; Jas. 5:16).

(2) We must “not lose heart” in our praying (Lk. 18:1-8; 1 Thess. 5:22).

(3) We must trust in the power of God as we pray (Eph. 3:20; **Lk. 18:7-8:** “And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? 8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”).

C. **Faith:** “Then 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.” Jesus said we could move mountains with our faith! **Mk. 11:22-23**

(1) We can only see our way ‘through’ problems with the eye of faith; therefore, we must prepare ourselves for hard times by increasing our faith (**Lk. 18:8:** “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”).

(2) There’s no “secret” for building one’s faith (Rom. 10:17; 2 Pet. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:15).

(3) By faith, like Elisha’s servant, our spiritual eyes can be opened and we can behold God’s spiritual host awaiting to minister to our needs (“Then 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.” 2 Kings 6:17; e.g., **1 Cor. 10:13:** “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”).

D. **Obedience:**

(1) It is only by faithful obedience (Jas. 2:18-26) that we build our spiritual house on the rock (**Matt. 7:24-27:** contrast→ “whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock...” vs. “everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand...”).

(2) Like the man who built his house on the rock, we too must prepare ourselves to weather the storms of hard times by preparing!

☛ Again, if we fail to prepare, we prepare to fail.

☛ Upon what foundation is your spiritual house built? Faithful obedience? Or, obedience only when it is convenient and suits your liking?

III. Conclusion:

1. **9** How did Elisha's "hard time" turn out? Elisha and his servant were delivered and ultimately Ben-Hadad was murdered by Hazael.
2. Like Elisha we can weather "hard times" successfully if we "wait on the Lord": trust, pray, grow in faith, and remain humbly obedient (**Psa. 27:14**: "Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!").
3. Are you prepared for "hard times"?
 - A. Is your **trust** in God where it needs to be?
 - B. Do you **pray** on a regular basis? Do you pray "without ceasing" trusting that God hears, cares, and is able to answer?
 - C. Is your **faith** growing? Are you giving "all diligence" to make it grow?
 - D. Are you an **obedient** servant of the Master? Are you building your house on the sand or on the rock?
4. Sooner or later a "hard time" will come to each and every one of us whether we're ready for it or not.
5. Are you ready? Do you believe in the "Chariots of Fire"?
6. If you're not ready, if you don't believe in the "Chariots of Fire" in your life; then why not come and seek the peace, safety, and comfort of the Savior? Matt. 11:28-20; **Isa. 40:31**: "But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

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