THOSE WHO ARE WITH US ARE MORE THAN THOSE WHO ARE WITH THEM

By Al Diestelkamp

Many stories in the Old Testament have become “favorites” because of the great faith shown by God’s people. Hebrews 11 is but a small sample of faith that produced heroes worthy of imitation.

As a youth, one of my favorite stories was that of the three Hebrews who were willing to die a horrible death in a furnace of fire rather than bow~~ing~~ to a false god. *They did not bow; they did not bend; they did not burn.* In my “senior” days, a story that has become a favorite is one that began—not about faith—but about fear and doubt.

This story, recorded in 2 Kings 6, took place during the divided kingdom when Elisha was God’s prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel. The king of Syria was waging war against Israel ~~but~~ without success because Elisha was warning the king of Israel about the enemy’s plans.

The king of Syria was certain that he had among his servants a “leaker” and called them together and said, “Will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel?” (v.11). One of his servants responded, “None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom” (v.12).

When the king of Syria learned that Elisha was in Dothan, the king sent horses and chariots and a great army by night and surrounded the city. When Elisha’s servant woke up and saw that the city was surrounded, he said to the prophet, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” Elisha tried to calm him, saying, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them” (vs. 15-16).

The servant was evidently still focused on the enemy, so Elisha prayed, “Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” The servant was able to see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (v.17).

The story then takes a surprising twist. When the Syrians made their move, Elisha prayed to the Lord again: “Strike them with blindness.” Then Elisha told them to follow him to the man they were seeking. When they arrived, he said, “Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they might see.” and the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and they were inside Samaria!” (vs. 19-20). What a revolting development this was for the Syrians! Elisha had delivered them into the hand of their enemy, the king of Israel, who immediately sought permission to kill them; but Elisha forbade it and told him to give them food and drink and send them home, resulting in peace for a time.

We, just as Elisha’s servant, may be too focused on the formidable sources of evil in our world today. Materialism, violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and many forms of sexual immorality seem to have us surrounded.

Even in religious circles, we see “deceitful workers” who pose as “ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:13-15) teaching false doctrines and leading multitudes away from the doctrine of Christ. Every Sunday, on our way to worship in modest facilities, we pass impressive edifices of sectarian churches that show little regard for the authority of the Scriptures...and their parking lots are packed!

We even see some of our own brethren who have surrendered to the culture, and we may want to cry out, “Alas, my Master, what shall we do?” The answer is to open our eyes that we might see the truth in God’s Word. Satan is alive and well and will be living among us until the Lord comes in judgment. We will appear to be outnumbered, but with the Lord at our side we will “not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21).

Regarding so-called biblical scholars, we need our eyes open to the truth that “not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Cor. 1:26). Remember, God had to blind Saul of Tarsus to his early training at the feet of Gamaliel and open his eyes to reject the errors of scholarship.

When seeing ourselves outnumbered, we need to accept the truth about numbers. Our Lord said, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there will be many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

Finally, I commend to you the lyrics of a gospel song that has encouraged me.

**Little is Much When God is in It**

*By K.J. Suffield*

In the harvest field now ripened,

there’s a work for all to do.

Hark, the voice of God is calling,

To the harvest calling you.

Does the place you’re called to labor

Seem so small and little known?

It is great if God is in it,

And He’ll not forget His own.

Are you laid aside from service,

Body worn from toil and care?

You can still be in the battle,

In the sacred place of prayer.

When the conflict here is ended

And our race on earth is run,

He will say, if we are faithful,

“Welcome home, my child, well done.”

*Refrain:*

Little is much when God is in it!

Labor not for wealth or fame;

There’s a crown, and you can win it,

If you go in Jesus’ name.