

The Strength of Seeing

by Chip Brogden

The strength of seeing is the ability to see the reality of the Spirit, even in the midst of difficult circumstances, and to live in accordance with that reality.

Duration: 29:20

Scripture: 2 Kings 6:16, Ephesians 1:17

Topics: "Victory"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the desperate times we are living in, with conflicts, terrorism, and immorality plaguing the world. He emphasizes the fear and uncertainty that many people feel in the face of these challenges. However, he points to a message from the Lord that says 'fear not.' The difference lies in what people see when they look at their circumstances. The speaker encourages listeners to have their eyes opened by God to see the truth and reality of the situation. He reminds them that the key to victory lies not in external circumstances, but in what is happening on the inside.

Transcript

I want to share with you a message this morning that I call the strength of seeing. The strength of seeing. And just to give us a place to begin in God's Word, would you join with me in the book of 2 Kings.

2 Kings in the 6th chapter. Now if you don't read much in the Old Testament, you might not know where 2 Kings is, so I'll just help you out. It's on page 435 in my Bible anyway.

And if that doesn't help you, 2 Kings comes just after 1 Kings. How's that? But when you find that scripture, would you shout amen to me? Praise God. 2 Kings chapter 6. Now just to give you some background, the King of Israel is looking for Elijah the prophet, because Elijah the prophet is causing him so many problems.

And every time they plan something, Elijah discloses it to their enemies. And the King says, well, who is it that keeps spilling all of our secrets? Who keeps telling these secret things? And they said, it's not us, O King, but it's the prophet Elijah. Or Elisha, I should say.

Elisha was the protegee of Elijah. But verse 12 of 2 Kings 6 says, And one of his servants said, None, my Lord, O King, but it is Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel. He tells the King of Israel the words that you speak in your bedchamber.

And verse 13, So 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. And verse 14, Therefore this king sent hither horses and chariots and a great host, and they came by night and encompassed the city round about.

They surrounded that city. Verse 15, When the servant of the man of God, Elisha, was risen early and gone forth, behold, and host surrounded the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, unto Elisha, Alas, my master, how shall we do? What shall we do? Verse 16, Elisha answered, Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

Verse 17, 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.

Hallelujah. Father, this morning I thank you for your word, and I pray that you would give us ears to hear what the Spirit is speaking to us. Encourage us, strengthen us, and challenge us in our faith this morning.

In Jesus' name, Amen. The strength of seeing. Verse 15, if you would look there again, it says that his servant said unto him, Alas, my master, how shall we do? What shall we do? Folks, when we look around at the world today, if we watch the evening news, or if we watch CNN, or if we read the newspaper, we know that we are in some desperate times in this world.

We're on the brink of a war. We are fighting terrorism. We have conflict in the Middle East.

We have conflict all around the world. Our country, our economy, crime, immorality, a lot of things going on around us, even within our own families, challenges, problems, needs that have yet to be met, questions. When we look around, we see many things that hinder and distract us, many things that cause us to be afraid, many questions that go unanswered.

How will it all turn out? When we look around at our circumstances, we perhaps become frightened or depressed or confused, and we wonder, Alas, how shall we do? How shall all of this turn out? Did you know that the fear, stress, and anxiety of our time is clearly predicted in the Bible? For evidence of that, you don't have to turn there, but I'd like to read to you from 2 Timothy 3.1. Paul said, This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come. How many of you believe we are living in perilous times today, perilous, dangerous times? Jesus said in Luke 21, 26, that men's hearts in this time, in this age, men's hearts will fail them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes in many places. But the characteristic of these last days, the Scripture says it will be perilous, it will be dangerous, and men's hearts, Jesus said, would fail them for fear.

In fact, that is what terrorism is. It is trying to manipulate and control people through fear. And if you spend time, as I used to do, watching the evening news every night, which I don't do anymore, I've got an email service that just sends me the headlines.

If something really major happens, then I'll get a page on my beeper and it will tell me the headline from CNN, but it will be headline news, urgent news. But if you sit and you listen to all of those people talking back and forth about what all might happen and what could happen, it's enough to make you afraid. It's enough you can sense a spirit of fear on the inside of you.

And we don't even have to look at the news, we can just, right within our own circumstances, our economy, jobs, what does it all mean? When is the market going to go back up? When is unemployment

going to go back down? With all of these burdens and things, it seems as though we could be sinking underneath the weight of them, and many people are. Many people do sink underneath the weight of all of this stress and all of this fear. We have to be honest, when we look at the facts of the situation, when we look at the world through our eyes here, through our physical eyes, it does seem as though we are hopelessly surrounded.

We are surrounded with all kinds of things meant to steal and to kill and to destroy us. Alas, what shall we do? Elisha's servant said. Well, I have a message from the Lord for you this morning.

In response to what shall we do, or alas, or oh no, or what's going to happen, read in verse 16. And Elisha answered, Fear not. Two words.

Fear not. Have you ever done a study of how many times in the Bible it says, Fear not? If you've got a computer, go home and type in fear not into your Bible software, and you will be amazed, and I believe encouraged to see just how many times the scripture says, Fear not. Don't be afraid.

There are literally hundreds of them. I'd like to read just a few. I'm not going to read all 100 or all 200 of them.

But how many fear nots can you find in the Bible? Well, God said to Abraham, Fear not, Abraham, for I am your shield and your exceeding great reward. The angel of the Lord said to Hagar, Fear not, for God has heard the voice of Ishmael and will make of him a great nation. God said to Jacob, I am God, the God of your father.

Fear not to go down into Egypt, for there I will make you a great nation. Moses speaking to Israel said, The Lord goes before you, he will be with you, he will not fail you, neither forsake you. Fear not, neither be dismayed.

And Joshua speaking to Israel again said, Fear not, nor be dismayed. Be strong and of good courage. When Solomon was about to begin his building project on the temple, David spoke to him and said, Be strong and of good courage and do it.

Fear not, nor be dismayed, for the Lord God, even my God, will be with you. He will not fail you, nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord. The Lord spoke to King Jehoshaphat one time in the midst of a battle that he could not win because he was outnumbered.

And the Lord said, You shall not need to fight in this battle. Set yourself, stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord. Fear not, nor be dismayed.

Tomorrow go out against them, for the Lord will be with you. Praise God. The prophet Isaiah said to Israel, Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name and you belong to me.

The angel said to Daniel, Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and to pray and to fast, your words were heard, your prayers were heard. When we look at the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ, we see the angel telling everyone, Don't be afraid. To Mary, he says, Fear not, Mary, you have been in favor with God.

To the shepherds, he says, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy. To Joseph, it says, The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto you

Mary to be your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. Jesus said to Peter, you remember when Jesus called Peter to be his disciple? He said, Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.

And Jesus, what did he say? Fear not, Peter, for I will teach you to become fishers of men. I will teach you. Fear not.

And to the rest of his disciples, he says, Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Jesus was on the way to heal and to raise from the dead a little girl that had died, and on the way, the report came. She's already dead.

Don't trouble the Master anymore. It's too late. How many of you know when it's too late for us, it's never too late for Jesus? And what was the first words he told the Father? Fear not.

Only believe. Fear not. Paul was called in a big storm, a huge hurricane, on a ship.

It records his journey in the book of Acts, as he's on the way to Rome, and the ship is called in a great storm. But Paul encouraged them in the darkest time aboard that ship, when they feared that all of them would be lost, Paul says, Fear not. The angel came to him.

Fear not, Paul. Thou must be brought before Caesar, and lo, God has given you all of them that sail with you as well. Fear not, Paul.

And then Paul took that word from the Lord, and he encouraged everyone else on the ship, over 200 people. He said, Fear not, because the angel of the God whom I serve stood before me, or stood beside me last night, and said, You must get to Rome, and so I'm going to get to Rome. And we see that he did get to Rome.

In the book of Revelation, in the first chapter, it says that John saw a vision of the Christ, the risen Son of God. It says, When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead, and he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not. I am the first and the last.

What is my point in sharing that? 2 Timothy 1.7 says, God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind. I want you to see the contrast here. The servant of Elijah looks out across the plain and looks out from that place in the city, and he sees that the entire place is surrounded with horses and chariots and soldiers coming to take his master.

And he looks out from there, and he says, Alas, what shall we do? What do we do? Elijah looks out, sees a great host surrounding them, and says, Fear not. What a study in contrast. Now, how can we say to one another, Fear not? How can we accept that? I know some of you may be sitting out there today and say, Well, that's all good.

I'm not really afraid. I don't really sense fear in my life. Until you get that pink slip, until you get that doctor's report, until you hear that bad report about your family, your loved ones, or you hear of something over the news, something else to be worried about.

How can we have no fear? Look again in verse 16 in the last part. Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. I hope you will understand this morning that things out there may not change.

In fact, I think it would be appropriate to say things going on around you will probably get worse before they get better. But I want you to see that the problem or the thing that determines your victory has nothing to do with what is going on around you, but it has everything to do with what is going on on the inside of you. Both men face the same army.

Both men face the same circumstance. Both men face the same outward appearance of things. But one man said, Alas, and the other man said, Fear not.

Now, how is it possible that two people looking at the exact same situation, the exact same circumstance, can reach two completely different conclusions? And I'll tell you what the difference is. The difference is in what they saw when they looked. The difference is in what they saw when they looked.

Read in verse 17, Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And could I interject in here? Open his eyes that he can see what I see. Open his eyes so that he can see as I see.

And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And what did he see? Hallelujah. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

Hallelujah. One moment of seeing is worth more than a lifetime of hearing. That's so important, I think I'll say that again.

One moment of seeing is worth more than a lifetime of hearing. I've been preaching for 20 years, but I'm telling you, if God will open your eyes to see just a glimpse of the truth, just a glimpse of reality, just a glimpse, then that one moment of seeing is worth more than 20 years of hearing me preach. Somebody say amen.

What do you see when you look? What do you see? Do you see the things going on around you? Or do you see the things going on inside of you? And what do I mean by that? Well, first of all, I wanted to say this. Elisha did not pray for God to give him protection. Elisha did not call for the angels to surround him round about.

Elisha did not pray that God would give him an arsenal of weapons so that he could fight the enemy. Why? Because the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. They're not flesh and blood, but they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

When he looked out, he saw that he was surrounded by the chariots of fire, the armies of the Lord. And because he saw what his servant did not see, he was able to say in the midst of that, fear not, fear not. Friends, let me share something with you that has changed my life.

When victory is already ours, we do not have to pray for victory. Let me say that again. When victory is already ours, when we have already won the battle, we don't have to pray to win it.

We don't have to pray for the victory. And what do I mean by that? 1 Corinthians 15, 57 says, but thanks be to God, which gives us the victory in Christ Jesus. It doesn't say Elisha prayed for any of that.

It just was. It was a reality. What do you see when you look? Because one moment of seeing, one moment of revelation, one moment of having your eyes open to see things as they really are.

It's worth more than 20 years of hearing me preach. It's more than a lifetime of sermons. In fact, you can sit and listen and listen, listen and never see what Elisha saw.

And this morning, I'm not talking about that. We have to see an actual vision. I don't mean that we should be able to look out and actually see a vision as Elijah did, but it speaks to something else.

It speaks to the eyes of faith, the eyes of belief. You'll recall that there was a disciple named Thomas and he would not believe anything that the Lord said or anything that anyone else said and said, I've got to see it for myself. He says, I will not believe that Jesus has risen from the dead unless I see the print in his hands, unless I put my hand into his side, unless I can see it, I can't believe it.

And you'll recall, of course, that the next time Jesus appeared, see Thomas missed the Lord the first time. And I don't know why that was. It says the disciples were gathered together, but Thomas was not with them.

But what was Thomas doing? Where was he at? You should never miss the one time you decide not to go in fellowship or not to go to church or not go where the believers is. That's the one time Jesus might show up and then where are you at? Thomas wasn't there. And as a result, he didn't believe.

Everyone else was saying, we've seen the Lord. We've seen the Lord. He's risen.

Thomas said, I won't believe it unless I see it. Well, then the next time it says Jesus was in the midst of them and he said, peace be unto you. And he looked right at Thomas and he said, Thomas, put your finger in my hand, put your hand into my side.

Stop being full of doubt, but believe. And Thomas said, my Lord and my God, hallelujah. But then Jesus says something that's very critical to our understanding this morning.

He says, you see Thomas because you have seen, or you believe Thomas because you have seen, but blessed are they who have never seen, but they believe. Now this morning, I've never seen Jesus. I've never seen him in the, in a body.

I've never had a vision of Jesus. I've never seen, had my eyes open to see chariots of fire. I've never seen the angels descending and ascending up into heaven.

I've never had a vision per se, but I know whom I have believed. And how do I see? How do I know? Because it is revealed in me. Paul says, I certify to you, brethren, that the gospel I preached did not come from flesh and blood and it was not taught to me, but it is by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And to the Ephesians, he says, I pray that God will grant unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened. Praise God. I'm not suggesting today that we should seek for visions and dreams.

What I am suggesting is that there is a spiritual reality that the heavenly father wants to reveal to us. And it is that reality, that that truth revealed in us, that revelation of Jesus Christ that will enable us to stand in these days, in these perilous times. Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

If victory is mine, then all I have to do is have my eyes opened to see it. If I have already obtained it, I don't have to attain it. If I have already attained the victory in Christ, I don't have to attain it.

What is the difference? Well, obtain means I have it and attain means I'm still working towards it. But you see, if victory has anything to do with me, then I'll be defeated. Can you say that of yourself this morning?

If it has to do with something that I have to do or something that I have to remember or something that I have to work out or something that I have to attain to, I'll never make it because I tried to live the Christian life for so many years.

Then I discovered the secret that Paul says in Galatians 2.20. Here's the secret of the Christian life. It is no longer I that live, it is Christ who lives in me. And then he says, it is Christ who is our victory.

Victory is a man this morning. Praise God. Victory is a man who lives on the inside of you.

He is the Son of Man and the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Elisha saw something differently that morning. He saw differently than the rest of the world saw.

And because he saw differently, he thought differently about his circumstances. Did you think he was worried? Do you think he was afraid? No, because he saw the reality of the Spirit. He thought differently.

He spoke differently. He behaved differently. Often we try to change the way we think or change the way we talk or change the way we act in hopes that we will become victorious.

But acting spiritual doesn't produce a victory. Having a positive mental attitude does not give us the victory. For victory is not in what I do or what I say, but victory is in what I see.

And how did the servant of Elisha see? Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray you, open his eyes. Because that sort of seeing cannot be taught to us. That sort of spiritual perception cannot be learned in a seminary.

It cannot be learned by sitting in church. It cannot be learned by listening or by hearing to other people talk about it. Jesus says, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and proved it, and you have revealed them unto babies.

And today the Father wishes to encourage us and to strengthen us. How? By giving us that revelation of who Jesus Christ is. He is the captain of the Lord's host.

And just as we read in Psalm 91 this morning, a thousand shall fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not come near to you. What is the enemy that you're facing today? Is it cancer? Is it financial difficulty? Is it unsafe loved ones? What enemies are surrounding you this morning? Victory is not in what you do or what you don't do. It's not what you say or what you don't say.

Victory is in what you see. Have you seen Jesus? For victory is Christ. He is my rock.

He is my fortress. He is my strength and my song, my salvation, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace, Emmanuel, God with us and God in us. As I close, I'd like for you to turn to the book of 1 John, all the way in the back of the Bible, because what I'd like to do is apply this to today.

Every story, every bit of teaching that we find in the Old Testament has a New Testament application for us in Christ. And if you'll turn to 1 John chapter 4, the epistle of John, 1 John chapter 4, beginning in verse 4. If you're there, say amen. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them.

Why? Because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. This morning, brothers and sisters, do you see that? Is that a reality in your life? If not, the Father in heaven waits to open your eyes to see how wonderful and how majestic and how grand his Son is in us. The promise here is, it does not say you

are of God, spiritual men and women.

You are of God, mighty people. It says, you are of God, little children. The very least in the kingdom of God is born to overcome.

The very least in the kingdom of God is born into victory. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. And that is exactly what Elisha said earlier in 1 Kings, or 2 Kings.

He said, fear not, because those that be with us are greater than those that be with them. John says the same thing, and I'm sure he had this Old Testament illustration in mind. Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

You see, victory today has nothing to do with me. It has nothing to do with how I feel. It has nothing to do with what I'm going through.

It has everything to do with who lives on the inside of me. Christ is my victory. And you know something? He never changes.

I am the Lord. I change not. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Do you have the victory this morning? If you have Jesus, you have the victory. We do not have to work to overcome. All we have to do is have our eyes open.

The strength is in the seeing. If we will only see, and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal to us who Jesus is in us, and to open our eyes.

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