



## *Young and Old*

### **A Pastoral Letter Concerning the Temptations of the Times**

*Rev. E.C. Adams, Corsica, SD*

***“And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see”*** (2 Kings 6:17a).

In the above history, the city of Dothan was surrounded by the horses and chariots of the Syrians, with the intent to capture the prophet Elisha and bring him to the king of Syria. When in the early morning Elisha’s servant was given to behold all the horses and chariots, the servant said unto Elisha in verse 15, *“Alas, my master! how shall we do?”* And then we read the prayer of Elisha in the above-quoted text, *“Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see.”* Without further explanation of the context, we desire to make a necessary and practical application of these words.

As I read of the need of the servant in this great danger, then my thoughts are drawn to a much greater and profound danger within our denomination. When we consider this real and present danger, how necessary is the prayer of Elisha that we may be given to see. The danger that I am ready to address is much more subtle than all the swift horses and strong chariots of the Syrians.

By now you must be wondering to what danger I am referring. Please give me your undivided and earnest attention while we consider how we use our eyes with respect to all the new and modern technology that has become part of the world in which we live—technology that is here to stay and which shall only receive a larger place in our society as we come nearer to the end of the last times (1 John 2:18a). Let us, then, honestly examine how we are using our eyes! We can be very busy by staring at the lawful and good things of the world and even trying to find our happiness therein, but have not the eyes of many, both young and old, become addicted to staring and looking at the evil things of this world? How many of us are spending so much precious time of grace on open Internet and smart phones, looking at things which can only ruin our soul!

From the introduction you can understand that we hope to consider the above text words in a different light. The servant of Elisha saw the horses and chariots, and Elisha prayed that his servant would be given to see the Lord’s wonderful protection. The prayer of the prophet Elisha is so necessary also for us under all the different circumstances, both in the life of the unconverted and in the life of God’s people. For a true and sincere prayer to be born for the opening of the eyes and for the Lord’s help and protection, then we first need eyes to see our danger, whether it be naturally or spiritually. To that end we hope to consider this petition, in the context of a prayer that eyes may be given to see the Syrians’ strong horses and warlike chariots.

*“Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see.”* Older ones, fathers and mothers, how is it in our families, in our homes and outside of our homes? Have our desires quickly become our needs? Have our eyes been opened for all the new technology and how it is ruining the relationships in families between husbands and wives, parents and children? Do we realize that our depraved human nature is allowing the devil to take control of our eye gate and ear gate to use them as portals to bring all kinds of evil and filth to the hardening of our conscience? Lord, open the eyes of young and old, that they may build battlements around their houses and families! Lord, open the eyes of families that they may be given to see the intent of the warlike horses and captivating chariots. Open the eyes of our congregations that they may be given to see the wiles of the devil where he has but a short time (Ephesians 6:12). Open many eyes of fathers and mothers, boys and girls, that they may be given to learn the evil of their heart, where they have no strength against these mighty enemies (2 Chronicles 20:12). Open the eyes of our families before they shall fall apart with the love of many waxing cold (Matthew 24:12). Lord, open their eyes that they may be given to see the king who has sent the horses.

We also note that so many older ones spend much of their time texting or communicating, thereby, needlessly stealing their neighbors’ time. Also, we become guilty of transgressing the eighth commandment when we use this technology for personal use at work, stealing our employer’s time. How many older ones, when they visit their family or friends, take their cell phones along and spend time looking down at their cell phone instead of speaking to their family or friends? How many parents and grandparents indulge their (grand) children with the latest technology, not taking into account the amount of time that is wasted with their use or the dangers when they are used while driving a car? We even hear the sounds of these devices during church services. It is a sad testimony that there are those who are more concerned with what their friends have to say than to what the Lord has to say to us. Have our consciences been seared shut?

*“Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see.”* Dear readers and congregations, what the television has done to many churches, denominations, and families the Internet with all the consequences thereof is doing (or has already done) to our people. Fathers and mothers, may we be mindful of the oath which we have made with the baptism of our children to instruct them in the aforesaid doctrine to the utmost of our power. This surely also includes to the

utmost to keep them from the temptations of the world by means of the open Internet. Do fathers and mothers purchase cell phones for their children before they really need them or because their friends have one? Do parents allow their children to spend their precious time on computer games and with video movies? When our children are constantly placed before visual images, shall it not become more difficult for them to read a good book and attentively listen to a read or preached sermon? Are we still a separated people?

All of this new technology is here to stay and shall only receive a greater and more predominant place in society. I am not writing as one that has all the answers and solutions, but one thing I know—there are many eyes that are acutely blinded. Then, surely, we may say with the servant of Elisha, *“Alas, my master! how shall we do?”* It seems we have become so blind; many parents either deny or are not aware of what their children are doing. Is it not written in Jeremiah 17:9, *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”* This text refers to the heart of both young and old. May we be given to collectively do what our hand finds to do (Romans 12:2).

Many articles have been written in our different denominational publications concerning the dangers, but it seems that there is so little hearkening, and the warnings are falling on deaf ears. Warnings are even written by the secular world of all the dangers. Are our hearts captivated by these beautiful horses and golden chariots, or are our covetous hearts the problem, when these horses and chariots promise and offer us many riches (1 Timothy 6:10), pleasures (1 John 2:16), and comforts?

My comments are not only directed at the youth of our denomination but especially to parents and those who have positions of authority. Parents, do you have open Internet in your homes with no accountability to see what sites have been visited? How many of our people needlessly have open Internet on their portable phones? In how many homes, where the thought never entered their minds to take television into their homes, do families gather together to watch videos and children and parents have profiles on Facebook? We read in Deuteronomy 22:8, *“When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.”*

*“Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see.”* No, I am not asking that we live as hermits, only that we give heed to the times that we are living in and to diligently and prayerfully do what our hand finds to do. To know what to

do, we must be like the tribe of Issachar who had understanding of the times. To that end, we have need of the above prayer. Also, Christ has prayed in John 17:15, *“I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”* When we ask the Lord not to lead us and our dear children into temptation, and we do not use the means as far as possible to protect ourselves, then our prayers are mockery (Psalm 66:18 and Proverbs 15:8).

*“Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see.”* For many, their eyes shall be opened too late, both in this time and in eternity. For many their eyes shall open too late in the bottomless pit where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. In hell it shall truly be an open Internet for the lost where all the depravity of human nature shall be as an open book in the midst of mocking and cursing. In hell it will be forever too late to repent and to seek that one thing needful. *“Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”* (Ezekiel 33:11b).

Perhaps, for some of my readers, it is already too late concerning temporal matters. Perhaps they have already been carried away by these agile horses and purposeful chariots. How many eyes of husbands and wives shall be opened too late, when they realize that the modern means of communication has been the means of destroying their trust, love, or even their marriage. That which they have seen and should not have seen has received a permanent place in their heart and head. How many hearts are

becoming seared with a hot iron on account of what they have seen and heard? (1 Timothy 4:2).

We know that technology saves an enormous amount of time in manifold ways and that it undoubtedly is here to stay, but let us also be aware of the great danger when we needlessly waste a great amount of our precious time. We read in Ephesians 5:16, *“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”* Do not misunderstand me; I am not speaking of the proper use of technology but the misuse thereof. We live in a time where most of the business, medical information, communication, and many aspects of education are done via the Internet. This shall only increase as time continues; therefore, it so necessary to pray with the servant, *“Alas, my master! how shall we do?”*

I am convinced that many of our people do not need all the new technology to the extent they are using it. In that respect must we also not pray that our eyes may be given to see? The pointed question, perhaps, comes down to this. Are we willing to make sacrifices for our religion? Are we

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"Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see." Dear readers, it seems that in many instances the secular world is more awake to the dangers than we are. In a recent article in *De Waarheidsvriend*, a conservative Dutch periodical, Dr. M.J. de Vries writes, "It sometimes appears as if there are no standards in the Reformed denominations in the avoidance of these devices. To put it even stronger, it seems as if there is a sort of desire to show the world that we are quite knowledgeable in the use of these modern media. No, we are not a group of people that live a sheltered life, We go along with all of it." It can be seen in the attention which is paid to the sermons in church, and as Rev. Hegeman stated already many years ago, it is reflected by the children in catechism class what is most important in the family circle. When we are so busy from Monday to Saturday with all of these new inventions, is there still time for a family altar, some time for quiet meditation on God's Word? Can we really be quiet and attentive to God's Word on Sunday when all week long we have been concerned with bells and whistles?

Friends, the times are short and serious (1 Peter 4:7)! When we follow the world and the temptations thereof, when we become world-conformed, then the Spirit is grieved and shall depart (Ezekiel 10:4-18). We only have to look around us to see the many places where Jesus formerly walked, where the gospel of free grace is no longer proclaimed. My young friends, I hope that there may be some of you in whose heart the Lord has placed His tender fear and that you may be an example even for older ones. May the Lord continue to work among us. Pray much with the psalmist in Psalm 119:37, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken Thou me in the way." May God's Word be a lamp unto your feet and a light upon your path.

Fathers and mothers, I once more turn to you. Shall your dear children have to rise up against you in the day of days also concerning these matters? Shall your children then say: "Father and mother, you have placed me before much temptation. You have not honestly done what your hand has found to do. Father and mother, you have left us as

children alone when you were gone, knowing that we were born and conceived in sin, knowing that we had an evil heart, yet leaving us open to all the evils of the world. Father and mother, you have not even been a good example. You have given us many things for this time state, even things we did not need, but you have spoken so little of the one thing needful. You have raised us as if we had only a body and no soul for eternity. Father and mother, by your example you have only confused us by not making us jealous of the service of the Lord. Oh, father and mother, it is your fault that we must burn in hell for ever and ever!"

Fathers and mothers, may you be given prayerfully to do what your hand finds to do in these serious and difficult times. Proverbs 13:4: "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." We cannot convert them, but with God's help we can instruct and guide them. Remember the oath which you have made with the baptism of your dear children when you have presented them before the Lord to receive the sign and seal of the covenant to be a separate people (Numbers 23:9).

The God of all grace by His Holy Spirit grant that we may be given to walk in the tender fear of the Lord which shall keep us from much evil as we read in Proverbs 14:26&27, "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge. In the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." To that end may we be given to do what our hand finds to do as Solomon has written in Ecclesiastes 9:10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." As an incitement we read in Proverbs 10:4, "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich."

May there be a hearkening to the warnings and admonishments that have been given often times (Hebrews 13:17). Soon, we with our dear children shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account (Ecclesiastes 12:13&14). May we be given to pray for the powerful work of the glorious and majestic King in the hearts of young and old, whom the old Apostle John has seen on the isle of Patmos where we read in Revelation 6:2, "And I saw, and behold a white horse: and He that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto Him: and He went forth conquering, and to conquer." Then we shall receive a place by grace in the golden chariot of the greater Solomon (Song of Solomon 3:9&10). □

"Grant that we may hold the world with a loose hand."

— William Tiptaft