

Oh.

Taken from 2 Kings 6—7

Foundation

Before beginning your time of exploration today, stop and pray. Commit this time to the Lord, and ask God to help you see that with Him, nothing is impossible.

Focus

Do you find it hard to believe God's promise of victory when you're surrounded by defeat?

"I think I'll set my camp up right ... there!" the king of Aram stated, pointing to a spot that would make capturing the Israelites easier. Unfortunately, all the king's plans so far had been spoiled by Elisha. Each time the king of Aram made a plan to ambush the Israelites, the prophet Elisha informed the king of Israel, who then checked on those places.

"Which of you men is on the king of Israel's side?" the king of Aram demanded. It infuriated him that his plans had failed not just once, but several times.

"Not a one of us!" came the loyal response. "It's Elisha the prophet, who lives in Israel. He keeps informing the Israelite king of even the words you say in the privacy of your own bedroom!"

This angered the king of Aram so much that he ordered his officers to find out where Elisha was living so he could have him captured.

When word came back that Elisha was in Dothan, the king of Aram sent a great army with horses and chariots and surrounded the city during the night. The next morning Elisha's servant looked over the city walls in fear.

"Elisha, what are we going to do?" he asked anxiously. Since there was no escape, the situation seemed hopeless.

Looking at his servant, Elisha replied, "Don't worry. Those who are on our side are more than those who are on theirs."

His servant stared at Elisha, confused. *What in the world is Elisha talking about?* he wondered. *We're clearly outnumbered; defeat is inevitable!*

"O Lord," Elisha prayed, "open my servant's eyes so he can see what I see."

Suddenly the young servant gasped in surprise. He could now see the Lord's horses and chariots of fire on the surrounding hills!

Elisha prayed once more and asked the Lord to strike the Aramean army with blindness. He then went out to the blind soldiers and said, "This road and city aren't the one you want. If you want to find the man you're looking for, follow me, and I'll lead you to him."

After Elisha had led them away, he prayed for their sight to be restored. When God opened their eyes, the soldiers found themselves in Samaria, standing before the king of Israel! They were terrified.

Elisha then instructed the king not to harm the soldiers but rather to hold a large feast in their honor and then send them back to their own country. After this, the raids stopped—for a time.

Years later, the king of Aram marched against Samaria and laid siege to the city. No supplies could go in or out. Food and resources eventually

The chariots and horses Elisha's servant saw were part of God's heavenly army. An entire world is out there that our human eyes can't see.

In ancient times, sharing a meal with someone symbolized friendship. Because the soldiers ate with the king, they were now obligated under a treaty of friendship and could no longer raid Israel.

became so scarce that a donkey's head sold for forty ounces of silver! The Aramean king knew it would only be a short time before the Israelites died of starvation or surrendered.

People inside the city gates grew desperate, and the king of Israel, feeling helpless, grew frustrated and angry. *Elisha is responsible for this—surely he can do something about it!* the king grumbled. *Where is that God of his now?*

Going to Elisha, the king demanded to know why he should wait on the Lord any longer.

Elisha could hear the hostility in the king's voice. "This is what the Lord says: 'By this time tomorrow there will be food enough for all.'"

Elisha lived in the city of Dothan, which was twelve miles north of Samaria, the capital of Israel.

At those words, the king's servant laughed. "Yeah, right. Even if the Lord opened the floodgates of heaven, it could never happen," he spat with disbelief.

Elisha directed his gaze toward the servant. "Tomorrow," he said firmly, "you will see it for yourself. But you won't be able to eat any of it because of your disbelief." The servant glared back and then turned to leave with the king.

That same day four Israelite men with leprosy discussed the situation among themselves. "If we stay here outside the city gate, we'll starve," they reasoned. "But if we go inside the city, we'll starve there, too. Let's go to the enemy and turn ourselves in. If they kill us, we'll just die sooner."

So at dusk they made their way to the Aramean camp and found it completely abandoned. The camp was fully stocked with food and other supplies, but clothing and equipment were strewn all along the road, for God had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of approaching horses and chariots, and they fled in fear. The starving men grabbed supplies for themselves, taking anything they wanted. Then they went to the city gate and shouted the good news to the Israelites. At first the king thought it was a trick, but when he sent five soldiers to investigate, their reports came back the same. That morning there was food for everyone—just as God had promised through Elisha. God brought victory in the midst of defeat.

Footwork

How do you think the king's servant responded that morning when he heard the news about the food? We can only imagine! Now open your Bible to 2 Kings 7:19—20 and find out the facts. What happened to the king's servant in verse 20? (*Note:* “Man of God” refers to Elisha.)



The king's servant refused to believe that God was going to give the Israelites victory over the Arameans, and ironically, the last thing he ever saw was sweet victory. Unfortunately for him, he wasn't able to stick around to enjoy it.

When God promises you victory even though you're surrounded by defeat, what will *your* response be?