

2 Kings 6

Sunday 7/15/2012

Thank you, Daniel. If you have your Bibles this morning, in just a little bit, we are going to go over to 2 Kings 6 after a short introduction about some things. Today, as you are well aware of by now, is our anniversary Sunday. I know that to many of you, and I am glad that you are here, it does not mean that much to you. But to many of us here, or maybe some of us here, we see and understand what today is all really about. It is hard to come into something and hear about Mel Sabaka, my Father in the Lord, whom you never met, never probably heard preach, talk about his family and all of that, whom you just really met, and then try to put it all into perspective. My goal today is not to try to even do that, but our goal today is to try to show you how to mark your spiritual growth.

When I was a kid growing up, my dad used to mark along the side of the door going down to the basement in the kitchen. Every year on my birthday, he would carve a little notch in the side of the door frame there. I remember I went back to see my old home four or five years ago when I was in Ohio, and the people were gracious enough to let me walk through. I went into the kitchen, and the door frame had been painted over now, and everything had been kind to the door, but even under all that paint, I could still see those notches in the door. Those notches represented my growth and where I went. I think every Christian has to have a process to monitor your spiritual growth. I also think it is true of churches. A lot of what we are going to talk about today is basically about that.

Nine years ago, in my kitchen, a pastor by the name of Pastor Whelan preached our first official message as a church. As he laid down the charter for our church, we all sensed the excitement of what God was about to do. He and his church at that time were our sending church. The Bible teaches, and I believe it very clearly, that all biblical New Testament churches are started by another New Testament church. A church and a pastor who sponsors them and then sends them out within the New Testament structure. I think it is very clear from Acts 13 and Acts 16 with the church at Antioch, that is the way it is supposed to be. Some of you were there that day. Most of you were not, but you are here today, and that is really all that matters. Some that were there then are no longer with us today. As I preached a couple of weeks ago, Matthew 13, in effect, claimed them and took them.

Over these last nine years, we have seen God do some tremendous things. He brought all of you here to this New Testament, Bible-based, Bible-preaching local church. I do not know if you know this or not, but He brought you here, and if you decided to stay here, He brought you here for one reason: for you to find out who you really are, because that is what churches do. Mel used to say one of his famous things, he used to talk about the fact that there are two kinds of churches: there are churches that are of God, and there are churches that are for God. There is a great difference between the two. Anybody can build a church for God, but not too many churches are churches that are of God. I have never forgotten that all of my life, and I have tried, through the basic model of the New Testament and everything we do, and I believe I have succeeded, to build this as a church of God, a work of God, not just a work for God.

I. The Importance of Leadership and Patience

I want to preach to you today a message that I feel is very relevant to where we are really, really at. You might say that I have waited nine years to preach this message. In many ways, the last nine years, and you have to kind of look at things from an overall perspective. I know that lots of people have been saved. We have got twenty-some people today going to be baptized that were saved in the last half of the year. We have seen many marriages put back together and fixed, lives turned around, spiritual growth; all that is good. But really, in my mind, as I overlook the whole thing, I look at this last nine years as a church as just a training ground in spite of all that God has done. I think that God did a lot of things to train a lot of you to get us to the place where we are at right now because of where God wants us to go.

You know my thoughts on leadership in Christianity or within churches. I think leadership is absolutely vital. I think leadership always runs from the top down. In my humble opinion, building leadership is the number one task of the pastor as soon as he steps into the pulpit. I think a pastor's number one job is to train leaders, to invest himself into other men and women who will take what God has given him and then carry it on and keep that investment going. This has to be accomplished before anything meaningful can be done in the ministry. All that takes time.

When it comes to building a church, you never get in a hurry. That is something that most Christians do not understand today because we live in a world that is always in a hurry. I remember when the first McDonald's was built back in Canton, Ohio, and everybody thought it was a great thing because it was a fast food. It was the first of the fast foods. Right now, you drive by the sign, and it says "900 billion sold." I remember when it only said six. It was a great idea because it was fast food. But then as society progressed, the fast food was not fast enough, so we had to put a fast drive-through so you could get the fast food even faster than going into the fast food place.

Remember when you used to buy jeans, and they used to be all real dark and starchy, and you used to wash them and get them dirty on purpose so after they were washed about a hundred times, they really started to look good? We do not wait for them to wear out anymore. Now you buy them with holes in them. You pay a hundred dollars for jeans with the rear ends out of them. I do not understand that. But that is where we are at today. That same kind of mentality has worked its way into building churches, and people today think that you can build churches in a hurry or you can build people in a hurry. Building a church is about building people, and you have to build them one at a time. This idea of mass-producing Christians is a farce. Rather, you have to be able to take, it is like building a church today, I think, is like a lost art. It is like the ability to hand-fit pieces into people's lives, to give them one-on-one exactly what they do and what they need.

I think that the difference between churches today and the old churches is the difference between a '58 Chevy and a brand new 2012 Chevy. The 1958 Chevy was built to last. You hit another car or hit a pole, it took the pole up. You get a little bumper, hit a little pole now, it is \$9,000 damage. You know why? Because new cars are like new Christians; they are all made of plastic. When the damage comes, the plastic does not withstand it. The old cars, they were made of some metal.

My job is to get some Christians made with some metal. I am tired of plastic Christians. I am tired of Christians every time they get a bump in the world, it just all goes to pieces.

You build a church, I am going to tell you something that is an absolute thing that I just saw over the years, and I am going to give you an incredible unknown rule. You may build a church one person at a time, and that is true. But you build a ministry one leader at a time because it takes leaders to run a ministry. I think in the last nine years, after the last nine years, we are probably kind of coming into that point. In my own humble opinion, based on looking at it all, and many times you just see small pieces of it, but I get to look at the whole perspective. I think we stand at the greatest time within those nine years, ready to move this next year into a level of intensity of ministry that most churches never get to.

I think for me, the greatest aspect that I think this is true of any pastor, I think the greatest confidence that a pastor can have in any church is knowing who he has that will get the job done with him. After nine years, I think almost everything and everybody has pretty much defined themselves, and we know pretty much where we are at. Somebody told me last week, or maybe it was two weeks ago, about a guy here in town who is a pastor. Really, he is a "want-to-be" pastor. I will not tell you his name or anything, but it would not matter, you could get these guys like this. This little man is typical of what you get today. This little fellow now has got the great insight into how to build a church. Now, keep in mind, he has never built one himself. He never has built a church. He sure messed up a few, but he has never really built one. But now, after about two years in the ministry, you see he is pretending he knows what he is doing. He has got this great, you can always tell a guy who does not have any depth to him because he is always going around telling everybody that he meets the great truth that he just found. He is like the Athenians over there in Acts 17. They just have to tell some new thing. You come up and say, "Hey, what is going on in your world?" I could spend the next twelve hours boring you and telling you what. You know what I will say? "That is going great." I am not going to expand what new things are happening. You know why? If you want to find out, come and see what is happening. Nothing proves a man's shallowness more than every time you see him, he has got to tell you this great new thing. That is just kid. That is just guy. Had a thousand like him.

Now he has got the great revelation that if you are not out of a church in about two years and out there just setting the world on fire, there is something wrong with you. I love little guys like this. I think they really play an important part in the ministry and in churches because Paul said over there in 1 Corinthians 11:9:

1 Corinthians 11:9

For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

I think that they show you what is fake and false based on what is up against what is real and right. You cannot build anything for God in two years. Nothing shows how shallow you are than making statements like that. The real works of God that we know about, guys like this know nothing about. I would say to you Dr. Harold Hanninger, you would not even know what I was talking about. I am talking about a man that spent fifty years in the ministry that impacted people

all over the world. Three, four heart attacks later, after he built one of the greatest, strongest churches that his dad was a part of, and I was a part of, but he did not do it in a hurry.

I think of Dallas Billington from Akron Baptist Temple. One of the greatest books you will ever read on the planet is one of the most simplest books that was ever written: a simple little book called God is Real. Not even in print. Has not been in print for forty years. You probably buy it on the internet for nine cents because nobody wants to read it anymore. Yet if you want to find out how to build a church and build it right, read that book. Incredible book. I think of John Rawlings, Landmark Baptist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You know why it is called Landmark Baptist Church? Because it was the first Baptist church in Ohio, and Ohio became a state in 1803. The church was in effect before that. He spent seventy years investing his life in people. You cannot build anything in two years, especially people. Jesus Himself took three years to train up the twelve apostles before He went back to heaven.

Did you ever notice how long God takes in things? When Noah was preparing the ark, it took 120 years to do it. When God built the temple back there in the Old Testament, it took seven years. When God wanted to get Abraham, the friend of God, to be His friend and do everything that He wanted to do, it was ninety-nine years before he ever did anything for God. Moses, the greatest leader Israel ever had, eighty years before God was ready to use him. Some little punk comes along and says, "In two years, I will have you ready?" Get out of here. He probably will listen to this tape, and next week he will be going around telling everybody "three years."

But like they say on television when you want to offer your deal, "Wait, there is more." Did you ever notice that even the twelve that Jesus trained for three years, you do not find any of those ever recorded in the New Testament local church anywhere? No, no. The model, the guy who does the job, the man who carries the ball, is Paul. If you are paying attention, Paul gets saved in Acts 9, and then you do not hear from him again until Acts 13. Do you know how long God prepared him? You missed that little paragraph mark in Acts 9:23, did you, my little misguided friend? When you look at Paul's training from when he got saved in Acts 9 up into Acts 13, where he shows up in Antioch by Usher's chronology, that is ten years of his life.

My point in saying all that is simple. It takes time to build people. It takes time to build churches and building strong leadership that will carry a church. In my mind, and you hear me say it all the time, everything rises and falls on leadership. In the military, for those of you that were in the military, you know what I am about to say is true. You lead from the top down. That is the way it should be with Christians in churches. You lead from the top down. I am sure you can build a work for God in two years, but you will never build a work of God in less than ten according to the Bible. A New Testament local church has to be the base of operation for all extending ministries. That takes leadership. It takes strong leadership in men and women. Men and women who, as Colossians 2:7 says:

Colossians 2:7

Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Rooted, built up, and established in the faith. You do not do that in two years. You do not do that in three years. It is a process.

II. The Gospel Received and Fulfilled

Again, I say all this because after nine years of it, and where God has brought us, and to the level of leadership we have, we have really only begun. Up to this point, it has just been a weeding out process really. A process that makes you face the two aspects of the Gospel that I have been preaching about. The two aspects of the Gospel are this: when you got saved, you received the Gospel. God gave it to you free. God gave it to you by grace through faith. The first aspect of that Gospel is you received it. After you received it, you get into the Word of God a little bit, you realize why God saved you. Then comes into your life the second aspect of the Gospel, and that is the fulfillment of the Gospel: you fulfilling the purpose that God saved you for.

We have lots of people who get saved. They will take what God has and then they will keep what God has and will not give God anything back. I am talking about today, I am talking about the aspect that this church is basically that kind of process. A process that makes you face the Gospel received and then the Gospel fulfilled: what you are going to do with it after God gives it to you. Today I know what I have got to work with, and it is plain and simple. I cannot tell you what a blessing it is of the pastor to understand that when push comes to shove, I know who I can count on. After nine years, a pattern has been set.

A Bible-based ministry never will define people. You hear that all the time. A Bible-based ministry will never really define people. But what a Bible-based ministry does is allow people to define themselves. That is what makes it such a beautiful thing. It will not define you. It will allow you to define who you are. That is a great thing. As I said, it starts with me and comes right down the line. You want to know what kind of person I am? You want to know what kind of person I really am inside? All you have to do is look at my ministry and value what that is, because whatever my ministry is, is what I am. It is the same way with you. You say, "Well, I am not doing nothing." That is why you are nothing. You are going to get this before it is over today.

I want to preach to you today how to handle what is coming your way. I will be honest with you. I am glad you are all here, and I want you all to come back. If you are looking for a church, I would love to have you consider this one. If you want to meet with me and sit down and talk, I would be glad to. I have a standard procedure with anybody in our church. You do not even have to be a member. I will sit down with anybody for an hour and go through the Bible every week, whatever you want to do. I am here to help you. But I understand that what I have to say today, I would like to preach to everybody that is in this church that claims to be a member of this church. But I know some of you, it will just go over your heads because up to this point, you have not done nothing, and probably there is a good chance from this point on, you are not going to do anything. So I have a limited crowd that I am going to preach to. But it is a lot like throwing up. If some of it gets on a person around you, I am sorry, but that is the way it is.

For those of you who have committed now, and that is who I am interested in, I am just going to be upfront with you. For those of you who want a piece of this New Testament work, that you

have said in your heart, "I want a piece of this ministry," and you are willing to pay the price for it, there are going to be some things come your way. Here we are on anniversary Sunday, looking back where we have come from is important. But that is not nearly as important as understanding when we move on past this, what is coming our way. I have been preaching it to you out of the book of Corinthians trying to get you prepared for it. You are going to experience everything that Paul talked about. You are going to go through every heartache that he did. You are going to experience every downfall, everything that happened to him. Our great model in every way is going to come your way.

In serving God, there are two main concepts you better get. Most of you will never get this. That is why you will never serve Him.

- 1.) You have to be willing to lose it all to gain it all.
- 2.) If you are not willing to give it all up, then you are defeated before you ever start.

This is why God's people will not do the ministry that God has called them to do. It took nine years to develop in you ones here who understand ministry. I will let you decide if you are one of those people or not. It took nine years to get the steel in your backbone. It took nine years to give you the courage to stand for a Book because they had to teach you how to love it. It took nine years to develop the hardness of your metal, to turn your legs into marble, that for the ministry's sake and the Word of God's sake, that you are unmovable.

III. The Spiritual Warfare in 2 Kings 6

With that introduction, turn to 2 Kings 6. I want to preach to you today on what is coming your way and how to deal with it. This ministry is in my life, every day of my life. As a child of God in ministry, we know now that we are going to go through exactly what Paul did and what he went through. He talked about in 2 Corinthians 1:9, they had the sentence of death in himself. In 2 Corinthians 4, we have been studying how the ministry is suffering. I showed you in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 how that when you begin to serve God, when you are going to decide to do what God wants you to do, when you are going to make up your mind that you are going to stand for Him, then the Bible says that we are going to be:

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

The great comparisons between suffering for God and suffering for the world. As I stated a couple of weeks ago, when you do God's work, you are going to be surrounded by the hordes of hell. They are going to surround you to stop you. We are in a spiritual warfare. We are in a spiritual battle. Most of you never figured that out. You are in a spiritual warfare. You are in a spiritual battle. In these crucial times when they come, and brother, they will come if you are going to decide to be what God wants you to be. In those crucial times, this message will be all that will get you through, not because I am preaching it, but because of the content that is in it in this great story. For in this story, in the Old Testament, you have a biblical account of a man of

God, who like you and me, had determined to do a work of God, and how the devil tried to stop him.

If you have any plans, if you have any intentions, my dear friend, if you have any desire to be in this ministry or any ministry, you better get this down what I am telling you today. I am telling you this on anniversary Sunday, and I know it would be nice to have a walk down memory lane, show the old slides of the old building, and show the slides of the kitchen, show the slides of when we built this place, and show the slides of all that. Everybody slap each other on the back and say, "Well, it has been a great time." And it has been. There is no question about that. But you know what? I am looking at what is coming tomorrow. I am more concerned about where we are going after today. I am more concerned about the urgency of the hour of getting you ready to do what God has saved you to do, the fulfillment of the Gospel in your life of taking it to somebody else.

Gary, where are you at? My other Gary here. I hope you do not mind me saying this. I love you. You love this church, do you not? Gary is one out of our homeless ministry. Gary got saved a couple of months ago. Gary is getting baptized today, are you not, Gary? Gary last night had two more people come into the camp, did not have anywhere to go. He said, "You need to come to church with me this morning, and you need to come to my church and hear my preacher." So they are here today. Does that not make you feel like a fool? How you think that the homeless ministry is stupid? You know what I think, Gary? I think they are stupid. That little guy back there makes everything worth it. You said it, God turned the universe upside down to save one soul. The truth of the matter is that is exactly what He did to save me and to save you. Gary, you are my friend, and you are in this church, and God bless you. You got your first ministry this morning, but we will keep that between me and you.

If you have any plans, any intentions, any desires to be in the ministry, you better get this down. I want to read for you very quickly this passage, and then I am going to explain it to you. By the end of this sermon, here is what I want to do. I am going to give you five principles that you want to burn into your heart and your mind about surviving in the ministry. Five principles that when the hordes of hell come past you about, when you get surrounded, when you get perplexed, when you get troubled, when all of this stuff comes down, and brother, it will come down, these will be the only five things that will get you through. We have got to do a few little work to get there.

I will read the story.

2 Kings 6:8-17

Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp.

And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down.

And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.

Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?

And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan.

Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

Our Father, we come to You today. Lord, the only proper fitting prayer today that I have that I would even ask, and I ask boldly, is that You would open the eyes of these people. Lord, many of them have seen the ministry and understand what it is. So many of them, Lord, have not. So many of them, whatever their deal is, whatever their problem is, whatever their sin is, whatever their issue is, they have decided to receive Your Gospel but have also decided not to fulfill it, not to take it to somebody else. They look at the ministries that we have here and laugh. They look at us going down to Restart and down to the inner city, and they think it is foolishness. Yet today, Father, we see the fruit of what God has done. Lord, as we sit here today, there are probably nine or ten people that are in this church because of that ministry. We are not even doing it even a year yet. Lord, it is a tremendous opportunity. But Lord, my prayer today is very simple. It is the same prayer that Elisha prayed for his young man, that You would open these people's eyes. Lord, let them see before it is too late. Let them understand the gravity. Lord, there are so many issues involved in why so many people will not do what is right. But Father, open their eyes today, and if we just get one more, two more, three more that will walk out of here today saying, "I am on board. I am going to do what God has called me to do," then we won. So Father, we thank You today and take this message and use it for Your honor and glory through these feeble lips and this carnal mind and this weak, frail body that You might get the honor and glory out of everything that is said in Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.

IV. Characters and Tactics in Spiritual Warfare

This story is about Elisha, and Elisha is one of the great prophets. He followed after Elijah went back to heaven. You have heard me say many, many times how the things in the Old Testament are ensamples. They are models for us. What you have here is a picture of the, whether you know it or not, is the spiritual warfare that I have been preaching to you about that we are all part of. We are looking at in this story, the spiritual warfare that surrounds us and troubles you on every side when you decide that you are going to take the Gospel that God gave you and fulfill it by giving it to somebody else. This is all through the Bible.

Ephesians 6:12

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

You go back to Daniel 10:2, and you find a glimpse of it there with Daniel and Gabriel where Daniel is praying. Gabriel is coming down with the answer, but the devil stops him twenty-one days. Finally, Michael the archangel has to come down and get Gabriel to Daniel. That is a picture of that warfare. Over in 2 Samuel 5:24, all the UFO guys like to take this one because here you have something going through the tops of the mulberry trees very fast. All the UFO boys say, "See, there are UFOs, here are UFOs." Yes, I guess you could say it was an unidentified flying object until you got your King James Bible, and it is an identified flying object. That was God's army going to the deliverance of Israel. There is another picture of it. You have it over there in Psalm 68:17 where it is talking about the second coming of Christ:

Psalms 68:17

The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.

As this story unfolds, there are some things that we need to be aware of here. The first thing I want you to look at is verse 8.

2 Kings 6:8

Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp.

Our first character here that I want to introduce you to in this great story that is going to help you figure it all out and be probably the greatest message you will ever hear to keep you when you get surrounded, if you ever get surrounded, is the King of Syria. He represents the devil in this warfare, and his job is to stop the plan of God. The Bible says the King of Syria warred against Israel. The King of Syria, as Satan, the Bible says, took counsel. Verse 8 says, just as we have a plan here today, and we have been talking about building leaders to do the ministry, the devil during the same time period, he has got a plan, and he is talking about taking counsel to stop the people who want to do what God wants them to do. You better get that. While we are having a service here and God is putting some things in your heart, the devil is preparing another service to take them out of your heart. That is how he works. He has a strategy to stop you and me. He has a plan of attack to stop us in our tracks, and right now as we speak and lay out our plan, he is

laying out his plan to stop us. I want you to see verse 8. He says, "My camp is in such and such a place." He is camped pretty close to us this morning. He is not over in the Middle East. He is not down the South Pole. He is camped pretty close. I will say something else if I might take the liberty this morning, some of you in this church are part of his plan to stop us. Maybe knowingly or unknowingly, but I am telling you, you think he has not infiltrated this place?

Jack Hiles was one of my favorite preachers. Most of you do not know who Jack Hiles was. He is dead. He was a great preacher in Hammond, Indiana. Jack Hiles was probably one of the most fearless guys. I have read a lot of stories about him and other guys, and I wish I had the courage that he had. Jack Hiles put up with no nonsense. I have seen him stop in the middle of a church service when some kids were fooling around in the second row or the third row and just shut down the whole service and clean their clocks. Then call their parents out for not disciplining. He was tough, man. Jack Hiles would watch his congregation, much like I do. He would watch people that would come for Sunday school, which a lot of churches have Sunday school, which is kind of a watered-down, I am not saying, and then you come to the main service. He had a lot of people that would come to the Sunday school. I am not saying anything is wrong with Sunday school. I am just saying it is not like the main service. I do not know what you think. I am against Sunday school. We had one this morning at 6:30. You just did not come. I did not either. But anyway, he was troubled by the fact that so many of his people, deacons, people who were supposed to be leaders, would come to Sunday school and then skip out. He would stand up there at the top balcony looking over the parking lot. After Sunday school, he watched all these people go, and it troubled him. But you see, he had a mind. You know what he did? He dressed up one of his deacons in a devil costume. Then the next Sunday, he had him walking up and down in the parking lot. When somebody walked out, skipping out of church, the devil guy would walk up, and he would say, "Hi, I am glad you did not stay for church today. Hi, I am glad you are leaving after Sunday school. I am glad. Oh, you make me so happy that you are not going to stay and hear the preaching of the Word of God. Good job." Do you not know that got some results? I would love to have the courage to do that. I really would. I have some specific people who I think would be a great benefit to the ministry, but for whatever reason, you are just kind of blowing it off. He would be knocking on your door this afternoon. But I will not. I do not have that kind of courage, but I think that is great. I really do. My point is simply this: he has a strategy to stop you. He has a plan of attack. Right now as we speak, he is camped by, all for the purpose of stopping in that story here, the man of God.

We need to learn these things because it is the difference, my friend, if you are going to get into ministry, this message today and the principles that I am going to give you, it is basically and fundamentally the difference between success and failure. It is just that simple.

Then in 2 Kings 6:9-10, we have the man of God.

2 Kings 6:9-10

And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down.

And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.

It means more than twice he got saved from being trapped by the devil or the King of Syria. The man of God that we know is Elisha, but that is a picture of me and you because you and I need to be the man of God. I am not excluding the women here. He is talking in both genders here obviously. But you and I are the man of God, and the man of God here, as you and I, has a work to do for God and a ministry to the people of God which you find in this story. Elisha was a prophet. I have told you many, many times, having the job of a prophet was really rough because I do not know of anything in the Bible that is more relative to where a pastor is today or a leader is today in ministry than an Old Testament prophet because the prophet took God's side against the whole nation that was against God. Many times in the ministry, you have to take a stand against people who you thought were your friends or maybe are your friends, but they are not God's friends. Sometimes you have to have the courage to do that, and many times God's people cannot do that. As the man of God, he warns the King of Israel of what the devil, King of Syria, is about to do. That he is going to surround the nation of Israel, going to destroy them, and he wants to wipe them out.

Then in 2 Kings 6:15, we have our third character. We have got the King of Syria now, who is the devil. We have got the man of God, who is a picture of me and you, Elisha. Now we have got down in verse 15, you have a young man who is called a servant. This is a picture of a young Christian like many of you are today. This is a picture of a young Christian who is learning from his Elisha. He is learning how to minister to God's people, but he lacks the experience and the understanding to do it on the upper levels. He is learning just like many of you are.

Okay, we have got our characters down. Now watch this. Look at 2 Kings 6:11-12. The devil, King of Syria, does not like what is happening. He cannot get the upper hand on the nation of Israel. He wants to get some information of what the man of God is doing because he just cannot seem to trap. In fact, verse 11 says:

2 Kings 6:11-12

Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?

And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

Let me translate that. "Will you not tell me who is the spy in our camp?" "I cannot get the advantage over the King of Israel and those people of God. Somebody in our ranks is tipping him off." His little buddy down here says, "Oh no, sir, no, no, no, we are all loyal to you." "Then what is the deal?" "Oh, do you not know? I do not know how he does it. I do not know how it happens, but when you lay your battle plans out, I will tell you more. When you speak in your bedchamber, Elisha knows everything you say, and he is telling the King of Israel." You see, he did have a spy in his camp, but it is the same spy you have got in your camp. It is the Holy Spirit of God revealing to you the plan and the attack of how the devil is going to attack you. Do you not see that? He thinks he has got a spy in his ranks, but the truth of it is, God is revealing to Elisha through His Word exactly what the plan of the devil is.

Now it is the same way with you and me. How many times have I told you this? This is a great picture why the devil hates this Book and why he has to get rid of the Word of God. This Book will always show you how the devil plans to stop you. It will reveal his every move. It will reveal, it will define him for you. It will show you how he attacks. It will show you how he has worked down through history. A couple of times ago on Sunday morning, I laid it all out for you when the Bible says that we are not ignorant of his devices. That Satan should get the advantage of us. We are not ignorant of his devices. He could not get the advantage over the nation of Israel because they were not ignorant of his devices. He should never get the advantage over you no matter what happens. You know why? Because we should not be ignorant of his devices.

Job 41:12

I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion.

2 Corinthians 11:14

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Two of the greatest verses that shows you how he does it. Job 41:13 says, "Who can discover the face of his garment?" Anybody can if you just believe the Bible God wrote you.

So the King of Syria, he now has another plan, and he sets out to stop the man of God just like he will try to stop you and me. Look at 2 Kings 6:13-14.

2 Kings 6:13-14

And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan.

Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

Here it comes. The devil, King of Syria, he tries his most famous tactic in spiritual warfare. This works almost a hundred percent of the time. You know what he did? He now tries to overwhelm the man of God by completely surrounding him, and he does this trying to intimidate us. Have you ever come to the place in your life where you get overwhelmed? I know I do. Here is the issue. The devil and his servants will surround you and overwhelm you to intimidate you. He will surround you with circumstance. He will surround you with problems. He will surround you with people. How many times I have seen it in so many young Christians that even come here. You come, you get saved, you really start to plug in and start to get something going, and then your whole world falls apart. The devil brings back in somebody here, somebody there, something happens. You lose your job. This happens. All things that God could get you through. But the devil wants, he will be okay if you receive the Gospel, but he wants to surround you so you will never, never, never fulfill the Gospel, and he intimidates you. He surrounds you.

Now watch this, and you better learn this, for the message will be all, it will be time when this will be all to get you through. The next morning, the man of God's servant, this little young guy, gets up, and he looks out the window, and he goes, "Wow." He goes, "Holy macaroni." "Man, we are surrounded." Look at 2 Kings 6:15.

2 Kings 6:15

And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

Here is where you find yourself. Here is where you are going to find yourself. Here is where it is going to be. If you decide to do what God wants you to do, and you are going to man up, cowboy up, be everything that God wants you to be, you are going to be surrounded on every side. You are going to be troubled on every side. This young man was perplexed. He said, "Wow, what are we going to do?"

I have got to stop here for a second and add an addendum to this. Elisha had a school for the prophets. Do you know that? One of the greatest things you will find is Baal, Ahab, Jezebel. They had 450 of their prophets, but Elisha had his own school that he took young men and young ladies and trained them to be the right kind of man of God for the people of God. It is incredible. It is uncanny. I look at that. He had a hundred of them. He had finally been in 2 Kings 2 and 2 Kings 4:38. I thought to myself when I read that, "Wow, out of this church of about 300 people, in reality, that is about how many I have got." Young prophets, as good as they are, and his desires they want to serve God, and he is hanging with the man he needs to hang with, but yet he cannot see what the old man sees. He walks out that window, and he sees the boss surrounded, and because he does not have the experience, because he does not have the ability as the old man that he is hanging with, he cannot see it. So he says in verse 15, "Alas, my master, how shall we do?" He panics. He gets intimidated by the hordes. The circumstances look overwhelming. He says, "What are we going to do?" I am going to tell you something, in the ministry, that is exactly the way it is going to be.

Now watch what the old man does. You learn from somebody who has been in some battles and not some green wannabe. I studied, I was telling Danny we were driving around together. I studied every tactic. I watched everything that Mel did. I realized he was the Elisha of my life, and God put him in my world, and boy, I studied everything that he did. I watched everything, every situation he handled. I watched everything he said. I listened to every, I felt like Samuel. That line of his words followed the ground. Old Mel used to say, and you all heard it many, many times, "God never sent green troops into combat." Never does.

You see, there is the greatest place in the Bible. He says in 2 Kings 6:16:

2 Kings 6:16-17

And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

See, the difference between seeing as God sees and seeing as the world sees. Isaiah 55:11, God's ways are not our ways. What you have got to do, what this young man could not do that Elisha could do. Elisha had been around for a while. He knew how God operated. He knew what he needed to do. There is a classic example of how the young guy says, "Whoa, what are we going to do?" And the old man says, "I will show you what we are going to do." But you have got to get there.

Want a great principle? Never see the situation as it appears. Always see it as it really is through the light of the Word of God. A great verse in verse 16, "Fear not: for they be with us more than they be with them." You know how it happens. He comes down, and he wipes out, blinds him, and wipes him out. That is the story.

V. Five Principles for Ministry Survival

Out of this story, and here we come out of the story, five great principles on our spiritual warfare from this chapter that you better burn in your heart and your minds. You say five, that is a number of death. Yes, yours. If you do not get them down. When you get into this thing, if you ever do get into it and you want to survive it, it is these five things out of this story that are going to keep you. They keep me every day of my life. They keep me understanding. They will give you the insight when you cannot see a thing, when you are perplexed, when you are cast down, when all of those things. This is what you get, these five things.

1.) Your Christian insistence will bring Satan's resistance.

I will say it again. Your insistence will bring Satan's resistance. Your insisting that you are going to do what God wants you to do is definitely going to bring him your way. It is not "will it," it is "when it will get there." It is not "how is it going to happen," it is going to happen. It is a fact. It is a way of life. In your life, if you are going to insist that you are going to live for Him and do His work, He saved you for, you are going to get surrounded. Get set for it. Accept it, expect it. Realize you are in a warfare. Be a good soldier for Jesus Christ. Realize that Christ is the Captain of your salvation. Realize you are to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and realize there is no discharge from this war. You know what your problem is as a child of God, Christian, this morning? You are AWOL. You will be troubled on every side, yet not distressed. You will be perplexed, but not in despair. You will be persecuted, but not forsaken. You will be cast down, but not destroyed. You will be surrounded on every side. The devil, through the people and circumstances, will try to overwhelm you and intimidate you. As a man of God, you must learn to rise above those circumstances. You must learn to stand above them. A leader understands the price that he must pay because he fundamentally understands the price that God paid. I am telling you, my dear friend, put on the whole armor of God. Do not deceive yourself. Prepare your heart. Prepare yourself. Your Christian insistence will bring Satan's resistance.

2.) Unbelief is the element that produces the fear that blinds us from seeing the reality of what God is doing in any given situation.

I am going to give it to you again. Unbelief is the element that produces the fear that blinds us from seeing the reality of what God is doing in any situation. In the Old Testament, God's favorite expression uses it over seventy times with all the main characters in the Bible. You know what it is? "Fear not." "Fear not." "Fear not." Uncontrolled fear will always distort our perception of anything. Years ago, I read the story of a woman. Her husband worked the midnight shift. Tragic accident. He worked the midnight shift. He never got home until six o'clock in the morning. She fell into a deep sleep. About two o'clock in the morning, she heard somebody in the house. She got prayerful. She realized that she was alone, and she heard somebody knocking something over and breaking this and breaking glass. She was sure somebody was breaking into the house. She reached into her nightstand and got her husband's revolver, and somebody opened the door and walked in, and she shot three times. When she turned the light on, she found it was her husband who had gotten off from work early, who broke a glass in the kitchen. He was coming in, and she killed him. You know why? Her fear distorted the perception of where she saw. She told the police, "It was some grotesque guy." It was your husband. Well, maybe it was. I do not know. But she said it was some large guy who came in, and it was her husband. But you see, fear always distorts the way things are. That is what the Bible says in 2 Timothy 1:7:

2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

What are you afraid of? 1 John 4:8 says, "perfect love casteth out fear." In 2 Kings 6:17, the old man says, "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." That was Elisha's prayer for his young man. It is my prayer for you guys every day of my life. You see, the young prophet, not yet skilled, still learning the great principles from the old man. He could not see it from God's standpoint, only the natural human standpoint. He could not see the victory of God in it. All he saw was the fear of man in it. People who cannot, I run them all my life in every church, in every church, people who cannot see the value of any ministry in any church. People who cannot see and grasp the vision of the goals of any church. The man of God sees what God sees. The ordinary young man here, he just sees what he wants to see. There are some great examples of that in the Bible. We do not have time, but Moses, the Bible says, and I gave you this last week, Moses endured as seeing Him who is invisible. The Bible says Abraham called those things that are not as though they were, the ability to see what nobody else sees. Unbelief is the element that produces the fear that blinds us from seeing the reality of what God is doing in any given situation.

3.) The devil will surround you to stop the power of God in your life.

He will. Remember, he is camped real nearby here, and he has some friends waiting to meet you. The Bible says that, I am telling you, the devil will surround you to stop the power of God in your life. Not maybe, he will. Not if he does, it is just when he does. 2 Kings 6:14 says:

2 Kings 6:14

Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

In the still of the night, in the darkness of the night, while you were asleep, when you least expected. I am going to tell you something, when you decide that you are going to take a stand for God, you are going to have to pay the price for doing it. When you, like this young prophet, get overwhelmed and you get stressed and you get anxious and you get anxiety sets in, do not go see your therapist. Do not go get some Prozac. Do not go get all of the things. You just come when the fear comes, you draw nigh to God, let Him draw nigh to you.

I told you a couple of weeks ago about the example of one of my heroes, a saved man, Major Dick Winters. That was famous when the Easy Company Band of Brothers came out a number of years ago. He wrote a book called Beyond Band of Brothers. Dick Winters was one of the greatest leaders of any generation. His men swore by him. His men loved him. There was never a man that had anything bad to say about Dick Winters as their company commander. He was absolutely an incredible leader. I learned so much about just reading his book and going through what he went through. I told you the story a couple of weeks ago that in Bastogne, December of '44, when they were surrounded, 101st Airborne, they were at a rest camp. They loaded them up in trucks. They got them down to Bastogne because Bastogne had five roads going through it, and it was a central hub, and the Germans wanted it. Those 101st boys, along with other groups and paratroopers, got in there, and they were surrounded. One of the 28th guys that was overrun and they were decimated, came running back through the lines, panicky, frayed. They are running by the 101st Airborne, and Dick Winters is standing there, and their company commander comes back, and he says, "You better get out of here. You better get out of here. Do you not know the Germans have this town surrounded? They are going to kill us all. We are surrounded. We are surrounded." Winters looked at him and said, "Well, you go ahead and go if you want. We are paratroopers. We are supposed to be surrounded." Do not you whine to me about being, all your surrounding, about being overwhelmed and all this stuff. Do not you whine to me. God gave you the Spirit of God. He gave you the Word of God. Let me tell you something this morning. If you are a child of God and you are in ministry by the grace of God, you are supposed to be surrounded. You are supposed to take that stand. That is what He saved you for. We are God's people, men and women who insist on doing God's work. We are supposed to be surrounded. The mark of a real leader is holding that line from caving in when they are coming over the North wall.

Who knows who Al Schmidt is? Anybody know who Al Schmidt was? You Marine Corps boys are going to do yourselves in, you do not know who Al Schmidt is. Nobody knows who Al Schmidt was. Well, in 1942, Marine First Division was on Guadalcanal. Al Schmidt formed one of the, to me, one of the greatest ministry stories, and he was a lost man. They made a movie about him, his life, called Pride of the Marines. Al Schmidt was a machine gunner on Guadalcanal in those early dark days of World War II. Back then, the Japanese did not want to lose Guadalcanal because it was the only airstrip within hundreds of miles, and they could land there and literally bomb Australia. So we had to take Guadalcanal, and the First Marine Division went in, and they were greatly overwhelmed. It was like 5,000 to 40,000. They strung themselves

out at night along a place called Alligator Creek. They were so spread out, there was like thirty feet between the two of them. Al Schmidt and his assistant gunner were manning a .30 caliber machine gun. They knew the Japs were going to come. They had strung barbed wire all over the other side of the creek, but they knew they were coming because the Japanese were going to test that line, try to get you to bring other troops in, and then hit the weak spot. About two o'clock in the morning, they hit Al's position. In the process, they only had a beat-up squad, about sixteen guys, to hold a whole line of defense. By thirty minutes into this battle, everybody was dead or wounded except Al Schmidt and his assistant gunner. A Japanese threw a grenade and blew up right and blinded Al. His assistant gunner was so beat up that he could not use his arms. I thought many, many times, this is what ministry really is. They both could have run back to the line, but they knew if they did, that line would cave in. Al, who did not have any eyes, and his partner, who did not have any arms, they stood there, and he told Al where to fire that gun. They held out for three hours, two of them, one blinded, and the other with no arms. The guys could hear it. They knew that no rifle fire was coming, one lone machine gun. When they finally got up there, it was decimated. They killed over 220 Japanese soldiers that night. The men could not go help them. Their own line was in peril, but they testified that they were in such a panic, and Al could not go where to fire. He was saying, "To the left, Al, to the right, Al, right up the middle, Al." Over it all, they could hear Al saying, "Not through my line, not through my line."

I read that story, and I thought to myself, boy, if God could give some of God's people that kind of steel in their backbone, how many times in the ministry when it starts to cave in, when it starts to go to hell in a handbag, if God's people could just reach down inside and grab that guts and say, "Not in my line," and hold that line. I think back in 1555 in Oxford, England, when they burned Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley at the stake for heresy. You know what their heresy was? The same heresy we are preaching this morning: believing the Bible is the Word of God. They put them up there, and the fire began, and Hugh Latimer was the old man, and Nicholas Ridley was the young guy. Ridley began to, he began to get frayed and tremble. Hugh Latimer, he looked over as the flame began to lick his body, and he says, "Be of good courage, Master Ridley, and play the man. For God this day is going to light a candle in England that no man will put out." England came back to God in the Word of God because men like that were willing to put it on the line and die. You cannot give it up for a beer. Cannot give it up for a cigarette. You cannot give it up for all the things that you want in this world. I will tell you what, the greatest verse in ministry is what old Hugh Latimer quoted over there in 2 Samuel 10:12 when he says:

2 Samuel 10:12

Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good.

The devil will surround you to stop the power of God in your life. I am telling you, he will. You will be surrounded, but here is the victory: thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph.

- 4.) Never let physical circumstances cancel out what is really happening when God is in charge. Keep your focus, stand your ground, play the man. Let the devil surround you as long as your

heart stays with God. It is okay. How many times we have heard old men say the Christian life was like a hurricane. In the middle of a hurricane, you have got what they call the eye of the hurricane or tornado. In that eye, for about a half a mile, is complete calm and peace. You would not know anything that is going on around you, called the eye of the tornado. But all around the outside of that eye is the destruction and death and the carnage of a great force destroying this planet. He always said the Christian life, it is just like that. You learn to live in the eye of the tornado. You bet you do. A leader knows and understands our warfare. He knows it is not logistical, never is. No warfare is never logistical. It is not about how many people you have got. It is about your tactics. It is about your position. In combat, there are two basic rules you follow. They are the exact same two basic rules you follow in the ministry.

1.) Never pay for the same ground twice. You take a position, hold it. Do not back up so you have got to spend more lives taking the same ground. If you have got it, hold it.

2.) Always hold the high ground. Make them come up that hill. Make them work coming up that hill and pour it into them as they are coming up. Hold the high ground.

For you and for me as God's people, we never retreat. We never pay for the same ground twice, and we always hold the high ground. I will concede the circumstances of my situation, but my heart will hold the center with God on the high ground.

5.) The real question is not how much is the devil against me, but rather how much is God for me.

Do you see that today? Some of God's people get so discouraged so easily. You get so intimidated when you see the hordes of the Syrians all around you. You let people in your life who care nothing about the Bible, nothing about church, nothing about the Word of God, nothing about ministry influence your life. Why at the opening volley of this warfare, you run, you leave your position. You know what happens when you leave the line? Somebody has to shift over and cover your flank because you left the hole exposed. Somebody has to plug the gap. The dream of every pastor, this is the dream of every pastor. If all of you would just take your spot on the line and fill the gap. That is the dream of every pastor, whoever pastored, I am sure. If all of God's people would just start doing God's work, start giving to God's work, immerse themselves into this battle, quit letting somebody else pick up the load that they should be carrying.

2 Kings 6:16

And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

Nine years today, nine years ago today, but I am telling you, this day is not about looking back and feeling all the nostalgia and where we have come from, though there is a lot of that today. There is a lot of that in my own heart. But for me, I am smart enough to know it is about where we go from here. Because we start this next level and get into this aspect of it that some of you have committed to do, we are going to be surrounded. We have already been surrounded. They are going to come over the wall on every side. You know what? It is going to take leadership. It is going to take, it is not going to take the ones who like to give a lot of lip service. In combat, there is always a disdain, and do not take this the wrong way. We will take it the wrong way. I do not care in combat. Shane would know this is true. There is always a disdain of men who

will not serve on the line, who want to be in the rear with the gear. I love all of God's people, always have it all through my life. I have held a disdain for God's people who get saved and then will not do and take their part in the line and let somebody else pull their share of the load. You have got to be ashamed of yourself. I disdain you. I do not know if that is not a bad word. I do not know what that one means either. But put it with your addendum.

It is about God sending us, men and women, couples, moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas. It is about our school of the prophets, building leaders to form a base of operation that will in time, reach across this world. It is about you deciding this day whom you will serve and who you will go forth with. I count the men and women God has given me. I love them. I cover them. They are strong. They are faithful. They are intense. They are unmovable. They are solid as a rock. They are focused. They are determined, but yet they are teachable, pliable, and they are workable and they are adaptable and they are compatible to anything. When you get into this battle, this message, and I am telling you, these five principles out of this story will be all that will get you through. All that will give you the endurance to keep going. In the last nine years, some of you have made incredible gains, and some of you, you are exactly where you are at where you came in the door. I am telling you, and I am finished. We are going to go baptize and have a great rest of the day. But I am telling you this. It is not just about where we have come from. The thing you better recognize in your mind, if we are going to really do a work of God, instead of being a work for God, these things are going to come our way. We better be ready for them.

Let us have a word of prayer. We will be dismissed immediately. If you can carpool, go out over there. There are maps in the back table if you need it. Guys will get everything set up for me and everything that I need over there. You people who are getting baptized, we are going to start baptizing as soon as I get there. So make sure you get.