

Chariots of Fire 2 Kings 6:8-23

I. Introduction: I

1. **2** Life is tough! **Job 14:1**: “Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.”
 - A. Problems common to all (\$\$, relationships, health, old age, Eccl. 12:1-8; vanity of life, **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.”).
 - B. Problems caused by sin (Gen. 3:17-19; also, temporal consequences of sin).
 - C. Problems peculiar to Christians:
 - (1) Spouse not a Christian: 1 Pet. 3:1-2.
 - (2) Former worldly friends: 1 Pet. 4:3-4 (Think you’re strange for not wanting to engage in worldly behavior.).
 - (3) Persecution: 2 Tim. 3:12 (Even Paul went through this despair! **2 Cor. 1:8-9a**: “For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, **so that we despaired even of life.** 9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves...”).
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: rather than turn to God, turn to carnal solutions to their problems.
 - (1) Finances: second job, overtime, overseas work (Heb. 10:25), theft, gambling, etc.
 - (2) Relationships: loneliness can lead to unhealthy relationships (Matt. 19:9; or wrong person).
 - (3) Ultimate “solution”: suicide (A permanent solution to a temporary problem!).
 - B. Abandon our faith: some just give up on their faith when faced by difficult problems.
 - (1) Doubt God’s care
 - (2) Total apostasy
4. ****** So, we need a godly strategy to prepare ourselves for really difficult times! Turn to God! **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.”; **Psa. 56:8**: “You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.” (NLT)
5. **3** 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. 6:8-23). 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 prophesies to the Northern Kingdom (Israel/Samaria) ruled by Ahab's evil son Joram.
 - D. The primary foe of Israel is Syria ruled by the wicked king Ben-hadad (Ben-hadad II?).
 - 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 (v. 12).
 - H. Ben-hadad becomes totally frustrated and seeks to kill Elisha (v. 13).
6. 4 Read text: **2 Kgs. 6:8-23**. Our lesson is entitled "*Chariots of Fire*"; three main points:

II. Discussion:

One important lesson we need to learn from this incident is that...

I. 5 We're surrounded by the enemy:

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

- (1) So are we as we live in this sin-sick world filled with evil, problems, difficulties, and death!

Jn. 3:19-20: *"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."*

2 Pet. 2:7-8: *"...righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)..."* (2 examples)

- (a) Example #1: Fox News (06/13/2019)

"A South Carolina father convicted of killing his five children in 2014 was sentenced to death on Thursday. A Lexington County jury found Timothy Jones Jr. guilty Tuesday on five counts of murder in the deaths of his children: Merah, 8; Elias, 7; Nahtahn, 6; Gabriel, 2; and Abigail Elaine, 1. The same jury handed down the death sentence Thursday after deliberating for less than two hours. Jones strangled four of his children, two with a belt and two with his hands, while the cause of death for Nahtahn remained unclear."

- (b) Example #2: Fox News (06/13/2019)

"A nurse in England accused of killing eight babies and attempting to kill at least six others, was rearrested Monday for the attempted murder of three more, police said. ...Local media outlets, including the BBC, identified the professional as Lucy Letby, a nurse who was first arrested in July 2018 on suspicion of murder as investigators connected her to the deaths of eight babies, and attempted deaths of another six infants at the Countess of Chester Hospital. Police said the suspect was rearrested on Monday for allegedly trying to kill another three babies."

- (2) ** Satan is relentless! 1 Pet. 5:8; **Job 1:7:** *"And the LORD said to Satan, 'From where do you come?' So Satan answered the LORD and said, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.'"*; Eph. 6:11: *"wiles of the devil"* (*methodeia*: "cunning arts, deceit, craft, trickery"; Thayer).
- (3) Then on top of this is the constant pressure of false teachers and false teaching:

Psa. 119:104: “Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.”

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,”; Eph. 5:11

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’s absolutely critical we recognize we live in a dangerous world spiritually speaking; recognize we must constantly be making preparations for “difficult times.” *If we fail to prepare we are preparing to fail!*

D. **6** 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) 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) Continued obedience to Christ (Heb. 5:9; Matt. 7:24-27: **vv. 24-25:** “whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.”).
 - (d) Love Him (Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 4:19; 2:3-5).
 - (e) Rely/lean 100% on the Lord!

1 Pet. 5:7: “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” (KJV)

Rom. 8:31-32: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”; Eph. 3:20

Heb. 4:16: “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

2 Cor. 1:3-4: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

Psa. 46:1-3: “God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; 3 Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its swelling.”

- (f) Run the race of faith with patience (Heb. 12:1-4; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Heb. 10:35ff).
 - (g) Rely on His grace! 2 Cor. 12:9; **Psa. 23:4:** “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me...”
 - (h) Devote yourself to fervent personal Bible study and prayer (Heb. 4:15; Matt. 4:1-11; Jesus was a man of prayer! Rom. 10:17; 1 Thess. 5:17; Lk. 18:1-8; **Col. 4:2:** “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;”).
- (4) ****** Times of great spiritual stress (regardless of the source!) are times we need to “double-down on our faith” so to speak! Psalms; Matt. 26:36-42
- “When you come to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on.”
—Franklin D. Roosevelt
- “Accept responsibility for your life. Know that it is you who will get you where you want to go, no one else.” (cvt: Phil. 2:12)

—Les Brown

Another important lesson we need to learn from this incident is that...

2. **7** *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 we’re 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**; cf. Dan. 10: archangel Michael goes to fight the prince of Persia). Consider Albert Barnes on Daniel 10:13:
******“How many arrangements may there be in progress designed to answer our prayers of which we know nothing! How many agents may be employed to bring about an answer! What mighty obstacles may be in a process of removal, and what changes may be made, and what influences exerted, while we are suffered to pray, and fast, and weep, amidst many discouragements, and many trials of our faith and patience!”
- D. ****** Just as Elisha’s servant could not initially see the “Chariots of Fire” we can’t always see God’s providential care w/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 difficulty 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:** we still may have to walk through “the valley of the shadow of death...”; 2 Cor. 12:9).

- (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).

Another important lesson we need to learn from this incident is that...

3. 8 God will deliver us: IF...

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 comfort, guidance, & 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**: “Elisha prayed, and said, ‘LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’” (2 Kgs. 6:17)

(1) Our prayers are effective if we do His will (1 Pet. 3:12; Jas. 1:6-8; 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; 1:19-22; **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.” (v. 17) 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 difficult 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. 1:5-11; Heb. 10:24-25; recall Jas. 1:6-8!!!).
- (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 difficult 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 feelings?

III. **Conclusion: 9**

1. How did Elisha’s “difficult time” turn out? Elisha and his servant were delivered and ultimately Ben-Hadad was murdered by Hazael (2 Kgs. 6:18-23; 8:15).
2. **** Like Elisha we can weather “difficult 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 “difficult times”?** Jas. 1:6-8
 - 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 “difficult time” will come to you whether you’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. 11:28-30: *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

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."*

An original sermon by Craig Thomas, evangelist working with the Westside church of Christ meeting at 1301 N. Enterprise, Bloomington, Indiana 47404