

[2 Kings 6:15-17](#)

Seeing Beyond Overwhelming Odds

Introduction

Imagine being Elisha's servant. You look all around; you see an enormous army surrounding your city. It's you and Elisha against hundreds of soldiers. Overwhelming odds indeed. A man named Gideon and his little group of 300 soldiers could relate. They were going up against an army which was "as thick as locusts" ([Judges 7:12](#)). And how about the shepherd boy, David, who fought against a fearsome giant who was nine feet tall in a life and death standoff ([1 Samuel 17:4-6](#)).

These are accounts in the Bible of people who looked beyond overwhelming odds. They were seemingly outnumbered by a powerful and evil enemy who opposed God and those who trust in Him. Not only that, they were going up against their own nation's declining spiritual and moral values, as especially attested to in the Old Testament books of 1 and 2 Kings. Yet, God remained faithful and trustworthy.

We live in a similar culture where it seems that truth, justice and the "gospel army" of believers in Christ are greatly outnumbered by the enemy. Where do we turn, then, when it appears the odds are stacked against us? Trust Jesus! He is the Master. He hears His servant's cries for help. He is the answer of hope because He is the only hope. He is the greatest advocate, mediator, and intercessor. He is trustworthy and faithful because He is God. So, here are three (3) points assuring us that trusting the Lord Jesus Christ means we:

- Cry for help ([2 Kings 6:15](#))
- Look for the answer of hope ([2 Kings 6:16](#))
- Need the intercessor's prayer ([2 Kings 6:17](#))

1. Cry for Help - 2 Kings 6:15

We can certainly see why Elisha's servant cried out "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" Yes, when the odds are overwhelmingly against us, our first inclination is to cry for help. Our cry is usually a plea of desperation. And who should we make our plea to when the chips are down and the situation is desperate? Take a look at [Psalm 18:6](#)

In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.

[Psalms 18:6](#) (ESV)

Indeed the Lord hears the cries of His people for help. When all seems hopeless and our world has been turned upside-down, we cannot go wrong by trusting God. In fact, one of my accountability and prayer partners says it simply like this: "Good things happen when you trust God." I'll say it again: We cannot go wrong by trusting God.

And get this: When Jesus is our trust, He is also our treasure. Our affections and our desires are centered in Him. We see Him as more valuable than anyone or anything

else. His covenant-keeping ways are proof that He can be trusted. He is our hope in all situations both good and bad. Yet, even when God in Christ is our treasure, life can be really hard. Elisha, Gideon and David certainly knew this; they had their bad days.

The prophet Habakkuk knew this too. He cried out to God for help. He was staring into the face of an invasion by the dreaded and fearsome Babylonians. Yet, listen to these words from Habakkuk where he trusts and treasures God in the midst of trouble. [Habakkuk 3:17-18](#) says this:

¹⁷ Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, ¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

[Hab 3:17-18](#) (ESV)

Habakkuk could have said something like this - "Oh no! Now what do we do? We'd better hunker down and hide and hope things turn out okay." How about you and me? Is the LORD our hope and trust today? Do we find Him to be our greatest treasure, even during times when the shadow of death is cast upon one's life?

Some of you may remember a man named Bill Westphal, who attended First Free Evangelical Church in La Crosse many years ago. Bill was 42 years old when he passed away in June 1995 after an 18 month struggle with cancer. Westphal was quoted as saying "Your faith is what gives you the assurance that God knows what he's doing." And asked if he didn't sometimes question why he was chosen to suffer, his response was "Why not me? Why not Bill?" In the midst of a troublesome situation, Westphal trusted the faithful God whose plan is always right and true.

God ordained trouble in the lives of Habakkuk, Elisha and Bill Westphal. He does that in our lives too. Overwhelming odds aren't road blocks to God's plan; they are the plan. When it seems like there's no seeing beyond overwhelming odds, we can cry out to God in Christ for help. He hears the cries of those in distress. He lavishes His grace and mercy upon the least, the lost, and the lonely. Those trusting Jesus find Him as the greatest treasure.

That's because knowing that what God has prepared for us in Christ, even before the foundation of the world, is far better than worldly success, security and prosperity. Jesus is better; He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. In fact, the Lord Jesus is the only Way to the Father who is in heaven ([John 14:6](#)). What's troubling you today? What prevents you from crying to Jesus for help? He's the only answer that is good, right and trustworthy, especially when we need the answer of hope.

2. Look for the Answer of Hope - [2 Kings 6:16](#)

You've got to love the answer Elisha gave his servant when he was overwhelmed by the sight of the Syrian army surrounding them: "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." That's the answer of hope. And even though Elisha's servant hadn't yet observed with his own eyes the unseen army of God, Elisha, in

essence, was saying "There's nothing to fear because God is with us and for us; His immortal army of angels outnumbers the enemy's army of mortal men." As one of my accountability and prayer partners put it: "God and one other person is a majority." Now, that's the God who is the only answer of hope; the object of the believer's faith.

Scripture says that faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen ([Hebrews 11:1](#)). So, the believer in the Lord walks by faith, not by sight ([2 Corinthians 5:7](#)). But here's the thing: Whether we'd like to admit it or not, faith and trust are not natural for us; fear and doubt are natural for us. And throw in the fact that when we're trusting in things unseen, the lack of seeing with our physical eyes tends to exacerbate our unbelief.

For example, after Jesus' resurrection, the disciple Thomas was not with the others when Jesus came and stood among them. Afterwards, Thomas said he didn't believe that Jesus had appeared to the others. He doubted. That's where the term "doubting Thomas" originates. Now, here's the man who had been with the Lord through thick and thin. And he said that unless he saw the nail marks in Jesus' hands and the wound in His side, he would never believe. Eight days later, Jesus stood in the midst of the disciples and Thomas was there. He saw the Lord and believed. Here's what Jesus said as recorded in [John 20:29](#).

Jesus said to him, **"Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."**

[John 20:29](#) (ESV)

Truth be told, not one of us is different than Thomas. Unless sight comes through the "eyes of the soul" instead of physical eyes, blindness remains to the hope, peace and joy found only in Christ. Have your spiritual eyes been opened to the risen Lord? If not, you're like a blind man with a treasure map who is oblivious to hidden treasure buried under your feet. Jesus is the greatest treasure. But only the Holy Spirit enlightens the eyes of the heart to the treasures of God, the unseen things ([Ephesians 1:17-18](#)). Scripture states the following about unseen things in [2 Corinthians 4:18](#).

...as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

[2 Cor 4:18](#) (ESV)

What are the eternal, unseen things? Well, for starters how about Jesus Himself? His steadfast love, matchless grace, and exceeding mercy are the same yesterday, today and forever. If we're to see beyond overwhelming odds, we'd better trust the solid rock of ages and the mighty fortress who is the God from everlasting to everlasting. Only the eternal God who is working behind the scenes is worthy of trust. He is the answer of hope; He does far more than we could ever ask or think. Do we believe it?

There's an account in 2 Kings of Elisha ministering to a widow whose children are to be taken as slaves because she can't pay her bills ([2 Kings 4:1-7](#)). She has nothing but a jar of oil in her house. However, from that one jar of oil, she filled numerous other

vessels with oil. In fact, the vessels being filled ran out before the oil did. A similar situation was reported by Jeanine Thicke, a missionary that La Crescent Evangelical Free Church (LEFC) supports, serving with Children's Vision International in Bogota, Columbia. Jeanine gave an account of food, such as beans and rice being given out, but never running out when people dipped into their jars. The answer of hope is displayed in marvelous ways through Christ who is great and good.

We may not be able to see what He is doing, especially when the odds are seemingly overwhelming. But God assures us, through the work of the Holy Spirit, that Jesus is greater than anything or anyone. This includes unseen spiritual forces of darkness and evil in the heavenly places ([Ephesians 6:12](#)). This includes the devil, who is in the world, wreaking havoc, especially against the church. Here's [1 John 4:4](#).

Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

[1 John 4:4](#) (ESV)

The Holy Spirit is God. He is greater than any person or circumstance, whether seen or unseen, good or evil. Julie Ackerman Link, an author for the devotional booklet, *Our Daily Bread*, says it well: "Whenever we become discouraged by the evil we can see, we need to think instead about the good work God is doing that we cannot see." We need an advocate; we need a mediator; we need an intercessor's prayer to allow us to see what we can't see.

3. Need the Intercessor's Prayer - 2 Kings 6:17

Elisha's servant could only see what was visible to his physical eyes. Elisha could see what was invisible because he had spiritual eyes. Only through the work of the Holy Spirit can a person's eyes be opened to the things of God, which are eternal things. So, Elisha prayed for his servant to see the army of God, so that he would have no doubt or fear. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man. Indeed, an intercessor's prayer is powerful and effective.

Cindy Hess Kasper, another writer for the daily devotional booklet, *Our Daily Bread*, relates the story of a 95 year old woman, Emma Gray, who died in 2009. Kasper writes, "For over two decades, she had been the cleaning lady in a big house. Each night as she did her work, she prayed for blessings, wisdom, and safety for the man she worked for." In the 24 years that Emma worked, the last names of the men she interceded for in prayer were Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and Carter.

An intercessor can be defined as follows: a person who intervenes on behalf of another, especially through prayer. A couple weeks ago, Pastor Dan emphasized in his sermon that those in Christ have an intercessor. Do you know who this intercessor is? Here's [Romans 8:26](#) and [Romans 8:34](#).

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

[Romans 8:26](#) (ESV)

Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

[Romans 8:34](#) (ESV)

The Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit are interceding in prayer. But they're not the only ones. In this gathering of the church at LEFC, God has people who are what I'd call "prayer warriors". They're intercessors in prayer. Some meet to pray on Sunday mornings before the first worship service; a few meet on Wednesday evenings; some of them will be meeting after each worship service in a couple months as post-service prayer resumes in September. Come join them; witness God's power through prayer.

Have you ever thought or said something like this: "There's no way God could change that guy's life. No amount of prayer would help him." Those words described me before I was born again with a new life in Christ. I was so mired in the muck of pornography, habitual lying and sex outside-of-marriage. I truly was a lost soul, an enemy of God, traveling down a hell-bound road. Is that you now? If it is, then turn away from sin; turn your eyes upon Jesus; see Him as your greatest treasure.

Jesus truly is the greatest treasure. He changed everything for me; he'll do it for you. In His grace and mercy, Jesus bore my sins on the cross; He exchanged His righteousness for my unrighteousness. But that wasn't all. God's unseen presence was manifest in the Holy Spirit prompting people to intercede for me in prayer and I didn't even know it. I'm sure those who prayed were my parents and grandparents. But there were probably people unknown to me who were praying too.

But God didn't stop there. People are still interceding for me in prayer to this day, as are the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Now in my old age, I wrestle with sins, such as pride, lust, and a critical spirit. But I can trust my closest brothers in Christ who are prayer, discipleship and accountability partners to intercede. And whether we'd like to admit it or not, all of us are in desperate need of intercessory prayer. In fact, if desperation for prayer in the church were a speedometer readout, what would LEFC's speed be? 40? 100? 0?

Indeed, prayer on behalf of others is one of the beautiful, Christ-exalting, blessings of the church. It's a joy to seek God's face on behalf of others. Communing with and petitioning the God who is all-knowing, all-sufficient, all-everywhere, all of the time is a marvelous privilege. An intercessor's prayer is and always will be a signature of God's grace and mercy for His people and through His people.

Conclusion

We're a lot like Elisha's servant. When circumstances are against us, and we cry out for help, who will give us eyes to see beyond overwhelming odds? Only God in Christ can do that; we need to trust Him. No one is more trustworthy to be working behind the scenes for His glory and for the good of His people. Therefore, cry to Him for help; look to Him for the answer of hope; know that the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus are interceding in prayer, as are the brothers and sisters in Christ.

So, I'd like to close with a couple final questions. What seemingly overwhelming odds are you having a problem seeing beyond? Which is bigger, your worst problem or the God who made everything? Remember, the Lord Jesus, who is unseen, is in heaven at this moment as the only mediator between God and man. He is the greatest treasure; He gives sight to those who call on His name. That's a trustworthy promise only God in Christ can fulfill. And you cannot go wrong trusting in Him. Amen.