

ADRIAN ROGERS

# LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



## 2 KINGS

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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# A Profile in Power

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 12, 1979**

**Main Scripture Text: 2 Kings 2:9**

*“And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.”*

2 KINGS 2:9

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## Introduction

Second Kings, the second chapter. We're talking tonight, we're continuing tonight, in a series of messages on what we call "The Miracles of Elisha." And we're making that relate to the miracle life that every believer ought to live. Last Sunday night, we talked about "The Design for Discipleship," and how to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Tonight, the title of our message is "A Profile in Power," how to receive the power of God for our miracle lives that we're to live. Second Kings chapter 2 and verse 9 is the key verse that we'll look at: *“And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee...”*—now if God were to give you a blank check, and say, "Ask what you will," what would you ask for tonight? Would you ask for wealth? Would you ask for influence? Would you ask for health? What would you ask for? Elisha had a blank check, as it were, and this is what

he asked for. He said—*“Ask what I shall do for thee, before [I’m] taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me”* (2 Kings 2:9).

Now in the last message, we found that Elisha was divinely appointed. But it’s not enough for the man of God to be divinely appointed. He must also be divinely anointed. In the last message, we saw Elisha emptying himself as he left position, as he left possessions, as he left parents. But it is not enough for one to empty himself. One must also be filled with the fullness of God. But even God cannot fill that which is already full. And if you want God to fill you, you’ve got to come to that place that Elisha came to when he allowed God to empty him. And before you can take hold on God, you must let go of the things of this world. But it’s not enough, ladies and gentlemen—I want to say again—just to let go of the world unless you take hold of God. I’m not impressed with anybody who’s dead to the world unless that person is also alive to God.

And so here was Elisha, who said to Elijah, “I want a double portion of the spirit that rests upon you to rest upon me.” That is, “I want the same power that’s in your ministry to be in my ministry; and the same power that’s in your life, I want it to be in my life—only I want a double portion.” That actually is the portion of the firstborn son. And what he’s saying is, “I want a full legacy.”

Now I want you to notice four steps—four steps—tonight in Elisha’s quest for the double portion.

## **I. A Steadfast Determination**

First of all, and the first step, is what I call a steadfast determination. I want you to read with me now chapter 2, verses 1 through 7, that builds up to verse 9 that we just read: *“And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan”* (2 Kings 2:1–7).

Now here's an interesting thing. Elisha is a disciple of Elijah. It was Elijah who cast his mantle upon Elisha, and he, Elisha, followed Elijah and ministered to him. But now here's the strange thing. His master, his leader, his discipler, is saying to Elisha, "Just stop right here. You've gone far enough. Just leave me alone. I'm going on. And you can stay right here." And Elisha said, "Oh no, sir, wherever you go, I'm going. I'm going to stick to you just like glue on flypaper. You can't get rid of me. As the Lord lives, as my soul lives, I'll not leave you. I'm going to stick with you; I'm going to stay by you."

Now why? Here was a man who was motivated by a burning, intense desire to stay unshakably by his master. Now the interesting thing is this: that Elijah keeps telling him, "Just stay here; I'm going on. You just stay here." Now why would Elijah do that when he knows that Elisha wants a blessing and when he knows that Elisha needs a blessing? Why would he say to him, "You just stay here; I'm going on"? I'll tell you why. Because he was testing him. Because he was trying him. Because he was proving him.

You know, there's something about the way that God deals with us that we need to learn. Did you know that God sometimes, ladies and gentlemen, will seem to discourage us when He doesn't really want to discourage us but He wants to test us? Let me tell you something, friend. I don't know how much of God that you have—pay attention now—I don't know how much of God you have tonight, but you have all you want. And if you don't have any more, it is really because you don't want anymore.

You know, we say that we want power. We say that we want a double portion. We say that we want to be filled with the Spirit. But I'm afraid sometimes, ladies and gentlemen, that that is a prayer meeting request, easily uttered and soon forgotten. Would you say, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not stop; I will not let up; I will not back up; I will not shut up until I'm filled up, until I am filled with the Spirit of God, until I have that double portion"?

You see, there were obstacles.

#### **A. The Obstacle of Discouragement**

The first obstacle was discouragement. In verse 2, you find Elisha discouraged, Elijah discouraging him. In verse 4, you find Elijah discouraging him. In verse 6, you find Elijah saying, "Tarry here," and discouraging him. Why was he discouraging him? He didn't really want to discourage him.

Let me give you another example. Do you remember in the Bible where Jacob was wrestling with the angels and remember the angel was the angel of Yahweh, and there they were in a wrestling match? Now I've often heard of the man wrestling with the angels, Jacob wrestling with the angel, but have you ever thought about the angel wrestling with Jacob? Now here's a man and an angel. Now who do you think could win in a fight like that? I mean, here's a mortal man and an angel. And the angel was really

the pre-incarnate Christ, the angel of Yahweh. Now it's very obvious—it's very obvious—if that angel wanted to get away, he could; or, if that angel wanted to prevail and win that fight, he could—very obvious—and yet you hear the angel saying, "Let me go, let me go." And here's Jacob saying, "I'll not let you go unless you bless me. I'll not let you go." And here's the angel saying, "Let me go." You know that angel could have gotten away if he'd wanted to. That fight was fixed, folks. I mean, here's the whole idea. Look. The whole time the angel of the Lord is saying to Jacob, "Let me go," he's secretly saying, "I hope he doesn't—I hope he doesn't."

That's strange, isn't it? It seems as though God wants to discourage us. But He doesn't really want to discourage us. He wants to test us and prove us. And ole Jacob said, "I will not let thee go." And do you know what the angel of the Lord said? "You're no longer Jacob now; you're Israel. You've prevailed with God" (Genesis 32:24–30).

Elijah was saying to Elisha, "Turn back, stay here." And Elisha said, "Oh, no, sir, not on your life. I'm going all the way."

Do you remember that Syrophenician woman who came to Jesus, and this woman who was a pagan woman, and she had a daughter that was vexed with a demon spirit, came and asked Jesus for a blessing for the daughter? And Jesus said, "Woman, what do I have to do with you? I have not been sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). And then Jesus said something that seems so mean, so cruel. Jesus said, "It's not right to take children's bread and give it to dogs" (Matthew 15:26; Mark 7:27).

Now what would you have done right there? What would you have done had Jesus spoken that way to you, and said, "I'm not going to take bread off the children's table for these good wonderful Jewish people and give it to you, a pagan Gentile dog"? It doesn't even sound like Jesus, does it? But Jesus said it. Oh, listen. Jesus knew exactly what He was doing. And do you know what happened to this woman? Her chin started to quiver, her eyes ran with tears, and she looked up into the face of Jesus, and she said, "Yes, Master, that's true. But even the dogs..."—and she used the worst name for dogs. Jesus used a name for dog that meant "household pet," but she used another word for dog that means "the mangy, yellow, back alley cur." And she said—"But even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the children's table" (Matthew 15:27; Mark 7:28). And the heart of Jesus burst with love. And He said, "Woman, great is thy faith," and He blessed her and gave her what she needed (Matthew 15:28; Mark 7:29–30). It seemed like He was trying to discourage her, but He wasn't. He was just giving her a platform for her faith.

It seemed like that angel was trying to get away from Jacob, but he wasn't. It seems here that Elijah was trying to get away from Elisha, but he wasn't. And sometimes, dear friend, it might seem that God is far from you. And it might seem that God is

discouraging you. And it might seem that God is not going to answer your prayer, but would you press on through? Don't give up—don't give up. Get hold of God tonight and say, "O God, I will not let thee go until thou dost bless me. As my soul liveth, I'll not forsake you. I'm staying by you until I get the blessing."

### **B. The Obstacle of Difficulties**

Not only was there the obstacle of discouragement, but friend, there was the obstacle of difficulties. Have you ever noticed the places that they travel? It's not by chance here that these places are mentioned there in verse 2 and verse 4 and verse 6. We see Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho. What were these places? These were places that once God had blessed in a mighty way, but now they've turned to centers of pagan influence and demonology and idolatry. And this is the way that Elijah led him: right into every one of these hotbeds of infidelity. And God allowed him to see all of the difficulties and all of the problems.

What was God showing him? God was showing him, friend, you'd better be determined enough if you want a double portion not to let discouragement stop you and not to let difficulties stop you. There are going to be difficulties. I believe that's what he was saying. You want to be filled with the Spirit tonight? You want to be a servant of God tonight? All right, friend, I want to tell you it's not an easy road. And I want to tell you the world is chockfull of enemies who are ready to come down hard on a man of God, on the woman of God, on the boy or girl who dares to live for Jesus Christ. Now if you just want to live a mediocre life, if you want to just drift to and fro, that's all right. But when you get ready for the double portion, get ready for the double persecution. Now, listen. Leonard Ravenhill has said that, "When God opens the windows of heaven to bless us, the devil will open the doors of hell to blast us."

### **C. The Obstacle of Derision**

But still Elisha had a sincere determination that overcame discouragement. It overcame difficulty. It overcame derision. Look, if you will, please, in verse 3: "*And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace*" (2 Kings 2:3). Then look again, if you will, please, at verse 5, and we find almost the same thing: "*And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace*" (2 Kings 2:5). That is, "Put a lid on it; can it."

What were they doing? Now it doesn't come through here as easily in English, but they were deriding him. They were making fun of him. They were ridiculing him. They were saying, "In a little while, you'll be by yourself, you'll be helpless, and you might as

well go back home; you might as well drop out; you might as well quit. You'll be lost without him." And the whole idea was one of derision and one of ridicule. And yet Elisha, the man of God, went on.

Did you know that some people have been laughed out of the work for God? Did you know that some people can take almost anything but scorn and ridicule, and they wither under that? But here was a man—I want you to notice him now—here was a man who wanted a double portion, and he had a sincere determination that could not be stopped by discouragement. It could not be stopped by difficulty. And it could not be stopped by derision.

## II. A Spiritual Identification

Point number two—and let's see, just check up, first of all: Do you have a sincere determination tonight? I mean, with as much as in you is, do you say I want, I long, to be filled with the Spirit of God? You say, "Well, Brother Rogers, I need to be filled with Spirit of God." I didn't ask you that. You say, "Well, I'm empty." My car's been empty many a time, but it's never once been thirsty. I want to ask you, Are you thirsting? Are you hungry? Are you seeking? Are you wanting? Are you desiring? Are you determined? Had you rather die without being filled with the Spirit of God? A sincere determination: "As my soul liveth, I will not leave thee nor forsake thee."

All right, now, not only a sincere determination, but point number two in this journey to fullness was a spiritual identification. Notice here now—I'm reading 2 Kings 2 and beginning in verse 8: "*And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me*" (2 Kings 2:8–9).

Now the key word in being filled with the Holy Spirit, or a key word, is *identification*. Now what do I mean by *identification*? I mean being identified with our Lord. There are three things that come to me out of these verses that I've just read.

### A. The Persons

First of all, the persons—the persons. Let's go back to verse 7: "*And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two...*"—which two? Elijah and Elisha, the disciple and the discipler, the master and the student—"and they two stood by Jordan. And Elisha took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two"—notice they two—"went over on dry ground" (2 Kings 2:7–8). Here was the disciple and his master crossing Jordan together.

Now friend, I said this about a month ago, but it bears repeating, and it's not so great because I've said it; it's just great because it's great. And I want you to listen to it. One of the greatest secrets of living a victorious life that I know anything about: *Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness.* Now did you get that? Did you hear it? Did it sink in? Let me say it again: Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness. Now what I mean by that is this: So many times we think, you know, "If I could pray enough, maybe I can get close to Jesus"; or, "if I could live purely enough, maybe I could get close to Jesus"; or, "if I could study my Bible thoroughly and learn my Bible, maybe that would bring me close to Jesus; if I could get my life holy, that holiness would bring me into proximity to Jesus Christ and would bring me in a relationship with Jesus Christ." But not so.

Dear friend, it is Jesus Christ who enables you to pray. It is Jesus Christ who enables you to study the Bible. It is Jesus Christ who enables you to live the pure life. Learn it: that just as Elisha was identified with Elijah, so you must be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ if you would have a double portion. Holiness is not the way to Christ. Christ is the way to holiness. And so we see the persons: *"They two went over."*

## **B. The Place**

And then I want you to see the place. Notice here in verse 7: *"They...stood by Jordan."* Where did this thing transpire? Where did this man receive a double portion of his spirit? *"By Jordan."*

Now what is Jordan in the Bible? Well, Jordan is that old river that we talk about and sing about and make sermons about. But actually, Jordan means the river of death—the river of death. And in Bible typology and symbolism, crossing Jordan does not symbolize going to heaven, but crossing Jordan symbolizes leaving the carnal life, and the self-life, and entering into the fullness of God.

You remember there in Joshua chapter 3 that Joshua led the children of Israel out of the wilderness and into Canaan, and the way that he did it was that he crossed over Jordan on dry sod (Joshua 3). Jordan symbolizes in the Bible—are you paying attention?—taking death to yourself—taking death to yourself. Here at the river of death they two went through. Jesus was baptized in Jordan, and baptism symbolizes burial and death. The river Jordan symbolizes taking death to ourselves and to that old way. And here were the two, the man identified with his master, both of them going down into the river of death on the one side, and coming up on the other side to live that resurrection life.

You want to be filled with Spirit of God? You do, sir? You want a double portion? Do you, lady? Do you really? You really do? Are you willing to forsake self? Are you willing to deny yourself? Are you willing to go with your Master down into the river of death? If

not, forget it. Did you know that self can want a double portion of the Spirit? Did you know that self can want to be a good preacher? Did you know that self can want to be a good singer? Did you know that self can want to be a good Bible student? Did you know that self can want to be a good Sunday School teacher? Did you know that self can want to be a well-known layman? Did you know that?

And God's not buying it. God is not going to superimpose His mighty dynamic power on your old self-life, taking death to self. Jesus said, *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross"* (Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23). And let me say something now. Jesus didn't say, "Deny yourself things." You know what some people think denying themselves is? Doing without certain kinds of food, doing without sleep, doing without certain pleasures. They think maybe if they go off and live in a monastery, that they're denying themselves. Friend, there's no holiness in a hole.

Now let me tell you something. It is not denying yourself things; it is denying yourself. Now that may include denying yourself things. But you can deny yourself things without denying yourself. Simon Peter forsook his nets, but it was a long time before Simon Peter forsook Simon Peter. And you see, self doesn't want to die. Self, like King Agag, will plead eloquently for its life (1 Samuel 15), but are you willing to say, "None of me, and all of thee"? Are you so willing to be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ that you with Him will go down into the river of judgment and come up on resurrection ground, and say, "I'm willing that Adrian Rogers will die that Jesus Christ may live." The Apostle Paul said, *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20).

So the persons—the disciple and his master; the place—the river of death; and then the power—notice verses verse 9: *"And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away"* (2 Kings 2:9).

### **C. The Time**

And notice the time when this request was ready to be granted. After this man had gone all the way with a sincere determination and with a spiritual identification, now he's ready for the power. Now he's ready for the double portion.

## **III. A Strong Supplication**

Now the third thing I want you to notice: Not only a sincere determination, and not only a spiritual identification, identified with his master in death and resurrection, but I want you to notice also, thirdly, a strong supplication. Notice, if you will, please, in verse 9: *"And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall*

*do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee,”—I pray thee—“let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me” (2 Kings 2:9).*

Power and prayer are inseparably linked together. And as you study the Bible, you'll find out that God gives us the fullness of the Spirit and the double portion—God gives us that in answer to prayer. Look in Luke chapter 11 and verse 13 and see what our Lord Jesus Christ taught about all of the fullness of the Spirit: *“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:13).*

Now that's very plain, isn't it? You want a double portion of the Spirit? Ask God for it. But don't ask prematurely; don't ask before you have that sincere determination. Don't ask before you have that spiritual identification. But then, when you have, ask God. *“Ask, and it shall be given you” (Luke 11:9).*

Look, if you will, please, in Acts chapter 4, and you're going to find out again here that the fullness of the Spirit is linked with prayer. Acts chapter 4 and verse 31: *“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).* *“When they had prayed”*: Are you willing to seek that place of prayer? Are you willing to face your Master as Elisha faced his master, and said, *“I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me”*?

#### **IV. A Simple Appropriation**

I must leave that point in order to finish, and let me go on to the fourth and final point: Not only was there a sincere determination, not only was there a spiritual identification, and not only was there a strong supplication, but then there was a simple appropriation. Look again, please, in 2 Kings chapter 2, and this time let's begin reading in verse 10—2 Kings chapter 2 and verse 10: *“And he said,”—that is, Elijah said—“Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; and he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over” (2 Kings 2:10–14).*

I call this simple appropriation. Now notice that Elisha's power is related to the ascension of his master just as our power is related to the ascension of our Master. I

want you to look in Luke 24 and verse 49 with me for a moment, and I want to begin reading in verse 49. We're talking about the ascended power of our Lord. And Jesus said, *"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven"* (Luke 24:49–51).

And notice here that the enduement with power is linked with the ascension of our Lord into glory. I want you to turn now to the next Gospel, the Gospel of John, in John chapter 7 and verse 37, and I want you to look at this: *"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake ye of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)"* (John 7:37–39). It was when Jesus was glorified, when Jesus was ascended, that the Holy Spirit was given.

And now I want you to turn to Acts chapter 2, and I want you to read in verse 32. I want you to see, dear friend, that our power is linked with our ascended Master in Acts chapter 2, and I begin reading now in verse 32. Peter said on the Day of Pentecost, *"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ"* (Acts 2:32–36). And notice the key—notice in verse 33: *"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted,"* He sent forth the promise of the Father, which was the Holy Spirit.

What I'm saying is this, ladies and gentlemen: We see the pattern in the Old Testament, but we see the fulfillment in the New Testament. The Lord went up, the Spirit came down, the disciples went out, and the lost came in. That's the way it was; that was God's plan. Our Lord ascended to glory. And now when our Lord ascended to glory, He gave the promise of the Spirit. And just as Elisha's master, Elijah, ascended, he left behind him the symbol of his power, which was his mantle.

And I want you to notice what Elisha did. Elisha took his old garments, and he took his strong hands and he ripped his old garments apart into two halves, and he took now the mantle, the cloak of Elisha, and it had fallen to the ground. And he reached down, and he picked it up, and he appropriated it.

Now ladies and gentlemen, he could have come thus far—he could have had a

sincere determination, he could have had a spiritual identification, he could have had a strong supplication—but until he came to a simple appropriation, there was still nothing. There came a time when he by faith had to just simply reach down and take that mantle and appropriate it, saying, “Off with the old, and on with the new.” I wonder, will you come to the place where you’ve taken those other three steps by an audacious and yet sanctified appropriation, and say, “I claim now the fullness of God’s power, on the basis of the promise of my ascended Lord who has made the promise that I will be endued with power”? Just appropriate the power of God’s Holy Spirit. And then, dear friend, when you do, by faith, act on it.

Now you know, I just can imagine that he, Elisha, was really wondering somewhere, perhaps, there was just a modicum of doubt in his mind as he took the mantle of Elijah, and said, “Where’s the Lord God of Elijah?” and smote those waters. And dear friend, until he began to act in faith, God still did not work. But when he by appropriation and action moved out, God started to move in and God moved through this man.

## **Conclusion**

Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Where is He, friend? He’s in the same place He’s always been. Do you know what I want to ask you tonight? Where are the Elijahs of God? And where are the Elishas? And where are the people who will say, “O God, O God, I want a double portion of the Spirit to be upon me”?

# How to Turn Bitterness into Blessings

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 5, 1987

**Main Scripture Text:** 2 Kings 2:19–22

*“And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.”*

2 KINGS 2:21

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Problem of Bitterness

II. The Prescription for Bitterness

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you, please, to take God’s Word and turn, tonight, to 2 Kings chapter 2, and we’re going to begin reading in a moment in verse 19. Now, this morning we talked about forgiveness, and we told you this: that if you want to be good to yourself, you need to learn to forgive, because we said if you don’t forgive, if you *“let...the sun go down upon your wrath,”* (Ephesians 4:26) that unforgiving spirit turns to bitterness, and that bitterness turns to barrenness in your life, and God cannot bless. And, I just want to drive the nail up a little tighter tonight. So, I just want to put a P.S. on this morning’s message, and I want to tell you how to turn bitterness into blessing.

We begin reading here in verse 19. Elisha has just been anointed with the Holy Spirit of God, a double portion of the power that was on Elijah, and he has crossed over Jordan. And, the people of Jericho meet him, and this is what happened, beginning in verse 19: *“And the men of the city”—that is, the city of Jericho—“said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth”—and I have been to Jericho personally a number of times, and I can tell you, it’s one of the most beautifully situated cities on earth—“the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught”—that is, “it’s no good”—“and the ground barren”—that is, “it’s infertile; it doesn’t bear fruit”—“And he said”—that is, Elisha said—“Bring me a new cruse”—now, a cruse is a vessel—“and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And*

*he went forth [into] the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death [nor] barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.” (2 Kings 2:19–22)*

## **I. The Problem of Bitterness**

I remind you again of the problem of bitterness. It is a problem that blows out the candle of joy and leaves the soul in darkness. And, not only is it a problem that destroys the individual, but bitterness is a problem that wrecks and ruins marriages, family relationships, church relationships, and, indeed, shows itself in hurtful ways all over.

Now, if you’ve been around a bitter person, generally, that bitterness is caused because of an unforgiving spirit. You’ll find out that they may be a very harsh person, a very critical person, a very judgmental person, and that bitterness may show itself, as we preached this morning, as an outburst of anger, but it doesn’t always show itself that way. Some people are just not wired that way. Some bitter people are very quiet, sullen. Have you ever been around a sullen person? They are—they are—morose. Many times they’re filled with self-pity. And, and, and, and it may show itself up as being politely indifferent, cool, uninvolved, but the problem in their heart is bitterness that has taken away the joy. They are bitter believers. They are sour saints. They are caustic Christians. And, as we said this morning, they do more harm to the Body of Christ and hold back more of the power of God than liars and drunkards do, because many of them are in chief places, places of leadership, and yet they have the problem of bitterness.

Now, what has caused this bitterness has been a hurt, and that hurt has not been resolved. And, that hurt is the poison soil in which the root of bitterness goes down deep and which it grows. Now, the hurt may have been intentional—someone may have intentionally hurt you—or the hurt may have been unintentional. Or, the hurt may have not been real at all—it may only have been imagined. You may have it in your mind—the devil may have deceived you—that somebody has hurt you, and, therefore, you react.

I want to say that there’s not a one of us who’s not been hurt. I mean, if you’re a human being, you’ve been hurt. You just get hurt living. But, you’re not necessarily bitter because you dealt with that hurt. You took it out in the sunlight. You looked at it. You committed it to the Lord. You had a forgiving spirit to the person who hurt you. You mended the fence if you could, even when it wasn’t your fault. God’s grace took over, and, thank God, you did not become bitter.

But, a bitter person is a person who refuses to deal with the problem. He harbors hostility in his heart. He takes it into himself; and then, he has to justify the feeling that he has, and so he becomes a negative person. He begins to look for more things that

are wrong in order to justify the way he feels, because the Holy Spirit has convicted him that he ought not to feel the way that he feels. And, he gets a controversy with God, and he tells God that he has every right to feel the way that he feels. And, he looks around for other reasons to justify this, and the more he sees, the more bitter he becomes. And, by the way, if you come to any church service or go anywhere looking for something wrong, you can find it anywhere—at Bellevue or at anyplace else. If you want something to justify bitterness, just start looking. You can start with the pastor, and you can find something if you want to look for it. You'll see what you want. You see, bitter people have a way of bringing out the worst in other people. Bitter people know just exactly how to push the right emotional button; they know how to get to you. And, if they push that button and you react the way they want you to react, that gives them sort of a wicked joy, because it justifies the way they feel and they become more and more bitter.

Now, the problem with this is that most bitter people do not understand that they are bitter. Most people here are wondering if any of those folks are going to understand this message tonight. All of these deacons sitting up here on the front row—they're sitting up here with shovels; they're just shoveling it over their shoulders like that, and all those folks in the back are sitting there with umbrellas. Nobody thinks the message is for them. They don't really think that they are bitter. And, the Bible calls this thing of bitterness in Hebrews 12 a "*root of bitterness*." (Hebrews 12:15) Now, bitterness is basically under the ground. And, a lot of people pull the weeds off by the top, but they never really get down to the root.

Now, the passage that I have tonight is a passage that took place in history, where Elisha, the prophet of God, was down in the city of Jericho, a very beautiful, gorgeous, well-situated city, where it is warm in the winter and cool in the summer even though it's there in the Jordan valley—a very luxurious place, an oasis if you've been there (and I hope someday you can get to go to Jericho). But the people who were living in Jericho were deeply disappointed. There was something wrong in Jericho, and the thing that was wrong in Jericho is that the water there was bitter; the water could not be used to produce the crops that they needed. They had everything, seemingly; and yet, because the water was poor, the situation was terrible. Outwardly beautiful—it could have been a paradise—and yet this heartbreaking problem of bitter water. Now, I hope I am justified—and I don't think I'm misapplying the scripture—to say that symbolically, I believe that's a picture of a bitter life. You see, water, in the Bible, is spoken of as life: "the water of life." (Revelation 21:6; 22:1, 17) It is a symbol of life. Jesus Christ Himself is called "the water of life." but something had happened to the life of these people.

Now, notice here—look in the passage of Scripture that we have before you, and it says here that the people said that "*the water is naught*." (2 Kings 2:19) And, the word *naught* here just simply means that... In verse 19—look at it: "*And the men of the city*

*said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught.*" (2 Kings 2:19) The word for *naught* comes from a Hebrew root, which means "to spoil." That is, the water spoiled life; it poisoned life at its source. There was a spring there today; that spring is still flowing. It's called "Elisha's Spring."

And what happened is, because of this bitter water, the bitterness caused barrenness. Look again in verse 19: *"Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth, but the water is naught, and the ground barren."* (2 Kings 2:19) Now, the word *barren* here means "causing to miscarry." No fruit ever really came to its full perfection. Now, it doesn't mean that nothing grew. As I understand this, things would grow. They would put the seed in the ground, and it would sprout. They would plant the fruit trees, and they would grow. They would tend the vineyards, and the tendrils and the vines would go out; and there would be the bud, and there would be the blossom. But then, it would miscarry; it would fall to the ground. The shoots would burst through the soil. The leaves would pop out. The buds would form. And then, they would fade; and then, they would fall.

Do you know any Christians like that? They have the leaves of profession. Everything looks good. They are well situated. But, there's something wrong with those lives at the very source, and these people live lives of barrenness. They go through the motions. They're beautifully situated in churches. They carry a Bible. They go to Sunday School. But, there is no spiritual fruit in their lives. Bitterness causes barrenness every time. Now, that might be you; that might be a picture of you. This story, though an historical happening, may be a parable of your life.

## **II. The Prescription for Bitterness**

Now, what did these people do? Well, they recognized, thank God, what I hope that you will recognize—that there is a supernatural power to deal with bitterness. And so, they come to Elisha. Now, why did they come to Elisha? Look in verse 19: *"the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is [beautiful and so forth]."* (2 Kings 2:19) They came to him because they had seen the power of God on his life. They recognized that God had anointed him. They knew that he spoke for God. And, I just want to say this: that they recognize what I trust that you will recognize—that the cure for the blight of bitterness is always supernatural. It will take a miracle to deal with bitterness in your life, or my life, or anyone's life. We have some psychiatrists in our church; some of them are here tonight, I believe. But, there is no psychiatrist on this earth who can deal with the problem of bitterness apart from the power of God in the life of that individual. He may tranquilize an individual. He may help an individual to have a better problem—how to cope with this problem. But, I am going to tell you, my dear

friend, that the problem of bitterness is a spiritual problem, and it must have a spiritual answer. And, I thank God for Christian psychiatrist who believes in spiritual answers like we have, but there must be a problem beyond the normal pale of psychiatry that goes down to the spiritual root of the matter.

Now, I want you to notice what happened, and we're going to be very brief tonight, but look, if you will, in verse 20. Here's what Elisha said: *"he said, Bring me a new [vessel]"—"a new cruse"—"and put salt therein. And they brought it to him"—now, watch—"And he went forth unto the spring of the waters"—that is, "right to the very source"—"and cast the salt in there, and [says], Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land."* (2 Kings 2:20–21) Now, why salt? Salt, in the Bible, is highly emblematic, highly symbolic. Jesus said of the Christian, *"Ye are the salt of the earth."* (Matthew 5:13) Why? Because Christ is in us, and salt, really, speaks of the Savior. Did you know that salt, in the Bible, is an emblem and a symbol of the supernatural power of Jesus Christ?

Put in your margin Leviticus chapter 2 and verse 13, and let me read that to you: *"every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt"*—in plain English: "Don't make an offering unless you season that offering with salt." And then, he goes on—*"neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat [offerings]: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt [with all of it]."* (Leviticus 2:13)

Again, Ezekiel chapter 43, verse 24—speaking of the offerings: *"And thou shalt offer them before the LORD, and the [priest] shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up for a burnt offering unto the LORD."* (Ezekiel 43:24) No matter how costly the sacrifice was, that sacrifice was not accepted without salt. It is called in Leviticus 2 *"the salt of the covenant"* (Leviticus 2:13)—that is, it speaks of the unbreakable promise rooted in God's unshakable power. And so, when Elisha says, "Bring salt," he is talking about the supernatural power of God in the life... And, the supernatural power of God has to be applied to the source, to the spring. Reformation and good intentions are not good enough; it takes the life of God to turn bitterness into blessings.

Now, let me give you another verse, and I'm almost finished. Mark 9 and verse 50: *"Salt is good: but if the salt hath lost [its] saltiness, wherewith will ye season it?"*—now, watch this; listen to it now—*"Have salt in yourselves, and have peace...with [one] another"—"Have salt [within] yourselves...have peace...with [one] another."* (Mark 9:50) That's the way to deal with bitterness—salt within yourself and peace with one another. That is, it takes the life of Christ to deal with bitterness.

And, where do you apply the salt? Right to the source, to the spring. All problems have to be traced to the source. So many of us are dealing with problems out here when there is in our heart a poison spring of bitterness, or a root of bitterness. And, unless you go to the source, or to the root, or to the spring, you'll never deal with it.

You rededicate your life. You study your Bible. You make good intentions. You give your money. You do this, and you do that. Why don't you deal with that bitterness? Why don't you take the salt and put it to the source? And, when you do, that bitterness that has caused barrenness will be changed and there will be blessedness. How important it is that we get alone with God and ask God to show us that which has been poisoning our life and then apply the salt cure that cures at the source. And, notice what will happen—verses 21 and following: *“And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; [and] there shall not...from thence [be] any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.”* (2 Kings 2:21–22) The cure was immediate, and it was blessing. *“Have salt in yourselves, and...peace...with [one] another.”* (Mark 9:50)

## Conclusion

Before we take the Lord's Supper tonight, I want every head bowed, I want every eye closed, and I want you to allow the Holy Spirit of God to do radical surgery on you.

# God's Work in God's Way

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 12, 1982

**Main Scripture Text:** 2 Kings 3

*"For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts."*

2 KINGS 3:17

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Folly of Man's Plan

- A. There Was an Ungodly Ambition
- B. There Was an Unholy Alliance
- C. There Was an Unprayerful Assumption
- D. There Was an Unforeseen Adversary

II. The Faithfulness of God's Plan

III. The Fruitfulness of God's Provisions

- A. A Miraculous Supply
- B. A Mysterious Supply
- C. A Meaningful Supply
- D. A Manifold Supply

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, I want you to take your Bibles and turn, if you will please, to 2 Kings chapter 3, and I want us to think about "God's Work in God's Way"—"God's Work in God's Way." Second Kings chapter 3—one of the most interesting stories in all of the Bible is found here. And, I want us to read now the first seven verses of this marvelous story; it deals with the miracles of Elisha: *"Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom. And Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool. But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. And [the] king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all*

*Israel. And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses.” (2 Kings 3:1–7)*

Now, let me give the background of this passage of Scripture. For years, Mesha, the king of Moab, had been paying tribute to the king of Israel. He was a keeper of sheep; and so, he would—every year, I suppose, or every so often, in increments—give one hundred thousand lambs and one hundred thousand rams with the wool. Finally, Mesha got tired of doing this. And, one of the kings of Israel died, and another, Jehoram, took over. And, Mesha just said, “I’m not going to pay that tribute any more.” Jehoram said, “If you don’t pay it, we’re going to war against you. We’re going to go down there and collect it.” Now, in order to put down this rebellion of this king of Moab, Jehoram, the king of Israel (the northern kingdom), went down to the southern kingdom and said to Jehoshaphat, “I’m going up against this rebel up in Moab. Will you go with me to battle? We’ll just go against him.” They decided they’d do it, but they said, “We need somebody else to help us.” So, they went over and got the king of Edom; and so, now, the three of them are going to battle against the king of Moab—excuse me, yes, against the king of Moab.

Now, they got their heads together, and they planned their approach to the Moabites. And, Jehoshaphat suggested that the armies march through the wilderness of Edom, and they thought, evidently, this would be a real good plan. They thought they could surprise the enemy. And so, these three kings, as they plotted together, they put their armies in a forced march, and they thought it would be a very wonderful military maneuver. But, what happened is that after they marched for seven days, they were surprised by the fact that they had not completed their journey. They had run out of supplies—especially had they run out of water. Now, they’re exhausted, and they face death in the desert. And, God had to miraculously deliver them. Now, that’s the background.

I want to say three things tonight. I’m going to try and say them relatively quick, but I pray God He’ll help me to say them, because they deal with our long-range plan.

## **I. The Folly of Man’s Plan**

First thing I want us to see is the folly of man’s plan—the folly of man’s plan. Here were three kings who put their noodles together and came up with a terrible plan. They left God out of it. Jehoshaphat was a man who loved God. We speak of “good King Jehoshaphat.” But, he got suckered in, and he found himself in the middle of a problem that he himself had helped to make. Now, what was wrong with his whole expedition that was—that just died in the desert—was this:

### A. **There Was an Ungodly Ambition**

First of all, it started with an ungodly ambition. Verses 4 through 7 tell us that they were just going out for booty; they were just trying to get more tribute, more revenue. They were not interested in the glory of God. They were just trying to get something for themselves. They were materially minded. They had an ungodly ambition. I tell you what, folks, if our ambitions and our goals are not godly—if they're for the glory of man rather than for the glory of God, for the gain of man rather than the glory of God—we had just better forget them. But, there was—there was—a sense in which they had not the glory of God in mind. They don't mention God. They don't pray to God at all. They are just...they're in it with an ungodly ambition.

### B. **There Was an Unholy Alliance**

But now, the ungodly ambition is compounded by an unholy alliance. Now, if you'll notice verses 7 through 9 of this same passage—and you'll notice that I'm going a little faster than I normally do, so you'll have to study it at home—that you have three folks who've gathered here together. First of all, there was a spiritual man, Jehoshaphat. And then, along with that spiritual man there was a carnal man, Jehoram. Now, Jehoram was the king of Israel. Jehoram believed in God. He was... I guess the best counterpart you could have of him is that he was a carnal man—New Testament counterpart. The first three verses tell us he did evil, but he wasn't as bad as other folks. In other words, he's not all that hot, not all that cold. And so, you have good King Jehoshaphat. You have carnal King Jehoram. And then, you have the king of Edom. He wasn't a man of God at all; he was a pagan. And so, you have just sort of an unholy alliance here: a spiritual man, a carnal man, and a natural man, who are doing something together.

Now folks, there's something wrong with that also. If we do what we do here, not only are we going to have to have holy ambition, but we're also going to have to have a holy alliance. I mean, if God doesn't do it, we can't go out to the world. We're not going to have... We're not going to go expect the unsaved, ungodly people of this world to help us do this task. They're not going to help us. As a matter of fact, they're going to oppose us.

### C. **There Was an Unprayerful Assumption**

But, there was an ungodly ambition—that was wrong. There was an unholy alliance—that was wrong. There was an unprayerful assumption: they just assumed that God was going to bless them or that they were going to be able to do it. And, if you'll look in verses 8 and 9, the Bible says, *“And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom. So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a [company]”—“they fetched a compass”—“of seven days’ journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the*

*cattle that followed them.*” (2 Kings 3:8–9) They just assumed, “Well, it’s going to be fine,” and they assumed that somehow it was going to be victorious.

And, you know, we’re so guilty of that. So many times we just assume God’s going to be with us. We just assume that we can plan something and then, after we make our plans and after we build our unholy alliances (built on our wrong ambitions), then we sprinkle a little prayer over it and we ask God to bless it. And then, we wonder why we fail. The Bible says, *“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”* (Proverbs 3:6) And so, here was an unprayerful assumption.

#### **D. There Was an Unforeseen Adversary**

And then, I want you to see an unforeseen adversary. I want you to see what happened to these people. Look in verses 9 and 10: *“So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom”—these three, this mixed multitude—“they fetched a compass of seven days’ journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them. And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!”* (2 Kings 3:9–10) Now, they themselves had made this formula for failure. And now, what do they do? They turn around and blame God. They said, “Look what God is doing to us.” Start out with ungodly ambitions, made an unholy alliance, took an unprayerful assumption, then they met an unforeseen adversary, which was drought. And then, they say, “God, how did you ever get us into this kind of a mess?”

Now, what I want you to see is the folly of plans without God. And friend, this church or any church can die in the desert if we just assume, if we just sally forth to do anything without God’s mark, without God’s hand, without God’s stamp of approval.

## **II. The Faithfulness of God’s Plan**

Now, what I want you to see also is the faithfulness of God’s plan—the faithfulness of God’s plan. There’s some good things to be said about these men, in that they made a midcourse correction. They sought and found the will of God.

I want you to begin reading now in verse 11: *“But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel’s servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him. And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab. And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand,*

*surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee*”—boy, thank God for Jehoshaphat, and thank God for a man of God who knows how to repent when he’s wrong and to get right. Now, verse 15—*“But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. And he said, Thus [says] the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the LORD, [You] shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye and your cattle, and your beasts.”* (2 Kings 3:11–17)

Now, in verses 11 and 12, I want you to notice that Jehoshaphat had enough sense to inquire of the Word of the Lord. And friend, there can be no guidance, no leadership, no plans that are not biblically based. Our committee, before we did anything else, inquired of the Lord. We read the Scriptures. We prayed. We sought the face of Almighty God. And, thank God that He’s always ready to hear the cry of His children. Verses 13 and 14—especially verse 14: *“And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth”*—and, thank God, He does—*“before whom I stand”*—and, thank God, I stand before Him, too—*“surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.”* (2 Kings 3:14) But, dear friend, God does regard His people when they’re in the problem, and when they need guidance, and when they need leadership. And, the Bible says, *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. [Only] let him ask in faith.”* (James 1:5–6)

And so, here’s what they do: they’re starting to look to the faithful plan of God. And so, they seek out a man of God with the Word of God. And, what does the man of God do? I want you to notice in verse 15, he said—Elisha said, *“Now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.”* (2 Kings 3:15) You say, “Brother Rogers, what does that mean?” Well, friend, a minstrel is just a musician. And, what was he playing? He was praising the Lord. This was musical praise, Brother Jim. And, and, God moves upon His people when they learn to praise. You can always praise your way to victory if you learn how to praise the Lord. Praise and worship are always the first order of business, not the last. And, when they began to praise, then that panic turned to peace.

And so, God, then, gave direction, and I’ll guarantee what God told them to say was not what man would say. It seems so strange; it seemed impossible. Here’s what God told them to do: *“And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet [the] valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.”* (2 Kings 3:16–17) Now, God’s ways are not our ways. This was a strange thing for them to do. God says, “All right, you want me to bless you? You get your shovels. Get out

there. Get your soldiers out there, and begin to dig ditches.” Now, I want to say something here: that—it’s not a profound truth, but it is certainly a true thing that we need to hear—that if this is done, what we feel that God is calling us to do, folks, it will be the work of our sovereign God. And, we can’t do it without Him, but He will not do it without us. Now, now, God was getting ready to perform a miracle, but the whole time He’s getting ready to perform a miracle He says, “You go out there and start to dig ditches.”

Now, there are several things I want to tell you about digging ditches: it is human work, it is humbling work, and it is hard work. Anybody ever dig a ditch? It is human work. It is humbling work. It’s hard work. That’s what God told them: “Do you want me to help you? Do you want me to bless you? Now, you start out. You made a mess of things. And, you got things going your way, and you’ve ended up here in the desert. You just assume certain things. You made unholy alliances. You had ungodly ambitions. Now you’re in a pickle. Now you’ve come to me. Now you’ve read my Word, and now you’ve praised; and now you sought my face. All right, now get you some shovels, and get out there and start digging ditches.” And, by the way, He said, “Dig a lot of them.” Now listen, folks, there’s always—there is always—a balance between God’s heart and man’s heart. We believe in the sovereignty of God. And, man cannot do it without God; God will not do it without man—man cannot do it without God; God will not do it without man.

You study the walls of Jericho. The walls of Jericho fell, but what did God say to Joshua? “March around them seven times—on the seventh day, seven times.” (Joshua 6:4) God called Lazarus from the dead, but what did God say to man? “Roll away the stone.” (John 11:39) God changed water into wine, but what did He say to man? “*Fill the waterpots.*” (John 2:7) God took a widow’s vessels and filled them with oil, but he told her first of all, “*Borrow not a few.*” (2 Kings 4:3) God delivered Noah, but He told Noah to build an ark. And, all of these are ways—and this passage of Scripture is just simply a way—of telling you that—what I need to hear again—that “*faith without works is dead.*” (James 2:20, 26) And, if we’re believing God—if we’re believing God for this—then we’re going to have to work as though it all depended upon us and trust as though it all depended upon God. Digging ditches is hard work, human work, humbling work, and this is exactly what God told them to do. And, and, I want to say again, if you’re looking for an easy way, a cheap way, a lazy way to do it, just simply forget it. It cannot be done this way.

And so, notice again verse 16: “*And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches.*” (2 Kings 3:16) Now, somebody who was a good thinker that day would have said, “That doesn’t make sense because there’s not a cloud in the sky.” And, we don’t need to look upon appearances. I know there are probably some cynics who think

that we are the biggest fools on earth, who say, “You can’t do what you’ve just said you’re going to do. It’s impossible.” Friend, that’s the only good thing about it. That is the only good thing about it—is the impossibility. You see, we’re not—we’re not, we’re not—looking for what we can do; we’re looking for what God can do; and, therefore, we are not dependent upon appearances.

Look in verse 17: *“For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain”*—in other words, “God’s not going to let you see your way clear.” And, somebody says, “Well, if we had the money in the bank, perhaps I could see it. If we... If we could just... If we had the promise of the money, or if we just had...” No. God says, “You’re not going to see the wind; you’re not going to see the rain”—*“yet [the] valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.”* (2 Kings 3:17) Now, God says, “I am not going—I’m not going—to let you see how it’s going to be done. All you’re going to do is obey me. You’re going to get my Word; and then, you’re going to obey me.” And, I’m certain that there would have been a lot of people who could have said—a lot of spoilsports who said, “It can’t be done”; a lot of human wet blankets who would have said, “No, it can’t be done. It’s a waste of time. We don’t have the tools. It’s going to dissipate our strength, and it, just, it’s absurd.” Friend, that’s not our business. What we’ve got to do is get a word from God. And, if God puts us in front of a brick wall and says, “Jump,” we’ve got to jump. And, God’s got to make a hole in that wall, or else we’ll slide down on one side of it with our face rearranged. Now, God—God—is not dependent upon us to see the future. He, I mean, He’s not asking us to see the future; He’s asking us to depend upon Him.

Now, what I’m trying to show you is the folly of man’s plans. I want you to see the faithfulness of God’s plans. What we have to do and what this committee has tried to do—sincerely tried to do—is just to get a word from God.

### **III. The Fruitfulness of God’s Provisions**

Now, we’ve seen man’s plan and God’s plan. Now, I want you to see God’s provisions. I want you to see what happened. Look here, if you will, in verses 17 and 18 again: *“For thus saith the LORD, [You] shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts”*—and notice this—*“And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD”*—oh, I love that. He says, “I am the Lord. Is there anything too hard for me?”—*“this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand. And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones. And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water. And when all the Moabites heard*

*that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border. And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood: And they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another”—they said, “Why, look at there; look at all that blood. They’ve been fighting one another. The ground runs red with blood.” And, of course, they made a great mistake. And so, they assumed something wasn’t true; and so—“they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil. And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went [toward]”—“they went forward”—“smiting the Moabites, even in their country. And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of water” (2 Kings 3:17–25) and so forth.*

Now, I want you to notice four things about God’s supply. I want you to notice how God supplied the needs of those people that day, and this little, simple Bible lesson will be finished, because I’m expecting God to do the same thing for His people in this day—perhaps a different way, but yet in the same way.

#### **A. A Miraculous Supply**

First of all, I want you to notice it was a miraculous supply. Look in verse 17: the Bible says He’s going to do without wind and without rain. (2 Kings 3:17) That is, it’s going to be the work of God. After we’ve done all we can do, and after we’ve made every preparation, after we’ve dug every ditch, we still must wait upon God. You say, “Oh, we can give some money.” Friend, we can’t give it unless He gives it to us. All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down. I’m looking forward to a miracle, God. It was a miraculous supply.

#### **B. A Mysterious Supply**

Secondly, I want you to notice it was a mysterious supply. Because it was miraculous, it was mysterious. The Bible never does say exactly how it came; it just says it came and it came from a certain direction. What engendered this? Where it came from? I don’t know. Folks, I don’t know where this money’s coming from. Honestly, I do not. I’m looking at several of you got most of it, but... No, seriously, I don’t know where it’s coming from, and you don’t know where it’s coming from. But, if it’s God’s plan, God is our source and our resource, amen? You see, because it was a miraculous supply, it was a mysterious supply. I just don’t know where it’s coming from, but I think that’s the exciting part—to wait and see what God does and how God does it. So, we’re not going to be dependent upon any man; we’re going to be dependent upon our dear Lord.

### C. A Meaningful Supply

Now, the third thing I want you to see is that not only was it miraculous and not only was it mysterious; it was very meaningful. Why did God do it? Well, look, if you will, in verses 17 and 18 again. He says He's going to do it in verse 17; and then, verse 18—He says why: *"And this is...a light thing in the sight of the LORD"*—He says, "I'm not all that interested in filling ditches with water. That's not what it's all about. I mean, that's not a big deal." You see, look, friend, this new building that we're going to build is going to look like a tarpaper shack compared to what they have in heaven, amen? I mean, God's not all that excited about architecture and plans and so forth. "It's a light thing with me that I fill ditches with water." But—*"he will"*—the Lord—*"he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand."* (2 Kings 3:18)

God's plan for His people is victory. This was the meaning of the whole thing. God wanted His people to be victorious. There are the enemies of the Lord that need to be put down, and God knows—God knows—that all of the forces of hell are marshaled against our Lord, and His Christ, and His people. And, the purpose was victory. Now, the reason that God blessed them was not that the blessings might be an end in themselves. They were filled to fight; they were blessed to battle. And, we believe that God is calling us to a holy warfare. And so, what I'm talking to you about is ten years of battling and ten years of blessing. And so, God is going to give us a miraculous supply that is—might be—a mysterious supply. We'll just say, "Lord, we don't know how it's coming, where it's coming. We're just going to believe you, that it might be a meaningful supply."

### D. A Manifold Supply

And then, I want you to notice something else, dear friend: it was a manifold supply. Look, if you will, in verse 20: *"And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water."* (2 Kings 3:20) Now folks, there's no recession in heaven, and there's no panic in heaven—just plans. And here, God blessed. He just filled the ditches in a time of famine, in a time of drought.

You know, somebody would say to me, "Brother Rogers, you know, of all of the times for you to ask for a church to do something like this, you sure picked the worst one. I mean, my goodness! Sakes alive! Pastor, don't you know that some of the major plants are laying off people? And, and, don't you know that...what inflation is? And, don't you know what the interest rate is? Don't—don't—you know all that?" Elisha said, "You start digging ditches." Say, "Hey, hey, Preacher, don't you know there's a drought in the land? I mean, don't you know that it's dry as dust around here? Don't you know that? Huh?" You see, dear friend, all that is—is what?—a background for the display of

the grace and power of our great God. Amen? That's all it is.

Do you know when the Love Offering started? The Love Offering here at Bellevue started in a time of deep depression, when everybody else was in debt. And, this church decided that it was not going to fold up and die. And, God's people, out of their deep poverty, reached down. Some people even sold houses, and mortgaged houses, and did everything that they could do—and reached down, and dug down deep, and made sacrificial investments. And, right now, tonight, we're standing on the shoulders of people back yonder who believed God in a time of depression, and a time of debt, and a time when it couldn't be done. It was done, and it was done marvelously. And, manifold are the blessings of God. The supply of God, dear friend, was a miraculous supply. It was a mysterious supply. It was a meaningful, purposeful supply. It was a manifold supply.

## **Conclusion**

Now, I'm going to tell you something else: all of the ditches were filled, and had they dug more, God would have filled them, too—God would have filled them, too. And, the deeper the ditch, the fuller the flow. I can hear old Elisha saying out there, “Hey, fellows, you'd better dig deeper—you'd better dig deeper. There's a great host to be watered.” Who was it that said, “If God is in your plans, plan big”? We serve a big God. Now, I'm not talking about being a visionary. I'm not talking about man's plans, where we have an ungodly ambition, where we have an unholy alliance, where we have an unwarranted assumption. No, I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about going and hearing a word from God.

# Discovering Your Hidden Treasures

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 30, 1999**

**Main Scripture Text: 2 Kings 4:1–7**

*“And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.”*

1 KINGS 4:6

## Outline

### Introduction

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- B. We Have a Debt to God
- C. We Have a Debt to Our Brothers and Sisters in Christ
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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and find 2 Kings chapter 4? It's a wonderful story that is there. It reminds us of hidden resources that we all have that we need to discover. David has made it quite clear tonight that we cannot do what needs to be done with our own resources. And yet, God is wise enough, strong enough, good enough, loving enough that He would never command us to do something that we cannot do and that He will not supply the resources for.

Now, we need to understand that salvation is free, but while salvation is a free, there's a debt that comes with salvation. Now, how can that be?

### A. **We Have a Debt to the Unsaved**

Well, for example, we are debtors to the unsaved. Paul said in Romans 1, verse 14: *“I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise”* (Romans 1:14). We owe the gospel to this world, don’t we? We do! Your next-door neighbor—you’re a debtor to him. The person across the street, the person in the next city, the person across the ocean—we are debtors. And so, we have a debt that we need to pay to the unsaved. We need to bring the gospel of Jesus to them.

### B. **We Have a Debt to God**

And, we have a—we have a—debt to the God who saved us on that cross that Joyce sang about. Romans chapter 8, verses 11 and 12: the Bible says, *“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh”* (Romans 8:11–12). What does he mean by that? He means that if God has given us new life, if God has put the Holy Spirit in us, then we owe His majesty, His glory, our love, our service, forever and ever and ever. It seems contradictory because we’re saved by grace, but the song says,

*O to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I’m constrained to be!*

—ROBERT ROBINSON

Do you get what I’m saying? We’re debtors to an unsaved world. We are debtors to a great God who loved us, and we owe Him our unfailing, undying devotion.

### C. **We Have a Debt to Our Brothers and Sisters in Christ**

And, not only that, but folks, we have a debt to our brothers and sisters in Christ. I mean, I owe you some things, and you owe me some things. Romans chapter 13, verse 8: *“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another”* (Romans 13:8). That is, we have a debt of love that is ours constantly, and we’re to pay it.

Now, here is what is required of us: there’s a debt that needs to be paid; and yet, we don’t have the wherewithal to do it. And yet, God has commanded us to do this. And, I’ve taught you before and I want to teach you again that *behind every command of God is a promise of God*. Every command of God is incipiently, inherently, a promise. God never demands of us anything that He has not already given us.

One of my favorite stories—I may have shared this with you before, but I want to share it with you again. Some years ago, in the old facility, we had a Bible conference, and I had one of my dearest friends, Peter Lord, here to speak. And, we had an intermission. During the intermission, Peter went down to Gene Howard, who was

sitting in the auditorium (about where he's sitting right now, in the same perspective). And, Betty had gone out to the restroom, and Peter Lord said to Gene, "Gene, would you do me a favor?" He said, "Yes." He said, "I want to put something in Betty's Bible. Don't tell her I put it here. I'm going to call for a volunteer to bring Betty up to the platform, but don't tell Betty that I put this five dollars in her Bible." So, Peter put a five dollars bill in her Bible, closed it. It wasn't obvious. And so, after the intermission, Brother Peter Lord is speaking, and he said, "I need a volunteer." He said, "You, lady," and he called Betty up to the platform. He said, "Would you come up here?"

Well, Betty, as sweet as she is, compliant as she is, left her seat and came up. Gene said, "You'd better take your Bible," because Peter told Gene, "Make sure that Betty has her Bible." And so, when Betty stood up there—I can relive that moment right now—he, Peter Lord, looked at her, and said, "Betty Howard?" Said, "Yes." Said, "Do you believe I'm a man of God?" Well, what else could she say? "Yes, I do." He said, "Do you believe I tell the truth?" She said, "Yes, I do." Said, "Do you love me?" She said, "Yes, I do." Then, he said, "Well, Betty, if you believe I'm a man of God, I believe you believe I tell the truth, and you love me, and I were to ask you to do something that you could do right now, and you could do it right where you are (it would be very easy for you to do), would you do it?" She said, "Certainly."

He said, "All right. Would you give me five dollars?" She said, "Let me go get my purse." He said, "No, I didn't say that you would go get anything. I said you could do it right now where you are. Would you give me five dollars?" She said, "Well, I don't have five dollars with me." He said, "Didn't I tell you I wouldn't ask you to do anything you couldn't do?" "Yes." "Didn't you say you love me and trust me?" "Yes." "You believe I'm a man of God?" "Yes." "You believe I'm telling the truth?" "Yes." "All right. Then I believe you can give me five dollars. Will you give me five dollars?" She said, "But, I don't have five dollars." She said, "Gene." He said, "Don't call Gene. I said that you could do it right now where you are. Give me five dollars."

She got exasperated. She said, "But, I don't have five dollars." He said, "Is that your Bible?" She said, "Yes, it is." He took it, and opened it, and pulled five dollars out. She said, "How'd that get in there?" He said, "I put it in there." And then, he told her what I want to tell you: that God will never require of us anything that He's not already given us. That's a great truth: God never requires of us anything that He's not already given us. But, the truth of the matter is, she had it and didn't know she had it. She had not discovered what was in her Bible. And, I'm afraid that many of us have not discovered what is in our Bibles. I believe that many of us have assets that we have not yet discovered, and God is not going to require of us, however, anything that He has not already given us.

Now, with that as a background, I want you to notice this story in 2 Kings chapter 4:

*“Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead...thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take [away] unto him my two sons to be bondmen”—*that is, “to be slaves.” These boys, in order to pay the debt, were going to be sold into slavery—*“And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in [thine] house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil”—*and that may be translated “a flask of oil.” And, I’m saying that on purpose so you’ll come back to it: a flask of oil—*“[And] he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels”—*then, here’s what he says—*“borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and [thou] shalt pour out into all [these] vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. [And] so she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children [on] the rest”* (2 Kings 4:1–7). We might just call this a story of a poor widow that struck oil. It’s a wonderful, wonderful story.

Now, this lady was dependent upon Almighty God, and she has proved in the Word of God what God has taught in the New Testament—that *“[our] God shall supply all [our] need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:19).

## **I. A Family That Felt Forsaken**

First of all, I want you to notice a family—a family—that felt forsaken. Here was a woman. See what she had.

### **A. She Had a Burden on Her Heart**

She had, first of all, a burden on her heart. Verse 1 tells us that her husband had been a preacher. He was probably a ministerial student. He was called *“[one] of the sons of the prophets”* (2 Kings 4:1). He was going to the Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary of that day.

And, I can remember what it was to go to seminary. Joyce and I were in school seven years, married, raising a family, going to school, and I was trying to pay the school bills, take care of the family, and so forth. And, we lived from hand to mouth, and very frankly, it was God’s hand to our mouth. And, I had very few, if any, preacher friends who had any extraneous funds at that time. And, those who pastored little churches—you know, the members of those churches had a philosophy: “Lord, You keep him humble, and we’ll keep him poor.” And, that’s what they did.

And so, here was this woman, and she is widowed. And, obviously, her husband—they were young. And, you know, it was harder on widows in Bible times than it is in today's society, so she had a burden on her heart.

### **B. She Had Some Boys on Her Hands**

And then, she had some boys on her hands. She was not just alone; she had two boys that she had to raise, and it looked like these boys, her own precious sons, were going to be carried away into debtor's prison. This lady had nowhere to turn.

### **C. She Had Barrenness in Her Home**

On top of that, she had barrenness in her home. There was absolutely nothing that she could see. She, doubtless, had sold the furniture. She'd gotten rid of all the assets. She didn't know what to do, and she had come to a place of desperation. And, by the way, that's not bad—that is not bad for us to come to a place of desperation. But, just remember, here was a family that felt forsaken.

## **II. A Flask That Was Forgotten**

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see: there was a flask that was forgotten. Elisha said, "Well, what do you have in your home?" She said, "I haven't got anything, nothing at all—oh, except this: this pot of oil" (2 Kings 4:2). But, the word here is linked to anointing.

### **A. A Significant and Sacred Object**

You see, this was a preacher. And, in that day, the prophets, the preachers, would anoint people with oil. And so, he has a little flask here that was used in his ministry, and the oil in that flask was a symbol, an emblem, of the Holy Spirit. And, I believe there's a little lesson tucked away—or a big lesson tucked away—here. This was a significant object. It represents the power of Almighty God, the anointing power of God.

### **B. A Slighted Object**

Significant and sacred, but it was slighted. Somehow she had just overlooked it, or to her it was not all that important. And, when I read this and I thought about it, I wondered, "Is that true about so many of us—that we have better than the flask?" We have the Holy Spirit Himself in us—something that the people in the Old Testament did not have. The anointing came, and the anointing went. But, the Spirit of God abides with us forever. But, you know, I think some of us may go day after day after day complaining about our inability, our spiritual poverty, and we don't understand what we have in the Lord Jesus.

Did you know what the Apostle Paul had to say to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and 19? I want you to listen to it. Listen to it now—listen: he says, "*What?*"—

*“What?”—“know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost of God”—“of the Holy Ghost”—“which ye have of God”* (1 Corinthians 6:19). Paul says, “Don’t you know that?” Do you know what that means? That means that you can have the Holy Spirit in you and just be so careless that you’ve almost forgotten. Think how Paul said—he said, “What? Don’t you know? Have you forgotten that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). I think many of us do that. We are gutting it out, trying to do this and trying to do that, when we have inside of us an incredible resource. He said, “Don’t you know that? Don’t you understand that you have the Holy Spirit?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). Hey, folks, I’m not talking about somebody else. If you are saved, I can say to you, “Don’t you know who lives in you?”

### **C. A Saving Object**

Now, it was a significant object. It was a sacred object. It was a slighted object. It represented the Holy Spirit of God. It was her saving object. It was this thing that she had that she didn’t even realize that she had. She thought she was completely destitute, and we’re going to find out she had so much. It was this that brought her out of destitution, and brought her out of poverty, and brought her in to all that she needed.

You know, God had provided that. God has provided for us. And, I could tell you so many ways how God provides even before we know what we want. When God made you and created you, He gave you lungs. When God made the first man, He gave the first man lungs. But, before God ever gave Adam lungs, He created the world with air. He knows what you need. When God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac upon Mount Moriah, and God the Father knew that Isaac was not truly going to be sacrificed, God had provided a ram up there. As a matter of fact, Abraham called that place “Jehovahjireh”—“God will provide” (Genesis 22:14). And, I don’t know exactly how it happened, but I just believe as Abraham started up one side of that mountain, on the other side of that mountain that ram started up. Abraham didn’t know it, but God knows it. Listen, God knows what things you have need of before you ask Him.

This property that we are on out here—God put this together before the foundation of America. This land was here before our nation was born. This land was here, and God had it saved for us. We were downtown, saying, “Lord, what are we going to do? What are we going to do?” I remember we were trying to put together a business deal to buy some more property downtown. And, Roland Maddox came to me, and he said, “Pastor, you know that piece of property that we were trying to buy? The man just went up on the price one more time.” I can show you the spot on the parking lot where I stopped and said, “Well, praise God—praise God.” And then, I said this—I can remember saying it: “No two-legged man whose breath is in his nostrils is going to stop what God is doing.” I believe that with all of my heart. As a matter of fact, that man did

us the best favor he could ever have done us, because now here we are. And, God knows that we needed this place, and God, before we ever had the need, God had provided.

And, He, our God, is a God who anticipates needs and provides ahead of time. God knew that we needed salvation, so Jesus was slain before the foundation of the world. Before you ever were born, Jesus had already died for you.

### **III. A Faith That Learned to Function**

Now, here's a third thing, and I want to be brief tonight: there was a family that felt forsaken; there was a flask that had been forgotten; and then, here was a faith that learned to function. And, what did this woman do?

Well, first of all, there was the preparation of her faith. Elisha said to her, "Look, go out and borrow some vessels," and he said, "Don't get a few; get a lot of them" (2 Kings 4:3). And, she's told to get these vessels and make sure that they were empty, ready for the blessings of God. Have you ever done that? Have you ever prepared yourself for a miracle? Have you—I mean, believing that God's going to do something? Now folks, she just went out by faith and just got some empty pots, some pans, some jugs, whatever she got. I don't know what she got, but he said, "Just get some vessels, and you do your part."

That's what we've done as a church. We made preparation. We built these buildings. God is the One who has filled these buildings. If you can study the Bible, you'll find out that when man believes God, gets a word from God, makes preparation, God does the rest of it. Now, God is going to perform a miracle, but He doesn't do it without this woman's cooperation. Here was a faith that learned to function.

When God wanted to raise Lazarus from the dead, when Jesus did, He told the people to roll away the stone. Any body who can raise a Lazarus from the dead can roll away the stone, but God said, "You do that." When Jesus wanted to turn water into wine, He told the servants, "Fill the water pots with water." Well, any body who could turn water into wine could fill water pots with water, but He didn't do it. It was their job. When God wanted to save Noah from the flood, He said, "Noah, you build the ark." Every time you look at a miracle—or most every time, or many times, at least—there is man's part and then there's God's part.

So, God says to this woman, "Go get some pots, and get some pans." Now, then, he said, "Pour out what you have" (2 Kings 4:4). That's an act of obedience. Had she not poured, there never would have been a miracle.

How does that apply to me? How does that apply to you? Folks, we need to get a word from God, and before the miracle begins, we need to make preparation. That's what we've done in our church. That's what I've tried to do in my life—is to get ready.

When I went to seminary—to make preparation. We built these buildings to make preparation. We're building a Fellowship Building out here; we're just simply making preparation, believing that God is going to fill that building with people, with joy. Souls are going to be saved. God can do it without us, but He doesn't seem, often, willing to do it without us. He said, "Go, you borrow some vessels, not a few" (2 Kings 4:3).

#### **IV. A Flow That Never Fails**

Now, here's a fourth thing, and we're bringing up the heading: there's a flow that never fails. She began to pour out—verses 5 through 7 (2 Kings 4:5–7)—she just pours out this oil. She takes this little flask of anointing oil, and she fills up a pot so big. "Boys, set that aside." Then, she fills up another one. And then, she fills up another. And then, she fills up another, and another, and another, and another, and another. She says, "Bring me another vessel." She's having the best time of her life. And, they said, "There, Mama, there isn't any more vessel." And, that moment, the flow stopped. Do you know what? She was the one who determined the size of her blessing—she was the one who determined the size of her blessing. Question: Had she gotten more vessels, would she have had more oil? Obviously. As soon as the last vessel was filled, then the oil stopped. What does that mean? Small faith—small blessing; big faith—big blessing. Jesus said, "Be it unto you according to your faith" (Matthew 9:29). Faith is the medium of exchange in the Kingdom of Heaven. More faith—more blessings. But, the thing that thrills me here is that the flow never stopped as long as the vessels were there ready to be filled.

Let me give you a testimony. God called me to preach when I was in high school. I preached my first sermon when I was in high school. It was about fifteen minutes long. I preached everything I knew and a lot I didn't know. And then, I thought, "Boy, I hope I never get asked again." And, I preached again. And then, when I was nineteen, I got called to a little country church. I was in college. Joyce and I were married by then. And, I had one or two sermons, and I preached. Then, I realized, "I've got to preach again tonight." And then, I preached, and I realized, "I've got to preach again next Sunday, and then next Sunday night, and then again and again and again and again and again and again, over and over and over again." I jotted down the other day—I believe I have preached more than 10,000 sermons—more than 10,000 sermons. That's incredible, because I thought, "I'm going to run out of soap. I've preached everything I know." I mean, in three weeks I had exhausted the Bible. What a mighty God we serve! I'm telling you, folks, I have learned something: that if I will make preparation, I'll never run out of oil—never run out of oil.

What a mighty God we serve! Just like Betty discovered in that Bible with Peter Lord, anything God asks of us, He supplies for us. And, we're the one who's going to limit the

size of the blessing if we fail to prepare for God's flow of oil.

## **Conclusion**

Let's pray together. Father God, thank you for this—for this sweet lesson from your Word. And Lord, we know that you are a God who meets all of our need according to your riches in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19). In your name, we give this service and commit this thought to you. And, help me—and help us, Lord—that we will trust you moment by moment to meet our need. It may not be the way that we think, but Lord, you have never failed, and you can never fail. And, we thank you for that song “Jesus Never Fails.” In your holy name we pray. Amen.

# Facing the Problem of Pride

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** May 16, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** 2 Kings 5:1–11, 14

*“Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”*

1 KINGS 5: 14

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Find 2 Kings chapter 5. In a moment, we'll begin in verse 1—2 Kings chapter 5. It has well been said that man has learned how to fly through the air like a bird; he's learned to swim through the sea like a fish, but he has not yet learned to walk on earth like a man.

Now, what is the problem? Well, the problem, the sociologists would tell us, is that man needs a better environment. The problem, the evolutionists would tell us, is that he has not had enough time in his stumble upward. The problem, the geneticists would tell us, is that we need to do a little more selective breeding. The problem, the educator would tell us, is...man's problem is ignorance. And, all of these are different ways of saying that man lacks something. But, the problem with man is not what he lacks; the problem with man is what he has, and that is a sin nature. That is the problem, and that sin nature is wrapped up in a word that's an ugly word: it's the word *pride*. Now, pride is both dangerous and deceitful. "*Pride [comes] before destruction*" (Proverbs 16:18). There's nothing more ruinous than pride.

### A. National Ruin Comes by Pride

National ruin comes by pride. And, if America does not humble herself, she's going to join the graveyard of the nations.

### B. Domestic Ruin Comes by Pride

Domestic ruin comes by pride. Many homes are battlegrounds because in those homes, it's ego against ego.

### C. Financial Ruin Comes by Pride

Financial ruin comes by pride. We're trying to keep up with the Joneses, buying things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't like.

### D. Spiritual Ruin Comes by Pride

Spiritual ruin comes by pride. It is not that God cannot use us because we're not big enough; the problem is that God cannot use us because we're not small enough. The Bible says, "God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

### E. Eternal Ruin Comes by Pride

Eternal ruin comes by pride. Men are escorted to Hell, chained in the cold steel chains of pride, forged on the anvil of a hard heart. Most people in America are egomaniacs, strutting to Hell, thinking they are too good to be damned. Eternal ruin comes by pride. The Bible says that "*God resisteth the proud, but [He gives] grace to the humble*" (James 4:6). Pride is a dangerous sin.

## F. Deception Comes by Pride

And, pride is a deceptive sin. At least the drunkard knows he's a drunkard. At least the thief knows he's a thief. But, most people will not admit to the fact of pride, except maybe in a joking way. We always think it's the other man's problem. How many of you here have a problem with pride? May I see your hand? Awful question, wasn't it? But, to those of you who raised your hand, I'm going to be preaching to you today—but especially to those who did not.

I want to tell you, folks, that we have a problem. I have it; you have it. It is inherited in the human heart. And, Jesus said that pride comes out of our hearts (Matthew 15:18–19). And, pride is the major sin, the father sin, the mother sin—the sin out of which all other sins come. It was pride that made Satan *Satan*. Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, became Satan, the prince of darkness, through pride. It was pride that corrupted the human race. It was pride that caused the fall of man in the Garden of Eden and turned this world into a wilderness and a graveyard. Look at every hospital, every insane asylum, every graveyard, every emergency ward, every tear that falls to the ground, and you can say, “Pride did this.”

Now today, we're going to be talking about pride: “Facing the Problem of Pride.” And, our lesson today is going to be couched in and pitched around the life of a man named Naaman. You find him over here in 2 Kings chapter 5. He was an incredible man, a well-known man, of his day. What a wonderful lesson we have here!

## I. Naaman's Marvelous Character

The very first thing I want you to notice about Naaman is this: I want you to notice his character—his marvelous character. Look, if you will, in verse 1: “*Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable [man], because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour*” (2 Kings 5:1). Now, God has really packed a lot into one verse there.

### A. He Was a Capable Leader

That tells us here, first of all, that this man Naaman was a leader—and a very capable leader. That is, he had the mind, he had the intelligence, he had the charisma, he had the force, to be a leader. He was the Colin Powell or the Norman Schwarzkopf of his day. I mean, he was a military leader of no small genius. He was held in highest esteem. He was honorable and a man of great ability.

### B. He Was a Conquering Leader

Not only was he a capable leader; he was a conquering leader. I mean, he led victorious armies. I want you to see him as he sits in his chariot pulled by a snow white horse, see him with his metals on his chest, see this one as women would reach out to

touch him as he goes down the street with tears in their eyes. And, a dad lifts up his son to say, “There he is. There goes Captain Naaman. Son, one day—one day, Son—I hope you can be like Captain Naaman.”

### C. **He Was a Courageous Leader**

Not only was he capable, and not only was he conquering; oh, he was courageous. This verse says he was full of valor (2 Kings 5:1). On the battlefield, he wouldn’t flinch; he wouldn’t flee. There’s no fear there. He had a heart like a lion. What a man—what a man! In one verse, we learn about Captain Naaman, and God just tells us, sets the stage: this man wasn’t a “6” or “7” in the eyes of other men; he was a “10.”

## II. **Naaman’s Miserable Condition**

But, I want you to see not only Naaman the leader; I want you to see Naaman the leper. I want you to see not only Naaman and his marvelous character, but Naaman and his miserable condition. Look at how this verse ends—it says, “*but he was a leper*”—“*a leper*” (2 Kings 5:1).

### A. **Leprosy Was a Fearful Disease**

What was leprosy? It was a fearful disease. You cannot imagine the stark terror that went through the household of Naaman when he came from the doctor with the diagnosis: “I have leprosy.” Leprosy was the most horrible of all of the ancient diseases. And, when a man had leprosy, he was an outcast. His days of joy were over. What matters then his victorious armies? What matters then the medals on his chest, the trophies on his wall?

### B. **Leprosy Was a Fatal Disease**

It was fearful leprosy, because it was fatal leprosy. Leprosy would begin with a little white, slick, shiny patch on the skin, but it would begin to spread. And soon, the fingers would become deformed, and the facial features and the extremities would lose their feeling. And, he could stick his hand in the fire and not feel the flame. The feet and the toes would wear off as he would walk, and there would become great masses of swellings—discolored swellings—and the whole body would begin to disintegrate and rot as he’s living in this body. And, he knows he now that he cannot live with ordinary society. He must go down the street with his cloth over his face, crying out, “Unclean! Unclean!”—see little children as they scurry away, because now, the great Naaman has leprosy—fearful leprosy, fatal leprosy. There was no known cure apart from a miracle.

### C. **Leprosy Was a Figurative Disease**

And, my friend, it was figurative leprosy. Now, when I say it was figurative leprosy, I don’t mean that he didn’t have real leprosy—he did. But, in the Bible, literal, physical

leprosy was used as an emblem and a symbol for a greater disease—not a disease of the body, but a disease of the soul called “sin.” And, that’s the reason in the Book of Leviticus you have so much time given, so much space given, in the Book of Leviticus, about how the leper might be healed and adjudicated clean—because it is a type, a symbol, an emblem, of sin; a figure of sin.

And, to that degree, ladies and gentlemen, we all have the leprosy of pride—of sin. The Bible says in Romans chapter 5 and verse 12: “[for] as by one [man’s] sin entered into the world, and death by sin...so death passed [on] all men, [in] that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). Every one of us, by nature, is a child of wrath. Every one of us has inherited a sinful nature. There is within us the seed of sin. The disease of leprosy—more fearful, more fatal, than what old Naaman had so long ago. We may not want to admit it, but it is true.

Now, look around in the congregation today. The person sitting next to you is a leper, but so are you—by nature, a leper. You look at a man—he’s a great athlete. You can say, “What a marvelous athlete!” But, he was a leper. What a wonderful lawyer! But, he’s a leper. What a wonderful doctor! But, he’s a leper. What a great businessman! But, he’s a leper. What a beautiful face she has! But, she’s a leper. What grace and charm! But, she is a leper; he is a leper.

You say, “I don’t agree with that.” Well, that’s your business. But, the Bible says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 4:23). “There is none...good, no, not one” (Romans 3:12). And, the problem is not what we do; the problem is what we are, and we do what we do because we are what we are. The problem is not what man lacks, but what man is. He is a moral leper in the sight of a righteous and holy God. And, that’s what the Bible is written to tell us about, and pride doesn’t want to admit that.

So, you see Naaman. You say, “Do you see his marvelous character?” But, you see his miserable condition all put in one verse.

### **III. Naaman’s Miraculous Cure**

But, I want you to see his miraculous cure, because that’s what this chapter is about. And, the way that God dealt with Naaman and his leprosy is the way that God wants to deal with you.

#### **A. He Heard of God**

Now, the very first thing I want you to notice here, as we talk about his miraculous cure, is how he heard of God. Look, if you will, in verse 2: “And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and [have] brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid”—a little insignificant girl; we don’t even know her name. I confidently expect to meet her in

Heaven—*“a little maid; and she waited on Naaman’s wife”*—can you imagine—a little girl about 14 years of age, carried away, carried away out of Israel? Now, she’s up in Syria, and they put her in the household of Naaman. Here’s this little girl there, and she is a servant to Mrs. Naaman—*“And she said unto her mistress, Would God”*—oh, you see she knows God—*“Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy. And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel”* (2 Kings 5:2–4). Let me just say here, almost parenthetically, talking about how he heard of God, I’m so grateful for this little unnamed woman who changed the course of this man’s life.

### **1. She Was a Captive Maid**

This little maid—why, she was a captive maid. She was living in a land that was not her own. And, we’re all just pilgrims and sojourners down here, aren’t we? I mean, we’re like her. This world is not our home; we’re just passing through. But, God put us here that we might witness. That’s the business we have in the world.

### **2. She Was a Compassionate Maid**

She was a captive maid, but she was a compassionate maid. She saw that the man who had done her harm, the man that had carried her away as a captive, the man in whose home she lived and served as a slave, yet her heart of compassion went out to him. She knew he was suffering, and she did not give him what he deserved; she gave him what he needed. That was her prayer and her compassion.

You can be a lawyer without having compassion for your client. You can be a doctor without having compassion for your patient. You can be a merchant without having compassion for your customers. But, you can’t be a soul winner without having compassion for the people of this world.

### **3. She Was a Courageous Maid**

She’s a captive maid, a compassionate maid—courageous. She speaks up; she can’t keep quiet. It might be just a word from you somewhere tomorrow—might change somebody’s destiny, if you had just something of the courage that this little girl had to speak up, because she saw a problem and she knew a cure. And, say, I wonder—I really wonder—if you knew the cure to cancer, wouldn’t you tell it? Nod your head. Of course you would! If you know how to keep people out of Hell, and you don’t tell, what does that say? I mean, what does that say? Does that mean that we really don’t believe in Hell? Does that mean that we don’t care? How can we say that we know Jesus and yet be sinfully silent?

### **B. He Was Humbled of God**

You see how he heard of God, but I want you to see how he was humbled of God. Now, this man is filled with pride. He has every reason, according to the flesh, to be filled with

pride, because he is a man that has done great accomplishments. But now, notice what happens: he hears of God. And, beginning in verse 5: *“And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment”* (2 Kings 5:5).

Now, look up here, and let me tell you something: Naaman is a man’s man. Naaman has been used to doing it his way. Whatever he needed, he bought. Whatever got in front of him, he knocked it down. Wherever he needed to go, he went. And, he said, “I’m going to deal with this leprosy the same way.” Now, what he needs is to be humbled, and God is about to humble him. Do you know what most of us are trusting in? We trust in human resources, human reputation; we trust in human reason. And, God is about to knock the box out from underneath ol’ Naaman.

### **1. God Takes Away His Trust in Human Resources**

First of all, he takes silver and gold. As a matter of fact, one source that I read said that this could be the equivalent in our cash today of a half a million dollars. Besides that, he took ten of the finest suits that he had. I mean, here he is—he’s all dressed up; he never looked better. He’s got all these clothes—whether to give to the king of Israel or whether to wear, I know not. They are coming with silver and gold, and there he is with his resources—first of all, human resources. But, he’s going to learn, friend, that the blessings of God cannot be bought. You may be Madame Got-rocks here today. You may be Mr. Moneybags here today. And, if God has blessed you with money, fine. God bless you. But friend, not one penny or one billion dollars can get you any closer to God.

### **2. God Takes Away His Trust in Human Reputation**

So, God takes away his trust, we’re going to see, in human resources—and then, not only in human resources, but in human reputation. Look, if you will, as we continue to read, in verse 6: *“And he brought [a] letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter [has] come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy”* (2 Kings 5:6). Now, ole’ King Benhadad of Syria sends a letter to King Jehoram of Israel, and he says, “Now look, Jehoram—look: this man has a personal letter from me. I am the King of Syria. This is not a nobody. I want you to show him every possible courtesy. If you’ve got something over there that will take care of his leprosy, I want you to see that he does it.”

Now, when I go overseas, and when you go overseas, we don’t go overseas with a letter from the President saying, “Give this man royal treatment,” do we? I mean, but that’s what this man has. I mean, he’s a big shot. He is going not only with wealth, but he’s coming with his reputation; he’s coming with his recommendation. He is coming, saying, “Show this man every honor; show this man every privilege. Open every door for this man.” But friend, you’ll not walk into the presence of God with any letter of

recommendation from any body else except the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, here he is—here he is. He has his resources, and he has his reputation. And, you know where Jehoram was living? Jehoram was living in an ivory palace. Literally, an ivory palace had been built by Ahab. And, I see Naaman. He's been to big places before, and he just walks on in there, you know. He's got this letter, and he walks right into the presence of Jehoram. And, he says, "Jehoram, Benhadad has sent me to see you. Here's a letter from him."

Well, when Jehoram reads the letter, he says, "What is this—a trick? Are they trying to start a war? I can't heal this man of leprosy. They ought to know that." Jehoram begins to sweat. His hands get cold and clammy. And, about that time, Elisha the prophet says something. Look in verse 8: "*And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes*"—that doesn't mean that he got them from the tuxedo place. Dear friend, that means he tore his clothes. It says—"*when...the king of Israel had [torn] his clothes*"—that is, he's in anguish; he rips his clothes—"*[and] sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel*" (2 Kings 5:8). Now, here's Elisha, the man of God. That's the prophet the little girl was talking about. He says, "Jehoram, send him on down here to me, and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel."

### **3. God Takes Away His Trust in Human Reason**

"So"—watch verse 9—"So Naaman came with his horses and...his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha"—now, he walked right into the ivory palace, but he won't go into this preacher's house—oh, no. I can see him as he's going down the narrow streets there, maybe a back alley, comes to a little cottage there. And so, he waits outside, and he sends somebody in to go get the prophet to go and come out to him—"And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go...wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wrought, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought"—now, underscore that in your Bible: "I thought." Here's human reason. We've already dealt with human resources. We have already dealt with human reputation. And now, here, God's going to kick the third prop out from underneath this proud general—"I thought, He will surely come out to me"—that is, "I won't have to go in there where he is; he'll come out to me"—"*and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage*"—"a rage" (2 Kings 5:9–12). He is livid.

Now, you just have to get the scene. Here's this man in his beautiful chariot, wearing one of those ten marvelous changes of clothes, loaded down with gold and silver,

standing in front of a preacher's house. He sends a messenger in, and the preacher won't come out. Old Naaman says, "What's the matter? Isn't he home?" "Yes, he's home." "Well, what did he say?" "He said for me to tell you, 'Go jump in the river.'" That's it: "I mean, go dip seven times in the river Jordan."

Now, you just have to understand why it made this man so angry. You and I, we have all of these romanticized ideas about the river Jordan. I was so anticipating seeing the river Jordan for the first time. I thought, "Man oh man, I'll want to see Jordan." You know, I heard so many stories about the river Jordan, so many songs—you know, "Crossing over Jordan," and "Roll, Jordan, Roll," and "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand, / And cast a [wistful] eye" (Samuel Stennett), and all of that. Friend, I thought I was going to be overwhelmed. I wasn't even whelmed. I mean, I was underwhelmed when I saw Jordan. It's a muddy, dirty, little low creek. It doesn't even come up even to the Wolf River down here that we have here. I mean, it's just a muddy, dirty, little creek. It's kind of pretty up where it starts up at the Sea of Galilee, but by the time it gets down to Samaria, and down almost to the Dead Sea, folks, it is not much—just a polluted stream.

When he said, "Look, the Abana and the Pharpar rivers up there in Syria—they are more beautiful. I've been up to Syria; I've been up to Lebanon. I've seen the headwaters there as they come out of Mount Hermon, those snowy waters—and running over those brooks and everything. Crystal clear, beautiful waterfalls, and all of that—beautiful." He said, "What do you mean? You want me to dip in that dirty polluted stream? What kind of a preacher is this? I thought he would do thus-and-such." Human reasoning that does not want to accept what God says parades it past the judgment bar of the human mind.

Can't you see the pride that God is dealing with here? God is going to have to say, "Naaman..." God is saying, "Naaman, you've been trusting in human resources. You've been trusting in human reputation. You've been trusting in human reason. But, I am taking these things from you, Naaman, because you can't get to Heaven with these things." You see, God hates the sin of pride. Proverbs chapter 6 says, "*These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him*" (Proverbs 6:16). And, God lists seven things that God hates, that are an abomination unto God. And, number one on God's hate parade is "*a proud look*" (Proverbs 6:17)—number one. God hates pride. I tell you again, it is pride that made the devil the devil. It is pride that made this world a graveyard. It is pride that ruined the race. And, God hates the sin of pride.

Not only does God just simply ignore the man who is filled with pride, but the Bible says, "*God resisteth the proud*" (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). God sets Himself in battle array against the proud person. You will never know the grace of God until something is done with this abominable thing called pride. And yet, all of us, by nature, we reek with pride. It flows out of us. Jesus said, "Out of the heart of man proceeds pride" (Matthew

15:18–19). It is our stock and trade, and we inherited it from Adam.

There are three things that drive the modern sophisticated American into a frenzy because they are an affront to his pride. May I tell you what they are?

**i. Pride Hates a Fixed Standard of Right and Wrong**

Number one: that there is a fixed standard of right and wrong. Now, the fixed standard, of course, is the Word of God—the Bible. There are those who do not like the inerrancy of the Bible, the authority of the Bible, the infallibility of the Bible. But, you see, over and over again the Bible says, “God said...” The authority of God is behind the Bible.

Now, this generation doesn’t like for any body to say there is a fixed standard of right and wrong. We like morality by majority. We don’t like to talk about what’s right or wrong; we talk about what’s legal or not legal—isn’t that right?—what the Supreme Court or somebody else says about something. Let me tell you something: fornication is wrong because God says so. Adultery is wrong because God says so. Homosexuality is wrong, and a sin, and an abomination, because God says so, not because I said so.

Hey, if that angers you, don’t waste your time or my time by coming to argue with me. Don’t try to kill the messenger. Take it up with God. Read the Bible. See what God says. You say, “Well, I don’t accept the Bible.” Well, that’s good; that’s your problem. That’s all right; that’s okay. You don’t accept the Bible. I do. I accept the Bible as the Word of God, but human pride today doesn’t like the idea that there is a fixed standard of right and wrong.

**ii. Pride Hates the Idea That Jesus Christ Is the One and Only Savior of the World**

I’ll tell you something else human pride doesn’t like: the idea that Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior of the World. Oh, they are so livid. They say, “Why, you narrow-minded, red-necked, country bumpkin preacher! How dare you say that your way is the only way?” I’m not saying my way is the only way. It’s not my way; it’s His way—His way. It’s Jesus who said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: [and] no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). If you don’t like it, take it up with Him. Don’t blame me. I wouldn’t be worth my soul—I’d have no right to stand behind that pulpit and call myself a preacher—if I didn’t preach what the Bible says. A man doesn’t believe what the Bible says—he ought to get out of that pulpit and start making an honest living. I believe that with all of my heart. That’s what God says. Oh, human pride doesn’t like that.

**iii. Pride Hates the Idea That You Are Saved by Grace and Grace Alone**

I’ll tell you something else human pride doesn’t like: human pride does not like the idea that you are saved by grace and grace alone. Always something we want to do—we want to add our two bits worth to what God has done. But, the Bible says, *“By grace are [you] saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works”—why?—“lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8–9). “Oh, look what God and I did!” But, God says, “No—no.” If you’re going to be saved, you’re going to be

saved by the grace of God. First Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 18: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

What is salvation? It is by the cross alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, and Christ alone, and that’s it—that’s it. You say, “I don’t agree with it.” Your privilege. It’s America—you’ve got a right to be wrong. Listen—listen: pride—pride—resists those things. We want to make ourselves the center and the circumference—the sum total—of everything, but we can’t do it. God is saying to Mr. Naaman, “Put your pride in the dust. Your resources, your reputation, your reasoning—lay it in the dust, and come to Me.”

### **C. He Was Healed of God**

And, we’ve seen how he heard of God, how he was humbled of God. Now, I want you to see how he was healed of God. Oh, I love it—I love it. Look in verse 14, and you’re going to see how he was healed of God—how God healed him—three very wonderful things. What did God do?

#### **1. There Was Repentance**

First of all, there was repentance. You see, in verse 13, his fellows who were there, they said, “Look, Naaman, if the prophet had asked you to do some hard thing, you would have done it. If he had asked for all this gold and silver, you would have given it. Why don’t you just do what he says?” (2 Kings 5:13). And, do you know, somehow the hour of conviction struck on Naaman’s heart. And, verse 14 says, *“[And] he went down”* (2 Kings 5:14). Now, he was going home. I can see him as he strikes the haunches of that horse, as he jerks those reins, and that chariot begins to clatter down that cobblestone street. They said, “Wait a minute, Naaman! Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Just hold it! Just hold it, Naaman! Look, Naaman. Why don’t you give God a chance?” And, verse 14 says, *“[And] he went down”* (2 Kings 5:14). That’s repentance.

In verse 11, it says, *“I thought”* (2 Kings 5:11). But now, in verse 14, he was going God’s way (2 Kings 5:14). Do you know what repentance is? It’s the Greek word *metanoia*, and what it literally means is “a change of mind”—“a change of mind.” Here’s old Naaman going to Hell, singing a song—“I Did It My Way”—and now he turns around, and he’s going to do it God’s way. He is now repenting. It is repentance. And, Jesus said—Luke 13:3: *“except ye repent, you shall all likewise perish.”* I didn’t say that; Jesus said it. There has to be a change of mind.

#### **2. There Was Reliance**

But, not only was there repentance; there was reliance. This verse says he also did it *“according to the saying of the man of God”* (2 Kings 5:14)—according to the Word of God, according to what God says. No longer what he thinks—now, what God says. Repentance says, “I can’t do it”; faith says, “He can do it.” And, there’s repentance and

faith. Repentance, reliance, trusting the Word of God—doing what God says.

You know, people today have camcorders, videotape players. I wish I'd have had one there standing on the banks of Jordan. I'd love to see ole' Naaman pull up that chariot there, and off comes that magnificent uniform; those medals are stripped from his chest. I want you to see him as openly and publicly—not caring who sees it, not caring what they think—as he goes down into muddy Jordan. I wonder if the water was cold. I wonder if the bank was slippery. I wonder if he slipped and fell down. I wonder what happened to him. There he is. I mean, everybody can see it. There are no bathhouses there. There's no little private cubicle. I mean, this is public.

You know, there are some people that don't want to come down an aisle in front of all these people. You're afraid somebody is going to see you. Jesus hung naked on a cross before a bigger crowd than this. There he goes—one time, two times, three times, four times, five times, six times. I'm glad he didn't stop because seven is the perfect number. The seventh time he went under.

### **3. There Was Renewal**

There was repentance. There was reliance, and there was renewal. Look in that verse. That verse says that his flesh, his skin, became like a baby's skin (2 Kings 5:14). I mean, he had leprosy, and he gets the skin like the skin of a little child. What is God saying? *"If any man be in Christ [Jesus], he is a new [creation]"*—isn't that right?—*"old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). There is a renewal. Jesus is in the renewal business.

And, I want to say to every person today who's got leprosy, He can make you new. That leprosy of pride—He can make you new. You can be born again—born again. And, you know what it was? It was instantaneous—*instantaneous*. I've got new for you today: if you will repent of your sin, put your faith in the Word of God like Captain Naaman did, trust what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross, you will be radically, dramatically, and instantaneously changed today. You will be saved immediately and forever.

You say, "Pastor, are you sure?" I am certain. If you can show me any time, any place, anywhere, where any body puts his or her faith in Jesus Christ in repentance and faith and they're not saved, I'll close my Bible and never preach again. Jesus said, *"Him that cometh [unto] me [I'll] in no wise cast out"* (John 6:37). The Bible says Jesus said, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life"* (John 5:24). It was instantaneous, and it was complete. I mean, it happened just like that—completely changed, right there.

I got saved as a teenage boy, and I've been preaching now for many, many years. That was a long time ago when I was saved in 19-none-of-your-business, but I'm no more saved now than I was then. I'm more sanctified. But, you know, I was saved then.

You know, when I got born into my home, into my family, born naturally, I was as much my parents' child then as I am now. Isn't that right? I'm no more a child of them now than I was then. Now, you can be as much a child of God today as I am, as much a child of God as the Apostle Paul was and is, if you give your heart to Jesus.

You say, "But, there's no river Jordan for me to dip in, Pastor." No, that's only an illustration. But, let me tell you this:

*There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;  
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains.*

—WILLIAM COWPER

And, I can promise you on the authority of the Word of God, if you'll come in repentance and reliance, you'll know renewal—you will know renewal. You will be born again.

Do you sprout wings and get a halo? It doesn't mean you'll never stumble or fall—doesn't mean that. Just means you'll be saved and God, now, has begun to work in you. Wouldn't that be wonderful? Do you know what? Do you know what? God brought you here today, if you're not saved, that you might be saved. God gave me this message—and He gave it for you, not for any body else—for you, that you might know Jesus. And, the major thing that's going to keep you from coming today is not primarily unbelief; it's pride—pride. And, I want you to lay that pride in the dust and give your heart to Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion**

Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed—no one stirring. O God, I pray today in the name of Jesus for those in this room that need to be saved. Lord, I know what a powerful weapon Satan uses when he uses pride in my own life. And, I know, Lord, that I still, day by day, struggle with pride. But, I pray, Lord, that I might learn, and that we might learn, just, Lord, to repent, to rely, and to renew. And Lord, I want to pray today for those who may not be saved—many in this building who need Jesus. Help them to be saved.

# God's Blessing to the Obedient Man

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 4, 1979**

**Main Scripture Text: 2 Kings 5:1–14**

*“And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”*

2 KINGS 5:13–14

## Outline

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## Introduction

Turn please to 2 Kings chapter 5—2 Kings chapter 5. We're continuing our study on the miracles of Elisha. And here is one of the notable miracles of Elisha. It's the story of the cleansing of Naaman, who was a leper. And I'm reading in 2 Kings 5, verse 1: *“Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper. And the Syrians had gone out by companies,*

*and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy. And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel. And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment." This was the king's ransom, may I say. "And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter has come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy. And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me. And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and he went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith unto thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5:1–14).*

Now we're saved by grace apart from works of any kind. And no good works and no obedience or keeping of rules will get us into heaven. But oh, my friend, because you believe that and know that, I pray God that you'll never understand it to mean that faith becomes a substitute for obedience. It certainly is never meant to be, and as a matter of fact, it cannot be. I think it was Martin Luther who said that we are saved by faith, and we are not saved by faith and works, but we are saved by a faith that works. And I think it was Calvin that said, "Man is saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone." And both of these meant the same thing that James meant when he said, "*Faith without works is dead*" (James 2:26).

Don't tell me you're trusting God, don't tell me that you're saved, don't tell me you're

going to heaven, if the faith that you have has not transformed your life and if you're not obeying the Lord. It's not enough, dear friend, to quote the promises without obeying the commandments of our Lord.

*Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

—JOHN H. SAMMIS

Many of you know the story of Naaman. You've known it since you were a little child because you learned it in Sunday School. Here was this great mighty general in the Syrian army. He had everything. He had all the medals, all the wealth, all the accolades, all of the honor. He had it all. But the Bible says he was a leper. Thank God for this little girl, this little witness for the Lord Jesus, at least, the counterpart of the witness for the Lord Jesus. She witnessed for the Lord, the God of Israel, back in her day, and said, "I just wish that my master knew about the power of my God. There's a prophet in Israel that could heal him of this leprosy." And when the king of Syria heard that, he sent his mighty general, and this time he sent him wrongly to see the king of Israel. The king of Israel, when he saw Naaman coming, said, "Why, they ought to know that I can't cure leprosy. It's some kind of a trick. They're trying to start a confrontation. They're trying to start a war." But Elisha, the man of God, said, "Send him over here. Everybody needs to know there's a prophet in Israel." And you remember the story how Elisha, the man of God, told this high and mighty and noble man, this highbrow, to go and dip seven times in the river Jordan.

Naaman was upset. He was wroth. His pride was pricked. His vanity was wounded. His reasoning was accosted. And he said, "I'll not do it. It's all a waste of time." But then his friend said, "Now wait a minute. You've come all this far. If he'd have asked you to do something great, you'd have done it. Now that he's asked you to do this simple thing, don't you think you ought to do it?" Naaman acquiesced. He went and dipped one, two, three, four, five, six, seven times in the river Jordan, and when he did, he came forth, and his skin was as clean, as fresh, as supple, as pliable, as radiant, as the skin of a newborn baby.

Now there are many, many lessons we could learn out of this story, but I want us to learn the lesson concerning obedience. As I read this over and over again and I tried to say, "Lord, what is the major lesson? What is the major thing that I can tell the people about this?" it seemed that God said to me, "Adrian, speak to my people about the priority of obedience, about this matter of obedience." And so I want you to think with me about several things concerning obedience that I see in this story tonight.

## **I. The Prerequisite for Obedience**

First of all, I want you to see what I call the prerequisite for obedience—the prerequisite

for obedience. Look with me, please, in verse 10. Now I read here in verse 10: *“And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.”*

What is the prerequisite for obedience? It is simply this: to hear the Word of God. You can't obey it unless, first of all, you've heard it. You see, “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). And also obedience comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Now Naaman made a mistake when he went to the wrong voice. First of all, he went to the king of Israel, and the king of Israel, high and mighty as he was, had no answer. And friend, you'll not have any answer if you go to the potentate rather than to the prophet, if you go to the word of man rather than the Word of God. Naaman, in order to obey, first of all, had to know what it was that he was supposed to do.

Now that's a very ordinary thing and a very simple thing, but let me tell you, do you know why many of you—and many of us; I'll include myself—are not obeying God more than we are? Because we're not hearing what God is saying. We're not spending time listening to God. Oh, that's the importance of a quiet time; that's the importance of getting somewhere alone with God in a nook with a book, and opening this book, and reading and listening. The Bible says, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Do you know what your Bible study is every morning? It is reporting for duty. It is saying, “Speak, Lord; thy servant heareth” (1 Samuel 3:9–10). And so the prerequisite for obedience is to hear the Word of God.

## **II. The Priority of Obedience**

Now let's look a little bit at the priority of obedience. Oh, how important obedience is! Notice verses 11 and 12: *“But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.”*

Now let me say this: that there is no substitute for obedience. There is an alternative for obedience, and the alternative to obedience is disobedience. Now men try a lot of substitutes for obedience, and I want you to notice three substitutes that Naaman tried for obedience.

### **A. Human Reason Is Not a Substitute for Obedience**

First of all, he tried to substitute human reason for obedience. Look, if you will, please, in verse 11 again. He says, *“But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought.”* He had it all figured out, how it ought to be done: *“I thought.”* And God said

one thing, and he substituted his human reasonings for God's Word. And how foolish we are! Friend, when we read something in the Bible and it's a plain command of God, whether we understand it or not, we ought to obey it. *The Bible is not first and foremost a book to be explained; it is first and foremost a book to be believed and obeyed.* And dear friend, whether you understand it or not, when God says it, you just simply obey it. And don't substitute human reasoning for obedience.

Why is that so important? Well, because God says, "Your ways are not my ways and neither are your thoughts my thoughts. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8–9). So many times we like to tell God how He ought to do it. I can imagine those early disciples when Saul, who later became the Apostle Paul, was making havoc of the church and haling Christians to prison and to death. I imagine that there were many of them who were praying, and they were saying, "Oh, God, do something about Saul—do something about Saul. God, strike him dead." But God didn't want to strike him dead. God struck him alive. And aren't you glad that He did?

You know, I can just imagine that out there in the wilderness when those poisonous snakes were out there, there were people saying, "God, God, kill these snakes." But God didn't kill the snakes. Instead of that, He had a brazen serpent put on a pole. None of them would have thought of that. But God raised up a solution in the midst of the pollution. Some people may be saying today, "If God is so great, why doesn't He kill the devil?" But God doesn't do the things that man thinks He ought to do. God doesn't kill the devil. Instead He puts His Son on the cross. Isn't that strange, how God works? You see, our ways and God's ways are so different. And Naaman said, "Well, I thought that God would do it a certain way." Whether you understand it or not, you ought to obey.

I was reading an interesting story the other day about Stephen Grellet, who was a pioneer preacher in America, and he was a Quaker preacher and he was an evangelist. And his ministry was to the woodsmen and the woodchoppers, the lumbermen out there in Colorado at the base of the Rockies. And this man was a man of prayer. He was very sensitive to the Holy Spirit. And as he was walking in the Spirit and praying and listening to the Lord, he felt the Spirit of God leading him to go to this lumber camp and to preach at the base of the Rockies. And so this man went out there, and he went to the lumber camp to preach, thinking surely God would have a great congregation there for him, because the Lord was leading him and he was obeying.

When he got there, there was no one in the lumber camp. The place was absolutely deserted. He thought, "Well, maybe they're over there at the dining hall"—or whatever they call it—"at the chow hall." And so he went over there to this place to look, and it was empty; not even a cook was there, no one was there. He said, "Lord, I don't understand it." He said, "Lord, I had a distinct impression from you to come to this place

and preach.” And then he said, “There’s nobody here, and I don’t understand it, but I’m going to be obedient.” And Stephen Grellet opened his Bible without a soul in sight and preached a full-length message with all of the heart and unction and emotion and function of his soul. And when he finished, he gave an invitation to an empty house, to a dining hall, and with tears he pled for people to come to Christ and then he left. He said, “Lord, I don’t know what that was all about, but Lord, I was obedient. I did, Lord, what you told me to do.”

Years later, this man was now across the ocean over in England. He was standing by the London Bridge, and a man walked up to him and said, “You’re Stephen Grellet, aren’t you?” He said, “Yes.” He said, “I’ve been hoping to meet you.” He said, “Do you remember thus-and-such a time when you came to a lumber camp and preached to an empty place?” He said, “Oh, yes,” he said, “I remember it well.” He said, “Well, let me tell you who I am.” He said, “I was the foreman of those woodsmen and I was there. I had come back to the camp to get an axe. And,” he said, “I heard you in there preaching.” He said, “I was ashamed to make myself known,” and he said, “I stood behind a pile of lumber and I listened to you preach. And,” he said, “as you preached, my heart was strangely warmed and moved, and I repented of my sin and I gave my heart to Jesus Christ, and,” he said, “I went back out and,” he said, “I witnessed later when I got my spiritual courage up and you had already gone. But,” he said, “I witnessed to four other men, and they gave their hearts to Christ, and we banded ourselves together in prayer and Bible study. And,” he said, “now all five of us are missionaries who are preaching to our kind of men around the world.”

I think that’s a beautiful story, a wonderful story. But here was a man who couldn’t understand. God just simply said, “Preach,” and he preached. And so dear friend, let me say that there is no substitute for obedience. Human reason is not a substitute for obedience. Whether it makes sense to you or not, obey. Here was this man who was evidently a brilliant man. And how prone we are to want to substitute our brilliance for God’s reason, but human reason is not substitute for obedience.

## **B. Human Resources Are Not a Substitute for Obedience**

I want to go on and say, secondly, that human resources are not a substitute for obedience. God cannot be bought. Now here was this man when he went off to get healed of his leprosy, he took a lot of things with him. Look in verse 5: *“And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.”* And then I want you to see this pompous man in verse 9: *“So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.”* Look at him. He is dripping with money. But I want to say, dear friend, that all of his

wealth and all of his silver and all of his gold and all of his valuable gifts and raiment were no substitute for obeying the Word of God. For the Bible says, *“To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams”* (1 Samuel 15:22).

And I don’t care how much money you put in the offering plate here at Bellevue: If you’re not obeying the Lord, that money, as far as you’re concerned, is going down the tube. Friend, you can’t buy God; you can’t bribe God. And human reason is no substitute for obedience. This man thought perhaps he could buy the favor of God.

### **C. Human Reputation Is No Substitute for Obedience**

Then I want to tell you, thirdly, that human reputation is no substitute for obedience. Look again, if you will here, in chapter 5, and the Bible says in verse 1, *“Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable”*; and chapter 5, verse 5: *“And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel.”*

Boy, if you could have read that letter. Here comes Naaman. He is my servant, distinguished soldier of the year, here’s the Chamber of Commerce Award, here’s the stamp of approval, here’s the key to the city. He came with all of these accoutrements, all of these things. But I want to tell you, Elisha wasn’t impressed, and neither was God. Human reputation, Mr. Big Shot, is not obedience, and no substitute for obedience. You may be one of the finest, the most admired, one of the most respectable, one of the most intelligent, one of the most witty and charming persons in all of this world, but you’ll never get to first base with God until you learn to obey. Oh, the priority of obedience! Remember this. There is only one alternative to obedience, and that is disobedience.

## **III. The Perfection of Obedience**

Now I want you to think with me a little further as we think about obedience, and think not only of the prerequisite, and think not only of the priority, but I want you to think about the perfection of obedience. Look in verse 10 again: *“And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean.”*

Seven times he was told to wash. Why not eight times? Why not five times? Why not six times? I’ll tell you why: because seven in the Bible is the number of perfection. Seven—you see, in the Bible numbers have meaning. One is the number of unity. Two is the number of witness. Three is the number of deity. Four is the earth number. Six is the number of a man. But seven is the number of perfection. And when he is told to dip seven times, what God was saying to him is, “If you want me to bless you, not only must you be obedient; you must obey perfectly.”

You see, it's not enough to just obey in part if you want God's blessing. I think that's where many people fail. They say, "Well now, the Bible teaches I ought to tithe. Well, I don't think I can tithe, but at least, I'll give five percent." You see what they do: Suppose Naaman said, "Well, I don't think I can dip seven times, but I do believe I can make four." You see, "I do believe I can do that." Oh, how prone we are—how prone we are—to think that God is going to take a substitute or less than perfect obedience!

What wife here wants a husband who is eighty-five percent faithful to her? I was on an airplane when I was preparing this sermon the other day getting ready to land in Nashville, and I had my notes out in my lap and I was writing, and the pilot was just landing there in Nashville, and it was raining a little bit. And I got to thinking, "You know, I hope he's obeying that checklist." Suppose he said, "Well, you know, let's see: got the throttle back, I got this thing, got that thing," says, "let down the landing gear: I don't think I'll do that one."

Now look, folks. You can be good in so many things and obey in so many areas, but what God is asking us to do is to obey Him perfectly. I think that's what is symbolized here in the fact that God says that Naaman was to dip seven times in the river Jordan. And while we're talking about perfect obedience, let me say how important it is that we obey perfectly in small things. Look in verse 13: *"And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith unto thee, Wash, and be clean?"*

Friends, obey completely and obey minutely; obey in the small things, the seeming small things, as well as the big things. For the Bible says, *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much"* (Luke 16:10).

I was discussing this with a real good theologian not long ago, and this theologian said to me, "It may not have been the small thing. What seem to be small things are not necessarily small things." And she said to me, she said—listen, you didn't know that some women are great theologians; this one happens to be my younger daughter. She said to me, "Daddy, if he had not obeyed in this small thing, he would not have had a great blessing." You see, what seems to be small may not be small at all. Don't just discount some things that seem to be small. It was really a great and a large thing that this man was almost overlooking. But he thought that it was a small thing.

You know, God may be testing you with something that seems very small. A man wanted to be a missionary, and in order to be a missionary he had to appear before the superintendent of missions, the man who passes on all of the missionaries, and he had to have an interview with this man. And the superintendent of missions said to the man who was applying to go to the mission field, "I want you to come by my house at five o'clock in the morning—five in the morning." Can you imagine that? It was a snowy

morning. But at five in the morning, the young aspiring missionary was there. He was welcomed in by the servant and told to sit down. He sat there until eight o'clock in the morning. And finally, the missions superintendent came down and said, "I'm glad to see you; it's good to have you here; and are you ready for your interview?" He said, "Yes sir, I am." He said, "All right, I want to ask you, Can you spell?" He said, "Yes sir." He said, "Well, spell baker." "Well," he said, "b-a-k-e-r." He said, "Thank you." He said, "Do you know mathematics?" He said, "Well, fairly well." He said, "What is two plus two?" "Well," he said, "four, sir." He said, "Thank you. That's all. You're dismissed." And the young aspiring missionary said, "Is that all, sir?" He said, "Yes." He said, "Well, thank you, sir, for your time." And he was perplexed, but he went away with a gentle spirit.

Later on, that missions superintendent said, "That man is a good candidate for the ministry and he'll make an excellent missionary. Number one, I ask him to come at an early hour in the morning on a snowy day, and he came without a murmur, and that shows he has a spirit of self-sacrifice. Furthermore, he was there on time, and that shows something about his character. Furthermore, he was made to wait for three hours, and he did it without grumbling, and that shows something about his patience. Furthermore, when I came down, he was not angry with me. That shows something about his temper. And when I asked him very simple questions, he answered them in a straightforward manner, and that shows something about his humility. He'll make an excellent missionary.

You see, sometimes when God is asking you to do something very small, it may not make sense to you. And you say, "I don't need to do that. Why, that's not important." You let God determine what's important. Here's old Naaman, and he said, "Why, there are better rivers over there in Syria if I want to wash in a river." But God knows what He's doing. Ladies and gentlemen, think with me about the perfection of obedience. You obey in the small things, and when you obey, obey completely.

*Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

—JOHN H. SAMMIS

#### **IV. The Power of Obedience**

Finally, I want you to notice with me tonight the power of obedience. Look, if you will, please, in verse 14. And the Bible says, *"Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."* God's omnipotence joins man's obedience—God's omnipotence joins man's obedience. One of the reasons that we see so few miracles in our lives and in our churches today is just simply this: We have not learned to completely, fully, obey the Lord.

I was very interested in this subject of obedience and so I took my concordance and looked up some scriptures dealing with obedience and the blessings that come with obedience. Let's do that for just a moment. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 11. We're talking now about the power of obedience. Deuteronomy chapter 11—God was speaking to Israel, but He also in spirit is speaking to us today, and this is what God says in Deuteronomy chapter 11, verse 26: *"Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day; and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God"* (Deuteronomy 11:26–28).

Now God is doing the same for you right now. God is setting before you right now a blessing and a curse. And what determines whether or not you receive a blessing? If you obey. What determines whether or not you're going to receive the curse? If you disobey.

And I looked up some of the blessings that God says that He has for those who obey. And let's just search them out.

#### **A. The Blessing of Plenty**

Turn to Isaiah chapter 1, verse 19, for a moment. And we'll just go as long as we can, and we don't have much more time, but let's just look at some of these blessings. It was such a blessing to me just to look them up. Isaiah chapter 1 and verses 19 and 20—here's the blessing that I call the blessing of plenty. God says, *"If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it"* (Isaiah 1:19–20).

#### **B. The Blessing of Peace**

There's the blessing of plenty that comes by obedience. There's the blessing of peace that comes by obedience. Look in Jeremiah 26 and verse 13. God had said that He was going to send war and plague and trouble upon His people because they were disobedient, but then God modified that by saying in Jeremiah chapter 26 and verse 13 these words now: *"Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you"* (Jeremiah 26:13). I believe that God has pronounced judgment against America, but I believe if we Americans would turn to God in obedience that God would turn from the judgment that He has pronounced against us and God would send us peace.

#### **C. The Blessing of Protection**

Plenty is one of the blessings of obedience. Peace is one of the blessings of obedience. Protection is one of the blessings of obedience. Look in Exodus chapter 23 and verse

22. I just had a good time just looking these things up in the concordance. What a blessing they were to my heart! *“But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak;”—listen to this now—“then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries”* (Exodus 23:22).

#### **D. The Blessing of Power**

God’s protection comes from obedience. But not only plenty, and peace, and protection; power comes from obedience. Look in Acts chapter 5 and verse 22. God here is talking about the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Don’t you want God’s power to be upon your life? Well, listen. Here’s the recipe for having God’s power upon your life—Acts chapter 5 and verse 32: *“And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him”* (Acts 5:32).

God’s not going to give His Holy Spirit to rebels, to those who are not yielded to His will. Do you want to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit? Of course, all of us have the Spirit dwelling in us, but this verse speaks of the Holy Spirit in power and special anointing. And that comes to the obedient Christian.

#### **E. The Blessing of Purity**

And then look in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 22, and you’re going to find out also that purity is one of the marvelous gifts of obedience in 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 22: *“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit”* (1 Peter 1:22). You want to be pure? Obey the truth. You want to be sanctified? There’s no way apart from obedience. Purity comes from obedience.

#### **F. The Blessing of Perception**

Now here’s one I think will interest a lot of you. Turn to Psalm 119, verse 100, and you’re going to find that perception comes from obedience. People sometimes can’t understand why they don’t understand the Bible. They say, “I read the Bible and it doesn’t make sense to me.” Well, let me give you a recipe for understanding the Bible. Psalm 119, verse 100: *“I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts”* (Psalm 119:100). Isn’t that wonderful? The way to understand the Bible is to obey the Bible, and the way to understand the verses you don’t understand is to obey the verses you do understand. I understand more than the ancients, that is, the accumulative wisdom of the ages. And I haven’t been off to the university, perhaps, or I haven’t studied abroad, but I keep God’s Word, and therefore God reveals to me His truth.

You see, folks, the only way that you can really understand the Bible is for God to reveal it to you, and God doesn’t reveal it to rebels. There are some of you who know that God wants you to do certain things, and you’re not doing them, and you wonder

why you've come up against a roadblock when you try to read the Bible.

### **G. The Blessing of the Presence of God**

And God's presence is the gift of obedience. Look in John 14, verse 21. Now there's a sense in which the Lord Jesus is always with us. I understand that. But would you like for Him to manifest His presence to you? Would you like for Jesus really to be real to you so that He's not just someone that you know about, but someone you know—that you'd not just like to pray at Him, but that you'd like to talk with Him, when you pray? Then look in John 14 and verse 21: *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them,”*—that is, he who obeys—*“he it is loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21).

Do you know why Jesus is not real to many of us? We're just not obeying His Word. Do you want Him to manifest Himself to you? Would you like for Jesus to be real? There's no way apart from obedience. And so we see that the prerequisite for obedience is to hear the Word of God. We see that the priority of obedience is this: that there's no substitute for it, not human reason, not human resources, not any kind of human pride or achievement. We see, ladies and gentlemen, that the power of obedience is such that when we begin to obey God God's omnipotence links with our obedience and all of these things—plenty and peace and protection and power and purity and perception and the presence of the Lord—they all become ours.

### **Conclusion**

Let me tell you this little story, and I think it perhaps will be used of God, and then I'll be finished. I read many, many years ago—I can't remember the source and I may not have the story exactly right, but it went something like this. A father and son who loved each other dearly were in the home together and they were having good communion and they were having good fellowship, and they respected and loved one another, and the son was an almost grown young man. And the fire died out in the fireplace, and the father said to that son, “Son, would you please get up and put another piece of wood on the fire?” And it was cold, and the son had settled down, and he really didn't want to do it. And he said, “No, Dad.” He said, “I just don't want to do that right now.” And the father said, “No, son, I'd like for you to do it. Son, please get up and put another piece of wood on the fire.” And the son said, “No, Daddy, I'm not going to do it.” And the father said, “Well now, son, I'm not asking you anymore; I'm telling you: Get up and put another piece of wood on the fire.” And the son bowed his back and he said, “No sir, I'm not going to do it.” He said, “Son, obey your father.” He said, “No, I will not obey.” And then the father said, “This is my house and you're my son, and I'll not have a rebel here. You're old enough now to be out on your own. Either you will obey me or you'll leave

this house.” And the young man said, “Well, if that’s the way you feel about it, I’ll leave this house.” And he jumped up, gathered his things together, put them in a bag, walked out, and slammed the door.

And out in the cold he went and left the house and the father that he loved. And he stayed gone for quite a while, and then he got to thinking, “What a rebellious son I am! What a fool I am! My father loves me, I love my father, and that was not a big thing to put a piece of wood on the fire. I’ve gone to far more trouble, and all of the things I’ve done living away from home than I would have had I put that simple piece of wood on the fire. How I’ve dishonored my father! How I’ve played the fool! I’ll go back and I’ll make it right. And he ate some crow and he humbled himself and went back and knocked on the door.

The father saw him, and his face smiled, and he said, “Yes, son?” He said, “Daddy, I’ve come to tell you that I’m so ashamed of myself. Dad, I acted like a fool. Daddy, I don’t know what got into me that made me so rebellious, that made me so angry. I just don’t know, Dad. But Dad, you had every right to say what you said to me. Daddy, I want you to know I’m really sorry, and I want to ask you, Will you please forgive me? And may I come back home? And may we be friends again?”

And the father, with the tears streaming down his cheeks, opened his arms and took his son in and gave him a hug and said, “Son, welcome home.” And he said, “Daddy, it’s good to be home.” And then the dad said, “And son, there’s one more thing: Would you put another piece of wood on the fire?”

Now friend, there is no way around obedience—no way at all. Don’t think you can talk your way past it. Don’t think tears or emotion or anything else is a substitute for obedience.

*Trust and obey, for there’s no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

—JOHN H. SAMMIS

# The Road to Hell is Paved with Pride

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 27, 1997

**Main Scripture Text:** 2 Kings 5: 1–14

*“And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?”*

2 KINGS 5:13

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to 2 Kings chapter 5. Familiar story, if you know Old Testament history—one of the best loved stories. It’s the story of Captain Naaman and how Captain Naaman dipped seven times in the river Jordan and was healed of his leprosy. Now, the title of the message today is “The Road to Hell Is Paved with Pride”—“The Road to Hell Is Paved with Pride.” And if you’re on that road, my prayer is that you will get off of it.

I was on an airplane a while back, and the steward said something like this: “This is

Flight 3726, bound for Cincinnati. If that's not your desired destination, I suggest you get off this airplane now." Well, if you are on the road to hell, and that's not your desired destination, it would be wonderful if you got off today and got on that right road, because, folks, you're going to end up where you're headed. I can't say it any plainer than that: You're going to end up where you're headed. And I want you to think about that right now.

You know, man is an amazing creature. He has learned to fly through the air like a bird, and he has learned to swim through the sea like a fish, but he has not yet learned to walk on earth like a man, like God created him to be. For further reference, just read this morning's newspaper, or any newspaper.

Now, what is the problem? Well, the evolutionist says he's on his way upward, and he's just stumbling upward, and he just has not had enough time. Just add more time. And the geneticist says, "Well, if we could just rearrange by genetic engineering his genes and chromosomes, we could build a better man. We just don't have the right ingredients." And the sociologist says, "Well, if we'd just put him in a better sociological condition—if we change his environment—we will change the man." And the educator says, "No, what he needs is knowledge—and knowledge is power. And what he needs is just more learning." But the problem—listen—the problem with man is not that he doesn't have this or doesn't have this, or doesn't this or doesn't that, or doesn't have thus-and-such; the problem is what he does have: that's where the problem is. The problem is what he already has, which is sin.

Now, that may sound passé for me to say that. You would say, "Well, I would expect you, a Baptist preacher, to say that the problem is sin." If you would go to one of the great universities and ask them, "What is the problem?" nobody would say sin. If you go to the UN and say, "What is the problem?" no one will say sin. If you go to the centers of power and Wall Street, or wherever that is, or the Pentagon, and say, "What is the problem?" nobody's going to stand up and say, "The problem is sin." But, folks, I want to tell you as clearly and as plainly as I know how, the problem is sin—the problem is sin! And that sin distilled is a little word named *pride*.

Now, pride will take you to hell. I want you to learn something as we study the story of Captain Naaman. Begin here in chapter 5, verse 1: "*Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man*"—underscore that: he was a great man—"with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour." (2 Kings 5:1)

## **I. Naaman's Marvelous Character**

Think of the marvelous, wonderful character of this man Naaman.

### A. He Was a Capable Leader

He was a capable leader. He was a military man. He was the Colin Powell, the Norman Schwarzkopf, of his day. Everybody knew who he was. He was held in highest esteem. This verse says that he was honorable. He had, evidently, great ability. Naaman was a man among men. If he walked into this auditorium today, every eye would turn.

### B. He Was a Conquering Leader

But not only was he a capable man; he was a conquering leader, for this verse says that he had led the armies of Syria. (2 Kings 5:1) I can see him now as his chariot is being pulled by his prancing white stallion. Across his chest are these medals of honor. I can see his broad shoulders, his square jaw. As he goes down the streets, the crowds cheer: "There goes Captain Naaman. Look! There's Naaman!" Women might weep as they see him go past, just filled with emotion. Teenagers would reach out to touch his chariot. A father holds up his son and says, "Son, I hope one day you can be like Captain Naaman. He's a great man. He's a real hero."

### C. He Was a Courageous Leader

Not only was he capable, and not only was he a conqueror, but he was so courageous. This verse says he was a man of valor. (2 Kings 5:1) Naaman wasn't a man to flinch. He wasn't a man to flee. He was a man full of courage. He had nerves of steel. He had the heart of a lion. I'm telling you, this man was an outstanding man. Listen to it again: *"Naaman, the captain of the host of the king of Syria...a great man with his master...honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour."* Friend, if you were in a fight, you'd want Captain Naaman on your side. He had it all.

## II. Naaman's Miserable Condition

But wait a minute—wait a minute. Wait just a minute. Let's finish the sentence. Let's look at it now: *"Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master,"*—that is, he had connections—*"and honourable,"*—he had character—*"because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria:"*—he had a track record—*"he was also a mighty man in valour,"*—he was strong and courageous—*"but he was a leper."* (2 Kings 5:1) He was a leader, but he was a leper. We talk about his marvelous character. Let's talk about his miserable condition: *"But he was a leper."* Naaman had leprosy.

Now, what was leprosy? Leprosy was an ancient disease and a horrible disease. It would show up, first of all, as just a speck on the flesh, and after a while, the extremities—the fingers and the toes—would lose their sensitivity. And then, after a while, they would become distorted and swollen. And after a while, the flesh would

begin to discolor, and putrefy, and rot. And the fingertips would fall off, and the toes would fall off, and stubs would be left. And this person who was a leper would know that sooner or later he was going to die, and he would be put into a leper colony, lest the disease spread. He would be quarantined. And when he would go down the streets, he would always walk downwind from the people, and he would have to hold his hand over his face and cry to those before he got there, “Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!” And people would shrink back, and they would be afraid of him, and they would not want to touch him, because he had leprosy—leprosy. Here was a man, a great man, but the Bible says, “*He was a leper.*”

Because of the characteristics of the disease called leprosy, it was used often in the Bible to illustrate sin. And the book of Leviticus gives more material as to how the leper was cleansed than almost any other subject, because, you see, leprosy was used in the Bible as an illustration, a type, of sin that may begin small, but it spreads until it consumes the whole being that ends in death. There’s no cure. The only way that a man could be cured from leprosy in that day was an absolute divine miracle of God, and that’s the reason leprosy was used as an illustration of sin in that day and in the book of Leviticus, because sin may start small, but it does not end that way. Sin distorts. Sin numbs. Sin putrefies. Sin ultimately kills. There is no known cure except a miracle of God—divine grace. And so, here this man is a leper.

Now, what a shudder must have gone through the household of Naaman when he comes back from the doctor, and the doctor has said, “Naaman, you have leprosy.” Then, all of these things, what did the honors that Naaman had, what did those honors mean now? What did his trophies mean now? What did the medals that hung on his chest, what did they mean now to Naaman? Who now would say, “I wish above all things I could trade places with Captain Naaman”?

Now, the Bible is full of illustrations of salvation. Why do you think this story is put in the Word of God? Just to tell us about a man who got healed of leprosy? Oh, no. It’s an illustration, if we will see it, of salvation, because all of us, spiritually—listen to me—all of us—all of us, spiritually, are lepers. Romans 5, verse 12: “*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*”—“*all have sinned*” (Romans 5:12)—every mother’s child in this building.

You could take the finest athlete in this building and stand him up here—a broad-shouldered, grinning young man, gifted, a bundle of coordination—and you could say of that young man, “He is a great athlete, but he’s a leper.” You could take the most charming, beautiful girl in this building today, full of grace and beauty, and stand her up here and say, “Isn’t she a lovely thing? Isn’t she charming? Isn’t she vivacious? Isn’t she friendly? Isn’t she beautiful?” but spiritually, she’s a leper. I could go out there and get

the finest businessman—I mean, the keenest one, the real entrepreneur, the wheeler-dealer, honest in his business, wise in his investments—put him up here and say, “Isn’t he a model businessman?” But he is a leper. Friend, there’s not a mother’s child in this building that is not a sinner, is that not right? I don’t care how many nice things you say about any individual, he is still a leper; he is a sinner.

And so you see, here’s a man. You see a man with a marvelous character, but a man with a miserable condition.

### **III. Naaman’s Miraculous Cleansing**

Now I want you to see a man with a miraculous cleansing. I want you to see what God did for Naaman, because what God did for Naaman God will do for you and God will do for anybody who will trust Him today.

#### **A. Naaman Heard of God**

First of all, Naaman heard of God. Now, let’s notice how he heard of God. Look, if you will, in verses 2 through 4: *“And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid;”—*there’s a little teenage girl—*“and she waited on Naaman’s wife”—*she’s a little servant girl, a little housemaid. *“And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he”—*God’s man, God’s prophet—*“would recover him of his leprosy. And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.”* (2 Kings 5:2–4) Now, here’s how he heard of God. There was a little captive maid. She was a little nobody, and she was a captive. She was in a foreign land. That wasn’t even her home. And did you know that God used this little girl to tell mighty Naaman about Himself?

What does that have to do with you? Well, friend, I want to tell you that we are strangers and pilgrims right here, are we not? This is not our native land. We’re just passing through. We are pilgrims; we’re sojourners. And we in the eyes of this world are little nobodies. But God has given us the greatest privilege that anybody could ever possibly have, and that is to point men, women, boys, and girls to Jesus Christ. And listen: Don’t you say that you don’t amount to anything. You see, she knew God, and she had a heart of compassion. She was touched by the fact that Naaman was a leper. She cared. You can be a doctor and not love your patient. You can be a lawyer and not have compassion on your client. You can be a merchant and not give a hoot about those that you sell to. But you can’t be a soul winner without a heart of love. Do you love those around you? Here was a little girl—just an insignificant little girl, a little maiden, a foreigner—but she was moved with compassion, and she had enough courage to speak to her mistress. I imagine that it was hard for her to do that.

Do you know one of the hardest things for me to ever do is to get started? I've been on the trail for a long time winning souls, Brother Dan, but one of the hardest things for me to do is still open my mouth about Jesus. Is it hard for you? I sit on an airplane next to a person and I say, "You know, that person may be on the road to hell." And something in me says, "Don't talk to them. You'll embarrass yourself. You'll embarrass them. You'll cause a scene. Don't do it." Do you ever feel that way? I mean, you know you ought to speak. May God give us courage—may God give us courage! You say, "Oh, well, you're going to drive them away." Well, they're already going to hell, so where are you going to drive them?" Speak—speak! Speak about Jesus! Don't be ashamed of Jesus. A little girl with a heart said, "I know somebody who can take care of Captain Naaman."

## **B. Naaman Was Humbled Before God**

But not only did he hear of God; he had to be humbled before God, because the title of this message is, folks, "The Road to Hell Is Paved with Pride." And Naaman was a proud man. We're going to see that in just a moment. Pride is a dangerous sin, and pride is a deceptive sin. It is a dangerous sin. It will take away revival. It will ruin your home. It will ruin you domestically. It will ruin you financially. It will ruin you emotionally. It will ruin you spiritually. It will ruin this nation nationally. It's a dangerous sin, but it's such a deceptive sin.

How many of you in this building have problems with pride? Let me see your hand. All right, I'm going to speak to you, but primarily to those who didn't raise their hand. That was mean, wasn't it? I'm going to tell you something, folks. Listen—listen: We all wrestle with pride. I do, and you do, and Naaman does.

### **1. Human Resources Failed Him**

So this little girl told Naaman about the Lord. Now, begin in verse 5, and look, if you will now, here: *"And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment."* (2 Kings 5:5) Now, boy, you talk about a guy whose got the resources now! Here he starts out. First of all, he gets the king of Syria. Now he's thick with the king of Syria. I mean, he was loved by the king in Syria. So the king of Syria writes a personal letter. It would be like you going overseas somewhere with a personal letter from the President of the United States. He's got this personal letter sealed with the king's seal. And then, he takes all this money. Do you know how much money that was? About one-half million bucks! He's got a half a million bucks with him. And then, he wants to look good when he goes in, so he takes ten new suits—ten suits of clothes. Now he's going off. Here he is—I mean, he is Mr. Big. And now he's got these resources. But God is going to teach him that he cannot trust in his human

resources.

## **2. Human Reputation Failed Him**

But not only does he have his human resources; he has his human reputation. Look, if you will, in verses 6 and 7: *“And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy. And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent”—that is, “he tore”—“his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.”* (2 Kings 5:6–7)

Now, oh, I can see old Naaman. He puts on one of those brand new suits. Maybe he’s got a bag of gold in each hand. And he goes walking with his letter of recommendation. He goes into that ivory palace there on the hill of Samaria that Ahab had built. He goes up to King Jehoram, and he hands him this letter. And he says, “Look, this is a letter from the king of Syria concerning me.” But Jehoram said, “Good night! What’s he doing here? I can’t heal him of his leprosy. Is this some sort of a way to start a war?” Now, what the whole point is, is this: that Naaman is depending upon human resources. He is depending upon human reputation.

And now, continue to read and see what happens in verse 8: *“And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash seven times,”—go wash in Jordan seven times—“and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.”* Now, notice verse 11: *“But Naaman was wroth...”*—kids, that means he was angry. I mean, you’d say he was mad: good and mad, hopping made—*“But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought...”*—just underscore “I thought”—*“I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away”*—now, notice this—*“in a rage.”* (2 Kings 5:8–12) He said, “Man!” So full of himself.

## **3. Human Reason Failed Him**

Now, his resources have failed him. His reputation has failed him. And you’re going to see right now, his reason is going to fail him. He’s depending also upon his cunningness and his ability. So he goes now. He hears he’s supposed to go to the prophet. And so he leaves the ivory palace, and I can see him as he with his entourage goes down,

perhaps, through the back alleys to a little humble cottage where there the prophet is. And he says, “All right, go get him and bring him out here.” Naaman’s out there waiting. After a while, they come back out, and they say, “He’s not coming out.” He says, “What?” “He’s not coming out.” “Well, I thought he would come out here and heal me. What’s he doing?” “I don’t know. He’s just not coming out.” “Well, what did he say?” “He said for you to go jump in the river.” “What? What river?” “Jordan.” “Jordan? That muddy creek, Jordan? How many times?” “Seven.” “Why, he’s crazy. Who does he think I am? Why, if I wanted to jump in a river, I would have stayed in Syria. Why, we’ve got beautiful rivers up there.”

And they do. I’ve been up to the headwaters of the Syrian rivers. They’re gorgeous and beautiful. Don’t get an idea that the Jordan River is a beautiful river. Friend, it is not. We have a romanticized idea about Jordan. It is a muddy, shallow creek. And when you see it, you’ll be underwhelmed. I’m telling you, you’ll be underwhelmed when you see Jordan—I was. I heard these songs, Jamie, about “Roll, Jordan Roll,” and “Mighty Jordan,” and all of that stuff. I was expecting one of the great rivers of the world when I saw Jordan. And in some places it’s no wider than from here to the choir, and in some places it’s so shallow you could wade across it easily. That’s the river Jordan. Of course, in certain times of the year, it would rise up and swell.

And he says, “Why, Naaman is so mad!” I can see him—the Bible says he’s full of rage (2 Kings 5:12)—I can see him as he strikes the flank of that horse, gathers his robe about him, and starts the chariot up. I can hear the clatter of those wheels as he’s riding. They said, “Hold it! Cool it! Cool it, man! If he’d asked you to do some mighty thing, you would have done it. But he’s asked you to do a very simple thing. Why don’t you do it?”

I want you to see how pride is working on this man. You see, he had everything: He had resources. He had reputation. He had reason. He said, “I thought I had it all figured out.” But he needed humility. And so he has a decision to make. He has now to lay his pride in the dust. You see, in his mind, he was a great man who had leprosy. In Elisha’s mind, he was a leper who just happened to be a great man. There are some of you in this building today who are never going to be saved, because of pride. You are so much like Captain Naaman. Others, thank God, they know their need. But I’m not talking primarily to that category today. I’m talking about people who are escorted to hell, chained in the cold chains of pride forged on the anvil of a hard heart. Naaman has a decision to make right now. Naaman has to ask himself, “Am I willing to lay my pride in the dust and come to God?”

Let me give you some verses on pride. Listen to me very carefully now. Proverbs chapter 6, verses 16 and 17: *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him.”* Now, folks, that’s strong language: *“an abomination unto him.”*

Number one of the list is *“a proud look.”* (Proverbs 6:16–17) Did you know that you can be proud just by the way you look? We sit haughty, unbent, unbroken—a proud look. Number one on God’s hate parade is pride. *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him.”* Put this scripture down—Proverbs 16, verse 5: *“Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD.”* (Proverbs 16:5)

Why does God hate pride? Because pride is a sense of independence from God. It was pride that made the devil the devil. It was pride that turned Lucifer, the son of the morning, into Satan, the father of the night. It was pride that caused the human race to fall. Why do you think that Eve did what she did in the Garden of Eden? For a piece of fruit? For a piece of fruit? No! The garden was filled with fruit. The temptation was, “You will be like God. You can be your own little cheap tin god.” It is pride that distorts and destroys the human race. And God hates the sin of pride. So much religion today is pride on parade: it is man-centered rather than God-centered. Most of the people in America today are egomaniacs strutting to hell, thinking they’re too good to be damned.

And the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 18, *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.”* (1 Corinthians 1:18) Do you know what the preaching of the cross does? Listen to me carefully. It slays man’s pride. God-centered religion is by the cross alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Now, a lot of folks here today, they think, “Well, you know, Adrian, when you preach, I’m going to look around and see if any of those old sinners are going to go down there and get saved,” and you’re the one that needs to be saved. You think the gospel is for the thief, the murderer, the harlot, the prostitute; you think that the gospel is for the down-and-out. But the gospel’s also for the up-and-out. Naaman was up, but he was out. He was filled with pride.

Let me tell you there are almost six billion on Planet Earth. If you were to take all six billion people on Planet Earth—all six billion of them—put them in a line, and get a golden vessel, and just pass down that line, and let each one of them put the very best quality of his nature in that golden vessel—if there was some way he could do that—and then take all of those best qualities out of those six billion people, and pour all of those into one man, that one man would have to kneel before the cross to get saved. I’m telling you, folks, *“There is none righteous, no, not one.”* (Romans 3:10) And so Naaman has a decision to make. Naaman is filled with pride, and he has a decision that he must make.

### **C. Naaman Was Cleansed by God**

Now, let’s find out. We’ve talked about his character. We’ve talked about his condition. Let’s talk about his cleansing. How was he cleansed? Well, let me show you. Look, if you will, beginning now in verse 13: *“And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not*

*have done it? how much rather then, when he saith unto thee, Wash, and be clean?"*

Now, here's how he was cleansed. If you need Jesus today, if you want to be saved, if you want to go to heaven, if you want the peace that passes understanding, if you want to be clean in God's sight, listen: *"Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."* (2 Kings 5:13–14) Now, let's break that down.

## **1. Repentance**

First of all, there was repentance. Verse 14 says, *"Then went he down."* (2 Kings 5:14) That is, he is going this way. He's going away. He's going back to Syria. They say, "Hold it! Why don't you do what God says?" And he turns around and goes down to Jordan. Now, repentance—though the word is not mentioned here, the action is shown—the word *repentance* means "a change of mind"—*metanoia*. You must change your mind. Are you willing to do that? Jesus said in Luke 13, verse 3, *"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."* (Luke 13:3) Jesus said, *"I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* (Matthew 9:13) Luke 15, verse 7, says there's *"joy...in heaven over one sinner that repenteth."* (Luke 15:7)

I can see Naaman now as he gets out of his chariot—he comes down from his high horse. I can see him now as he humbles himself. I can see him as he strips off his medals. I can see him as he lays aside that gorgeous garment that he is dressed with. I can see him now as he is stepping down into muddy Jordan. And you know how he has to do this, folks? Out in public! There he is in a public place. I mean, this is Naaman—off comes his garments, off comes his medals. There is the muddy Jordan, and there goes mighty Naaman down into the river Jordan.

Some of you say, "You know, pastor, if I could just get saved back here in the back and never make it public, that would be fine with me, but I'm not going to go forward in that service and make a spectacle of myself." No, you won't, will you? You know, Jesus told about two men who went up to the temple to pray: a Pharisee and a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed, and said, "God, I thank you that I'm not like other men." (Luke 18:11) The publican bowed his head; he would not even lift up his head to heaven. And he said, *"God be merciful to me a sinner."* (Luke 18:13) The Pharisee never got saved. Jesus said, "The publican was justified." (Luke 18:14) He was a dishonest, money-grubbing tax collector. One man went home dignified, and one man went home justified.

You know, there are some of you, you just don't want to lose your dignity—you just don't want to lose your dignity. I mean that the last thing you would do is say, "You think I'm going to down there and tell all those folks I need to be saved? You think I'm going to let them put me under the water in front of all those people up there? Man!" Well, go

on, then, and strut to hell—strut to Hell. Keep your pride, and die, and go to hell. *“God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.”* (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5)

## 2. Reliance

There’s Captain Naaman. There’s repentance. But not only is there repentance; there’s reliance, because the Bible says that he went down *“according to the saying of the man of God.”* (2 Kings 5:14) He is now trusting the Word of God. He’s laying aside his own reason, and he’s looking to God alone. When he takes off his garments and his medals, it’s his way of saying, “I can’t do it.” When he goes down into Jordan, it’s his way of saying, “God can do it.”

Do you know what Jordan symbolizes? Jordan symbolizes death. The very word *Jordan* means “descent”; it’s a combination of a word that means “judgment.” Dan means “judgment.” *Jor-dan*, put together, is “descent into death.” Why did Elisha say, “You go dip seven times in Jordan”? That’s a picture of Christ. That river Jordan pictures Christ, who took our sin, the river of death. He became death for us. Seven is the number of perfection. There will be a perfect cleansing by the grace of Almighty God. There was repentance. There was reliance, trust, in God’s Word. How does that relate to us? *“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already.”* (John 3:18) You’ve got to believe on the Lord.

## 3. Renewal

And then, there was renewal. Our time is gone, but look in verse 14—look in verse 14. Look at it—it says here, *“And his flesh came again like unto the flesh of”*—what?—*“a little child.”* (2 Kings 5:14) I had my little grandson Andrew the other day, and I felt his little leg—so soft and spongy. Don’t you love to feel the flesh of a little child? So smooth. Can you imagine a grown man with flesh like that? Well, I’ll tell you what: If the doctors could do that for you, there would be a long line. I mean, there he was, brand-spanking new, like a little child. *“If any man be in Christ, he is”*—what?—*“a new creature.”* (2 Corinthians 5:17) The Bible says, *“He was clean.”* (2 Kings 5:14) “For the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

## Conclusion

Now, friend, it’s only an illustration. I mean, I’m not saying that Naaman was born again. I’m not saying that at all. I don’t know what his spiritual condition ultimately was. I’m saying that God put this in the Bible as an illustration of how we could be saved. You know, the Bible’s just full of illustrations about how to know the Lord Jesus Christ. But I know this: that Naaman never would have been cleansed of his physical leprosy had he not humbled himself and believed the Word of God. Don’t you agree with that? And I’m telling you this: that I can take the finest person in this building today without Jesus and

stand up there and brag on you all day long, just like they bragged on Naaman in verse 1, (2 Kings 5:1) but I just have to say at the close of it, “But he’s a sinner. But he is a sinner. But he is a sinner.”

Now, folks, listen to me. From the time that Naaman went under the seventh time, he was made perfectly whole, perfectly clean. I have been saved for many, many years, and I’ve grown in the Lord, but I am no more saved today than I was that first moment after I said yes to the Lord Jesus. And I’m telling you, if you’ll trust Him today, if you’ll give Him your heart, you’ll be as saved as the Apostle Paul. You say, “How can that be?” Folks, it’s a miracle—it is a miracle! A greater miracle than the healing of leprosy is the cleansing of a soul.

*There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel’s veins;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.*

—WILLIAM COWPER

# The Sin of Silence

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 27, 1991

**Main Scripture Text:** 2 Kings 6:13–17, 24–31; 7:1–16

*“Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.”*

2 KINGS 7:9

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn with me, please, to 2 Kings chapter 6, and in just a moment, we're going to begin reading. Someone has well said that “one of Satan's chief strategies is to keep good men silent in a time of moral crisis.” I believe that is true. Now, we've heard the old proverb that “silence is golden,” but someone else came along and said, “Yes, silence is golden, but sometimes it's just plain yellow”—that we don't speak when we ought to speak. And, in my estimation, one of the chief sins of the twentieth-century Church is not the sin of immorality, not the sin of heresy, but the sin committed by many people who sit in my congregation tonight, and those who listen by radio, and those who will listen later by tape. It is the sin of silence, and I want to talk to you tonight about that—the sin of silence.

Andrew Murray said, “There are two classes of Christians: soul winners and backsliders.” He left no equivocation. He said, “If you're not a soul winner, no matter

what else you may do, you are not right with God.” I wonder how many in this congregation tonight really believe that. I think many of us think that there are other things that we can do that will substitute for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, but, my dear friend, there is only one thing you can do with good news—and that is to tell it. And, if you don’t tell it, then you’ve sinned against God.

I think of this magnificent building. I think of the staff that we have here. I think of all of the accouterments and all of the equipment that we have here, and I’m grateful for it. But, sometimes I’m almost condemned by it because I have a feeling that we are doing so little with so much. And, I think of that first-century Church, and they did so much with so little. I mean, I think about them. They were unlettered. They had no finances to speak of. They had no prestige, and yet they went out against the imperial might of Rome. They went out against the intellectual sophistry of Greece. They went out against the stiff-necked bigotry of the religion of that day, Judaism. And, it was said of them that they turned their world upside down, which really meant it was right side up, because it had been upside down before they turned it upside down and put it right side up.

People in this day and in this age, many who are in this auditorium, have spiritual lockjaw. Dr. Stephen Olford said, “They’re like artic rivers—frozen at the mouth!” Now, I want to talk to you, and I pray God that God the Holy Spirit will make this more than a sermon, more than a Bible study—that God the Holy Spirit will rivet what I have to say into your heart and impel you tonight, tomorrow, and the rest of your life to speak up for the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **I. The Problem**

### **A. A Time of Hunger**

Now, having said that, look in 2 Kings chapter 6, beginning in verse 24—here’s the moral crisis: *“And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host”—*that is, all his army—*“and went up, and besieged Samaria”—*now, here was the problem: there was an enemy, a Syrian wicked king, a heathen, pagan king, who had come up against Samaria and God’s chosen people. A real and a treacherous enemy had come against them, and, as a result of that, there was a time of hunger. Notice in verse 25—*“And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass’s head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver”—*eighty pieces of silver to buy the head of a donkey—*“and the fourth part of a cab of dove’s dung for five pieces of silver.”* (2 Kings 6:24–25) There was a war, a wicked king, and as a result of that, there was a time of famine and a time of hunger. To me, it only illustrates the greater famine.

Turn with me to the book of Amos for just a moment, and look, if you will, in chapter 8 and verse 11: God says, *“Behold, the days come”—*and may I say I believe those days are here—*“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in*

*the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD*” (Amos 8:11)—a famine for the Word of God. Always, when the enemy attacks after the war, there comes a famine if the enemy besieges any particular company or country very long.

And, when there’s a famine, what happens? Go back, if you will, to 2 Kings chapter 6. When there’s a famine, there’s always a depraved diet. Back in Samaria they were eating donkey’s heads and dove’s dung, and on top of that, they began to devour one another. Look, if you will, in verse 28: *“And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.”* (2 Kings 6:28–29) Now, get the situation. Here is a wicked, cruel, malevolent king who has attacked. As a result of that, there is a famine in the land. The people are eating such things as unclean animals, a donkey’s head. They’re eating such filth as dove’s dung. And then, they are devouring and eating their own children. You say, “Pastor, that’s the most depraved, despicable thing I can think of.” Yes, my dear friend, but there’s something even worse: the Bible speaks of us having a famine for the Word of God. The Bible speaks of those who are not right with God in Galatians chapter 5 as *“[biting] and [devouring] one another”* (Galatians 5:15) in the spiritual sense. It was a time of hunger.

## **B. A Time of Helplessness**

May I tell you not only was it a time of hunger; it was a time of helplessness? Look, if you will, in chapter 6, and I begin in verse 26: *“And...the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king. And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress? And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son”*—now, look in verse 30—*“And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he [tore]”—or, “rent”—“his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked [up], and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh. [And] he said, God do so and more...to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.”* (2 Kings 6:26–31)

Here’s the king. The woman comes to this king, and she says, “King, help.” The king says, “How do you think I’m going to help? What do you want me to do? What do you expect out of me?” This woman, looking to this backslidden, pathetic politician—all he

can do is to tear his clothes in anguish and pass on by. May I tell you, dear friend, not only do we have a spiritual famine in the land, but all of the king's men and all of the politicians put together don't have the answer? There's no need to look to Washington, and there's no need to look to Nashville, and there's no need to look to City Hall—they don't have the answer. It was a time of hunger. It was a time of hopelessness.

### C. **A Time of Hellishness**

And, it was a time of hellishness. Beginning in verse 31, the king is so frustrated that he turns on the man of God. Notice in verse 31: he said, *"God do so and more...to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day"* (2 Kings 6:31) That is, "I'm going to find the preacher, the prophet," the king said, "and I'm going to make him a foot shorter at the top. I'm going to take his head off." A hatred for the man of God—the one man that day that had the answer. And, they had rejected the Word of God. And, my dear friend, may I tell you I see so many parallels between this story and today? A time of spiritual hunger, a time of spiritual hopelessness, a time of spiritual hellishness—when we have turned from the Word of God.

## II. **The Provision**

Now, that was the problem, but problems are not problems to God. God has no problems. And so, God had an answer. Turn with me to 2 Kings chapter 7 and verse 1: *"Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel"*—that means it's very cheap—*"and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria"*—now, my dear friend, he says, "Tomorrow," not two or three months away, not a year away; tomorrow. In the city where people are so hungry that they're practicing cannibalism and women are boiling and eating their own children, "tomorrow," he says, "you will be able to buy food at supermarket prices tomorrow"—*"Then a lord"*—verse 2—*"on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?"*—that is, he said, "You're crazy—you're crazy. God would just have to open the windows of heaven for us...for this to happen." And then, the prophet turned and said—*"Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof."* (2 Kings 7:1–2) Now, God, my dear friend, is going to make provision. May I tell you that God doesn't have any problems today? We have problems. There's no problem with God; there is no problem in heaven. You have a study here, in these two verses, of two people. One is a prophet; one is a politician. One looks at figures; the other sees by faith. And today, we still have those people with us.

Now, I want you to see God's provision. We begin in verse 3: *"And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we*

*here until we die?”—and, by the way, that’s one of the great texts in the Word of God—“If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians.” (2 Kings 7:3–5)* Now, get the picture. Here are four leprous men. They can’t even come into the city of Samaria even at a time of famine because they’re lepers. They’re sitting there at the gate outside the city wall. They’re starving. Like everyone else, they don’t have enough food. And, they get to thinking; they say, “Why are we sitting here ’til we die? If we sit here, we’re going to die. If we go into the city, we’ll die because there’s a famine in the city. Let’s just head toward the army of the Syrians. We have everything to gain and nothing to lose.”

And so, verse 5 we read: *“And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there. For the LORD had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us”—*now, these Syrians are bivouacked there, and suddenly they hear the commotion of chariots and horses. And, they say, “The mighty armies of the Hittites and the Egyptians have come”—*“Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life. And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came gain, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it. Then they said one to another”—*now, listen to this (another great text in the Word of God)—*“We do not well: this...is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace”—*hence the title of the message, “The Sin of Silence”—*“this...is a day of good [news], and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come on us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king’s household. So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and...told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither [the] voice of a man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were. And he called the porters; and they told it to the king’s house within. And the king arose in the night, and said [to] his servants, I will now shew you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we be hungry; therefore [they] are...gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city”—*now, the king of Israel thinks it’s a trick—*“And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses*

*that remain, which are left in the city, (behold, they are as...the multitude of Israel that are left in it: behold, I say, they are even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed:) and let us send and see. They took therefore two chariot horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see. And they went after them into Jordan: and, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned, and told the king. And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.” (2 Kings 7:5–16)*

Now, my beloved brothers and sisters, a wicked enemy has come. There was a time of hunger. There was a time of hopelessness. There was a time of hellishness. And then, God gave a miraculous deliverance. But, but, even though God had made all of this provision, still the story needed to be told. Incidentally, what happened there was this: that the Syrians are bivouacked, camped outside Samaria, and they hear this noise, this rumble, this...the chariots and soldiers. Where did that noise come from? What was it that they heard?

Well, I read this verse tonight earlier, and it just blessed my heart as I read it. I want you to go back to 2 Kings chapter 6 and look, if you will, in verse 13. Let me give you the background for that. The king of Syria is trying to pull different war maneuvers, and every time he tries to pull a war maneuver, what he does is already known because the man of the God, the prophet of God, has told it. And now, the the king of Syria is out after the prophet of God, and he says in verse 13 to his men, *“Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And [behold] it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan”—*that is, Elisha is in Dothan—*“Therefore [he] sent...thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about”—*here’s the king of Syria’s army, and they’ve circled Dothan in order to catch this one preacher. Verse 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”—*that is, Elisha’s servant wakes up early, and he goes outside. And, he looks, and all around there, in the mountains and the hills, there is the Syrian army. And, he runs back to Elisha, and he says—*“And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?”—*now here’s what Elisha said to him—*“And he answered, Fear not”—*oh, here’s another great text: “Fear not!” Friend, if this is not underscored in your Bible, underscore it—*“Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them”—*well, all the servant of Elisha saw was just the Syrian army. And so—*“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”—*evidently, as a young man, he had 20/20 vision—*“And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man”—*the spiritual eyes—*“and he saw”—*oh, listen to

this—*“and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”* (2 Kings 6:13–17)

Now, my dear friend, that’s the unseen army of heaven. The Bible speaks so many times of the host of heaven. There is an angel army. There are the chariots of our God that encircle the believer. What did the army of Syria hear? Well, dear friend, God opened the eyes of Elisha’s servant. God opened the ears of the Syrian army, where they could hear what the servant saw. And, what they heard was the rumble of God’s chariots; what they heard were the voices of God’s warriors there. And, my dear friend, just as they encircled Elisha of old, they encircle me tonight and you tonight. And, *“the angel of the LORD [encamped] round about them that fear him.”* (Psalm 34:7)

While you’re here, just turn with me, please, to Psalm 68—Psalm 68—and I want you to read verse 17: *“The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place”* (Psalm 68:17)—thousands, and thousands, and thousands of chariots. You see, dear friend, heaven is not bankrupt. There is a supply in the Glory. God has His armies that are there. And, God provided. I learned something in this story—we’re back in 2 Kings chapter 6—I learned this: that when the devil tries to harm us, God can take that harm and use it for our good. And, God used the Syrian army to deliver to the people of Israel just what they needed. And, Satan became God’s grocery boy; God delivered the goods.

### **III. The Proclamation**

Now, I’ve said all of that, but now let’s get to the very crux of the message. I want to tighten down just a little bit more, and I want you to look at the text tonight that has gripped my heart. Look, if you will, in verse 9: *“they said one to another, We do not well”*—that is, “What we’re doing is not good”—*“this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.”* (2 Kings 7:9) May I tell you, my dear friend, if there’s good news and you don’t tell it, you’re sinning against Almighty God?

Now, I want to tell you the kind of men that God used to tell this story so long ago: they were four lepers. And, I’m so glad that God used four lepers. God used four lepers to tell good news, and because God used four lepers to tell good news, God has given me an incredible illustration of the kind of people that God can use today and the way that God can use them.

#### **A. God Uses Common Men**

The very first thing I want you to see about them is that they were common men. Look, if you will, in verse 3—look: *“there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate.”* (2 Kings 7:3) I mean, they were outcasts; they were the lowest of the low. Now, there are some of you who are listening to me tonight, and you say, “Adrian, if I were you, if I

had a college education and a seminary education, if I had your background and your knowledge of the Bible, I would be a witness. But, I don't. I don't have the opportunities you have. I don't have the background you have. I don't have the library that you have. I don't have the tools and the resources that you have. And, therefore, I'm excused." No, you're not. These were four lepers—four lepers—outcasts, the lowest of the low, in complete poverty.

Let me ask a question tonight: How many in this congregation, when you were in high school or college—and I want you to be honest with me—were voted "most likely to succeed"? Let me see your hand. Be honest. Lift it up. A few of you. Thank you. How many of you were Phi Beta Kappa? Let me see your hand. Come on. All right, how many of you, when you played football, were captain of your team? Let me see your hand. Thank you. How many of you in athletics were All-State or All-American? Let me see your hand. Come on. That's right, come on. How many of you were president of your class in high school or college? Let me see your hand. All right, how many of you, when you were in school, graduated with honors? Let me see your hand. How many of you were voted Miss Tennessee, Miss America, Miss Florida—something like that? You were a beauty queen—let me see your hand. How many of you are a multimillionaire? No, don't lift your hand. Now listen, in all of these things, we've seen a sprinkling of hands, and I'm so grateful you're here tonight. I've got wonderful news for you: if you lifted your hand for any of these things or all of these things, God can use you, too. But, He's going to have to work just a little harder to do it—really, it's an amazing thing. You know, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 26: *"[you] see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called...God hath chosen the foolish things of [this] world to confound the wise."* (1 Corinthians 1:26–27) That's God's plan. God takes ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Don't you think that you have to be some hotshot in order for God to use you. The men that God used here, this day, were common men. There's nobody here who is excused. It's not your fame but your faith. It's not ability; it is your availability. It is not what you know; it is whose you are.

## **B. God Uses Courageous Men**

Now, the second thing I want you to see about these men—not only were they common men; they were courageous men. Look, if you will, in verse 3 again: *"And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit...here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall [into] the host of the Syrians."* (2 Kings 7:3–4) That took a certain amount of courage. "Well," you say, "Brother Rogers, I'm just too timid to witness. I'm afraid that I might fail."

Well, you're already failing. You say, "Well, if I witness, I might mess it up. I'll drive them away." They're already away. I mean, dear friend, these people had everything to gain; they had nothing to lose. You say, "I might get in trouble." You're already in trouble—you're in trouble for not witnessing. What I'm trying to say is these people finally got to thinking: "Listen, we don't have anything to lose; we have everything to gain."

You know what Jim Elliot, who took the gospel to the Auca Indians, said? "A man is no fool to give what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." To give his life, because he can't keep it anyway, to gain what he cannot lose—and that is the eternal reward of a soul winner. May I tell you, my dear friend, in these days in which we are living, the most dangerous thing you can do is to play it safe? Did you hear me? In these dangerous days in which we're living, the most dangerous thing you can do is to play it safe. Question: When there was a storm that day on Galilee and Peter got out of the boat to walk to Jesus, who was the safest—Peter, on the waves, or those disciples in the boat? I dare say that Peter was safer on the waves with Jesus than those disciples were in the boat. Don't you believe so? Folks, listen, these were courageous men. I mean, it is time for us to get out of the boat with both feet. You're playing it safe for what? I mean, you're not safe. You're holding back. What do you hope to gain?

### **C. God Uses Convinced Men**

Not only were they common men and courageous men, but these were convinced men. This is why they witnessed. Look, beginning in verse 5 through 7, and you find out that they went into the host of the camp of the Syrians. And, when they got in there, they couldn't find any Syrians, and there's not a soul in sight. And so, they go into one tent, and there's more food than they'd seen in so long. I mean, man, they loaded up on Spam and whatever else they had in their K-rations. I don't know what the Syrians ate. But, I mean, here there are—they're eating and eating until they're bulging, and they're stuffing their pockets with jewels, and they run and hide them and go into another tent. There's more food, more jewels, more equipment. And, these are convinced men that there has been a victory.

You see, do you know those that God uses? Do you know those who are really soul winners? Let me tell you who they are: these are people who have witnessed the victory; these are they—listen—these were men who had witnessed the victory. The devil hopes you don't understand that he's been defeated. You see, they'd gone into the host of the enemy. They'd gone into the camp of the enemy. They had seen what God had done to the enemy. Therefore, they knew it was good news.

Now, some don't share because they haven't witnessed the victory, and the reason that many tonight are not soul winners is you have never seen the victory. And, by the way, the devil doesn't want you to see it. He'll do everything he can do to keep you from

understanding what has happened to him.

I heard about a man who came back to his friend. He was all beaten up and bloodied, disheveled. They said, “What happened to you?” He said, “Some thieves attacked me and said, ‘Give us your money or we’ll take your life.’” He said, “I put up a fight, but,” he said, “they didn’t get my money.” He said, “Well, they almost killed you.” He said, “How much money did you have?” He said, “One dollar and thirty-seven cents.” He said, “You mean, you put up a fight like that for one dollar and thirty-seven cents?” He said, “Yeah.” He said, “I didn’t want my financial condition exposed.” Now, I want to tell you something, friend: the devil will put up an incredible fight to keep you from seeing just how impoverished he is. He doesn’t want you to see the victory.

People, who are witnesses—let me tell you who they are: they are common people; they are courageous people; they are convinced people. Do you know why these were so convinced? Because their stomach was full of food and their hands were full of jewels. Is that you? Have you fed on the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you know victory? Do you have the riches of heaven? If you have, I don’t think you can be silent. These men were convinced men.

#### **D. God Uses Contented Men**

And, I’ll tell you something else: they were contented men. Look in verse 8: “*And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink.*” (2 Kings 7:8) They had personally partaken. They were witnesses, not lawyers. They had tasted, and, therefore, they were convinced and contented.

#### **E. God Uses Constrained Men**

I’ll tell you what else they were: they were constrained men. Look, if you will, in verse 9: “*Then they said one to another, We [are not doing] well: this...is a day of good tidings*”—that means, “This is a gospel day. This is a day of good news”—“*and we hold our peace.*” (2 Kings 7:9) Let me ask you a question: If, in the city of Memphis, there was such starvation that people were eating donkey’s heads and dove’s dung, and mothers were cooking and eating their own children, and you knew where there was plenty of food, would you tell it? Hmm...I mean, if you knew where there was plenty of food, I mean, and it was absolutely free, and people are starving, and little babies have their bellies distended, and old people are begging for food, and you knew where there was plenty, and it was free, would you tell it? Yes—yes. What kind of a monster would you be if you kept quiet? That’s what got into the head of these lepers. They said, “*This...is a day of good tidings*” (2 Kings 7:9)—“There’s plenty of food, and here we are gorging and feasting and not telling anybody else.” Friend, it’s one thing to be filled; it’s another thing to be overstuffed.

You know what’s wrong in a lot of our churches today? Our members are

overstuffed. We come on Sunday. We say, “Feed me, Brother Rogers. Feed me. Feed me. Feed me.” And, we feast and gorge on the Word of God, and all around we have neighbors that are starving. You say that if you knew where there were food and the people—the neighbors and the friends—were starving, you would share it. May I ask you another question? Are you sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ? If not, why not? Maybe you don’t believe it’s food. Maybe you’ve never seen the victory. Maybe you’ve never tasted it. Maybe you’ve never been satisfied. But, my dear friend, it is beyond my comprehension how anybody could name the name of Christ, say that he is a believer, say that he’s seen the victory, say that he’s tasted the fruits of it, having his pockets jammed with gospel jewels, having his viscera full of the Word of God, seeing friends all around him starving, and not wanting to share. What is wrong?

*“This...is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace”*—these men were wise enough to know that judgment comes upon those people. They said—*“If we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king’s household.”* (2 Kings 7:9) May I tell you, dear friend, as your friend and pastor, if you fail to witness, indeed, some mischief is going to come to you? You say, “What is that mischief?” The Judgment Seat of Christ. One of these days you’re going to have to face the Lord. These were constrained men.

## Conclusion

Think right now of somebody that you know who does not know the Lord Jesus. Don’t tell me that you can’t share. Anybody who’s been saved can share. Do you know what evangelism is? Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where he can find bread. That’s what it is. There was a problem. There was a provision, and there desperately needed to be a proclamation. Would you say in your heart in these desperate days, “This is a day of good news, and I’ll not let the devil keep me silent any more”?

# The Sin of Silence

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** March 3, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** 2 Kings 6:14–17, 25–31; 7:1–16

*“Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king’s household.”*

2 KINGS 7:9

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles and turn to 2 Kings chapter 7 for a moment, and just leave them open there in your lap, because we’re going to stay in these materials. And, I want you to look with me, if you will, in verse 9—2 Kings 7:9—these are the words of four leprous men outside the gate: “[And] they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king’s household.” (2 Kings 7:9)

Ladies and gentlemen, may I speak frankly with you from a burdened heart? Our church is not a soul-winning church. Now, you say, “Wait a minute, Brother Rogers. We baptize more than any church in the state of Tennessee.” We are not a soul-winning church. Souls are saved here, and some of our people are soul winners, but we’re not a

soul-winning church. Our staff is not necessarily a soul-winning staff—not all of them. Our secretaries are not necessarily all soul winners. Our Sunday School teachers are not all soul winners. Our deacons are not all soul winners. Our deacons' wives are not soul winners. And, the rank and file of our people are not soul winners. We come on Sunday and hear the sweetest music this side of heaven. We study God's Word. We make notes. We praise God. We shake hands. And, we come together to a holy huddle, and all around us are souls that are lost, and perishing, and going to hell. And, God is going to hold us accountable for this, ladies and gentlemen. We are baptizing and reaching souls by the hundreds when we should be reaching them by the thousands, and one of these days, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we're going to have to answer. And, the thing that concerns my heart is I'm going to have to answer as the pastor for why I have not stirred your heart more in this matter of soul winning, bringing men and women, boys and girls, bound in the golden chains of the gospel to lay at Jesus' feet.

*"This...is a day of good tidings, [if] we hold our peace...[surely] some mischief will come upon us."* (2 Kings 7:9) Now, let me give you the background for that text that I just read.

#### A. **A Problem**

First of all, I want you to notice what I'm going to entitle as a problem. Go back to chapter 6, and we're going to find out what the problem was. Chapter 6:24: *"And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria."* (2 Kings 6:24) There was a time of warfare. There was a cruel and a wicked king who had oppressed Samaria, and because of this, there were several other things that were inculcated into this problem.

##### 1. **A Time of Hunger**

For example, because this king had encamped round about Samaria, there was hunger. Look, if you will, in verse 25 now: and the Bible says, *"And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, [they]"—"and, behold"—"they besieged it"*—that is, they just camped around Samaria. And, the crops were outside, and the people were inside; and there was no way to get out and get to the crops. Now, this famine was so great that notice what they were eating—*"[and] an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver."* (2 Kings 6:25) You say, "That sounds disgusting and terrible." Well, go down to verse 28: *"And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give [me] thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow."* (2 Kings 6:28)

There was a famine in the land—a sore famine. It was a time of hunger, and it speaks to me of this day and of this age. Now, indeed, it is sad to see people going without food, but the Bible speaks in the book of Amos of a greater famine for the Word

of God. You might be interested to turn to Amos 8:11 and look at one of the most poignant passages, in my estimation, in the Bible. In Amos 8:11, the Bible says, *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but [for the] hearing [of] the words of the LORD.”* We’re living in that age; we’re living in that time. Now, we, here in the buckle on the Bible Belt, hear more of the Word of God than most people. But, I want to tell you that America is a vast desert where there is a famine for the Word of God, and there are multiplied millions around this world—indeed, billions—who have never heard the gospel in all of its purity and all of its power.

And, because of this famine, there was a depraved diet. They were eating an unclean animal, a donkey’s head, dove’s dung. And, whenever there is a famine for the Word of God, there’s always a depraved diet. People turn to pornography. People turn to licentiousness. People turn and feed their hearts, their minds, their filth on materialism—a depraved diet. And, not only that, but cannibalism—when there’s a famine for the Word of God, people begin to bite and devour one another. Galatians 5:15 speaks of people within the church, and Paul says that “you’re biting and devouring one another”—Christian cannibalism: people snapping at one another, growling at one another, biting one another, consuming one another because there’s a famine in the heart, and it has been caused by an enemy who has encircled the camp of God. It was a time of hunger.

## **2. A Time of Helplessness**

And, not only was it a time of hunger; it was a time of helplessness. Continue to read now in verse 26: *“And as the king of Israel was passing [along] the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king. And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress?”*—he’s being sarcastic with her—*“And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? ...she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son. And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he [tore] his clothes; and he passed by...the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh.”* (2 Kings 6:26–30)

Now, here was a time of helplessness. Here was a king, the leader of a nation, who, in his carnal mind, was doing the best he knew how to do, but he didn’t know how to do enough. There was a problem that was beyond him. And, may I tell you, that the problem in America and the problem in every nation of this world is beyond the politicians? And, if we’re looking to Washington for help, and if we say, “Well, we’ve got Ronald Reagan up there,” friend, forget it. Our help is not in Washington. And, if we, as

a denomination, are looking to Nashville for help, forget it. Our help is not in Nashville. Our help is above—above. Now, we need learn that—we need to learn that.

### 3. A Time of Hellishness

It was a time of hunger. It was a time of helplessness. Well, you would think, therefore, they would be turning to the Lord, but it was also a time of hellishness. I want you to continue to look in verse 31: “[And] he said”—that is, “the king said”—“*God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.*” (2 Kings 6:31) Here was a king and a politician who had a hatred for the man of God, Elisha. The man of God is not always to be loved. He never has been; He never will be if he’s truly a man of God.

And so, here was the problem: a time of hunger, a time of helplessness, a time of hatred of holy things.

#### B. A Promise

But, God has not left Himself without a promise. So, God comes to His man, and God gives—and this is the second point in the message—a promise. Look, if you will, in chapter 7:1: “*Then Elisha said, Hear...the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.*” (2 Kings 7:1) Now, here God made a marvelous, wonderful promise. I’ve told you before; I’ll tell you again: for every need there’s an answer. There is no panic in heaven, only plans. God always has a way to meet the needs of His people and all people who will turn to Him. God is a God who is plenteous in mercy, and God is a God who is abundantly rich. And so, God makes a promise to meet this problem.

Now, of course, the world does not accept that promise, and here was a sneering response to the promise of God—look in chapter 7:2: “*Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And [Elisha, the man of God, turned back and] said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat thereof.*” (2 Kings 7:2) Now, here was a man who sneered at what the man of God said. Here were two people, and here is a study in character. One man was a politician, and one man was a prophet. The prophet thought from God’s viewpoint; the politician thought from a human viewpoint. One man spoke from the basis of faith; another man spoke from the basis of finance and figures, but he spoke his unbelief in religious terms. He said, “If God were to make windows in heaven...” (2 Kings 7:2) That is, he gave deference to God, but he didn’t really believe in God. Or, he believed in a god who could not do what a god is supposed to do. The Bible speaks of the last days as days in which men “[have] a form of godliness, but [they deny] the power thereof.” (2 Timothy 3:5) And, there are plenty of

politicians today and plenty of moral worldlings who have a form of religion, but theirs is a sterile religion. They do not believe in a great and a mighty God. But, there was a promise—first, a problem; then, a promise.

### C. **A Provision**

And then, because of the promise, there was a provision. I want us to continue to read now in verses 3–16, and I'm going to read a longer passage: *"And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?"—that is, these four lepers at the gate of Samaria said, "We're not going to just stay here 'til we die of starvation"—"If we say, We will enter into the city, then...famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there. For the LORD had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life. And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat the drink"—they said, "I've never seen so much Spam and so many Pepsi-Colas," and they just ate all they could handle—"and [they] carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it"—I mean, these four beggars, these four leprous men, had never had it so good. They'd never seen so much—more than heart could wish for. And then, we come to our text—"[And] they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household. So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither [the] voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were. And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's house within. And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now shew you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we be hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, [that] when they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city"—that is, the king said, "It's just a Syrian trick"—"And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, [that] are left in the city, (behold,*

*they are as...the multitude of Israel that are left in it: behold, I say, they are even as all [of] the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed:) and let us send and see. [And] they took therefore two chariot horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see. And they went after them unto Jordan: and, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned, and told the king. And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.” (2 Kings 7:3–16)*

Now friends, all this passage that I’ve just read to you—this extended passage of Scripture—tells us that God Himself had made a marvelous provision according to the holy prophecy of the man of God. The Syrians were there. They heard a noise as of a mighty army. What army was that? What did they hear? I don’t think we have to guess about it. Go back to chapter 6 again—2 Kings 6—and look in verse 14, if you will. Remember that Elisha was at Dothan, and there was an army encamped around about him. And, Elisha’s servant was somewhat frightened. And, begin reading in verse 14: and the Bible says, *“Therefore [he] sent...thither horses, and chariots, and a great host”—*that is, the enemy king did—*“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”—*the host means “a great army”—*“And his servant said unto him”—*that is, “Elisha’s servant said unto him”—*“Alas, my master! [what] shall we do?”—*now, I want you to listen to the word of the man of God—*“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.” (2 Kings 6:14–17)* Now, that’s the same army that the host of the Syrians heard—those horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. *“The angel of the LORD [encamps] round about them that fear him.” (Psalm 34:17)*

A sweet verse as I was studying this was Psalm 68:17. I want you to turn to it for just a moment, and then we’ll come right back. Listen to it: *“The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.” (Psalm 68:17)* And, I want to tell you tonight, all around this auditorium protecting us as we worship are God’s holy angels and chariots of fire round about the people of God. And, I pray God that something will happen to me that needs to happen to me and to you that happened to that servant of Elisha so long ago at Dothan—that we will open our eyes and see the mighty host of God that encamps round about God’s people.

Well, these Syrians fled, and when they fled, they left everything behind. Have you

ever wondered why God doesn't just kill the devil? May I tell you that the devil is God's grocery boy? May I tell you that the devil, in a strange way, serves God? (Not that he wants to, not that he means to.) The Bible says that God is so great that He makes the wrath of man to praise Him. (Psalm 76:10) And, God uses the ax that the devil sharpens. It's just God's divine irony.

And so, God made a provision for these people. You see, first, there was a problem. Then, there was a prophecy. And then, there was a provision. It was a supernatural division—provision—that was wrought in heaven.

Now, that comes to the main point of the message. I want you to look again in chapter 7:9. These four lepers who went out and saw all of this booty—they saw all of these things. They may have been leprous, but they were not fools. *“Then they said one to another, We do not well: this...is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace”*—that is, “we are silent,” and thereby is the title of my message: “The Sin of Silence.” In my estimation, the greatest sin that is committed by twentieth-century Christendom is the sin of silence, being silent in this day of good tidings. The word *gospel* means “good news,” “good tidings.” And, I tell you, we do not well if we hold our peace. And, he goes on to say—*“if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.”* (2 Kings 7:9)

Now, let me tell you, dear friends, what kind of men, what kind of women, God will use to tell the King's household. Here were these lepers. They had eaten so much that they were no longer growing in grace; they were growing in grease. They were fat, and sleek, and well fed. They're like so many members of this church who are spiritually overstuffed. You sit here Sunday after Sunday, and gobble and feast and feed, and say, “Boy, isn't it nice? Isn't ours a wonderful church? Thank God for it.” Well, God was waiting for someone to announce the news. God was wanting someone—after God had made a provision (and a supernatural provision) for people who were in the yoke of a cruel king, being held bondage, under siege and in famine with a depraved diet and cannibalism—He was waiting for somebody to go and give the word. I want you to notice what kind of men God used.

## **I. God Used Common Men**

Look in chapter 7:3: *“And there were four leprous men.”* (2 Kings 7:3) Do you know who lepers were? They were outcasts; they were the lowest of the low. Now, it is not without significance to me that the Lord didn't choose the king to do this, but He chose four very common men—men that everybody else would have said cannot be used of Almighty God. It confirms what the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:26: *“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that...not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise.”* (1 Corinthians 1:26–27)

Are you listening to me tonight, those of you on the back row? Don't you dare insult God by saying He can't use you. There is not a Christian in this building tonight who is exempt. If God could use four lepers so long ago, God can use you tonight. First thing I want you to see is that these men were common men.

## **II. God Used Courageous Men**

But, I want you to see that they were courageous men. Look, as we continue to read, in verses 3–4: *“And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, [if] we shall”—“and we shall”—“die there: and if we sit still here”—“if we sit still here”—“we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.”* (2 Kings 7:3–4) Now, what they said is, “Let’s just don’t sit here! Let’s do something!” Now, they said, “If we sit here, we’re going to die anyway.”

Now folks, I want you to be reasonable: we’re all going to die. Now, do you want to die just sitting around while a world is in famine? Do you remember those classic words of Jim Elliot who died at the hands of the Auca Indians? Jim Elliot said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” We can’t keep our lives. I’ve told you before, a startling statistic on death is this: one out of one people die. You’re going to die. The most dangerous thing is not to venture out for Christ; the most dangerous thing is to sit still—the most dangerous thing is to play it safe. Some people have an idea that Simon Peter did a dangerous thing when he stepped out of that boat to walk on the water to Jesus, but I want to tell you something: I believe with all of my heart that Simon Peter was safer on the water obeying Jesus than he would have been in the boat playing it safe. And, we need, as men and women of God, to stop trying to play it safe. We need just simply to be not only common people, but, correspondingly, courageous people.

## **III. God Used Convinced Men**

But, not only were they common, not only were they courageous; they were also convinced. Look, if you will, in verses 5–7: *“And they rose up in the twilight, [and they] go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there. For the LORD had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and [the] noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. [Therefore] they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their [lives].”* (2 Kings 7:5–7) These four lepers were

convinced that the back of the enemy had been broken. No man will ever be much of a soul winner or a soldier for Jesus who does not see that the victory has already been won—convinced of that.

Now, many of you, I suppose, think it's still up for grabs, and you think maybe the devil may win after all. But, dear friend, a preacher is just somebody who goes to announce a victory that has already won. The very word *preacher* in the Bible is a word for a man who is running ahead of time, before the general gets back to the city, to tell the city that the victory has been won. These men were totally, completely convinced.

Now, the devil hopes you don't understand that. The devil will do everything to keep me from getting across to you the fact that, in Christ, the victory has already been won—supernaturally won—at the cross. Satan is a defeated enemy, and he doesn't want you to understand that. He does not want you to know just how bankrupt his kingdom is.

You heard of the man who came in one day all bloodied and beat up, his clothing torn. Someone asked him, "What happened to you?" He said, "Well, a man put a gun on me on the street and said, 'Give me your money.'" He said, "I didn't give it to him." He said, "I put up a tremendous fight, a battle." Said, "He almost killed me, but he didn't win. He didn't get my money." The friend said, "Well, boy, that's great." Said, "How much money did you have?" He said, "I had sixty-nine cents." And, he said, "You put up a battle like that for sixty-nine cents?" "Oh," he said, "it wasn't that." He said, "I didn't want my financial condition exposed." The devil doesn't want his exposed, and he is putting up a tremendous fight tonight to keep you from seeing just how bankrupt he is.

These men had seen with their eyes that there was, that day, a supernatural victory. These were men who were common men, yet they were courageous men—they were convinced men.

#### **IV. God Used Contented Men**

And, furthermore, they were contented men. Look, if you will, in verse 8, and verse 8 tells us that they were feasting: and the Bible says, "*And when these lepers came [unto] the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink.*" (2 Kings 7:8) Now, they had personally partaken of the provision of the Lord. Nobody can be a witness until he has personally partaken of God's victory. Not only must he be convinced of it; he must be contented by it. Have you fed on the Lord?

Now, you know what a witness is? You see, we're not called to be lawyers; we're called to be witnesses. Do you know what a witness is? A witness is somebody who tells what he has experienced, what he has seen, what he has heard, what he has tasted, what he's felt. I wonder if the reason that some in this congregation are not witnesses is that you've not tasted, you've not fed.

Let's suppose there's a physical famine in Memphis, and let's suppose that people are literally dying without enough food. And, let's suppose that you stumbled on an unlimited supply of food, and you tasted it, and it was good. Would you be quiet about it? I mean, would you fail to tell all of these hungry people all around you about this food? Would you? You say, "Of course not." Then, I wonder if you've ever met Jesus and you're not a soul winner. I wonder—I wonder. How can a man stay quiet in a world of famine—spiritual famine, and a depraved diet—in a world where people bite and devour one another?

You say, "Yes, I've tasted. Jesus is everything to me." I hear people sing, "Jesus is all the world to me"—hear people sing like Clyde did, "Take this world, but give me Jesus"—"Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold." I wonder, do we mean that? God's going to hold us accountable for the lies we sing, I believe. Maybe sometime, Brother Lane, it might be better if we asked them not to sing if they don't mean it. We sing these things. We say these things. We glibly talk these things. God knows I'm preaching to my own heart tonight, because my God has been speaking to me about the fact that, "Adrian, you need to be more of a soul winner than you are." I get myself so caught up in church administration, and visitation, and counseling, and sermon preparation, and all of the rest of it. God knows I don't want to stop going out and meeting people face to face—I'm not just talking about from this pulpit—but telling them about Jesus, the One who saved me. I don't want to lose that. I don't want our church to lose that.

These were men who were convinced men. They were also men who were contented men. You see, listen, not only are we witnesses; we are part of the evidence. We, ourselves, are to have fed on that food that God has provided for us.

## V. God Used Constrained Men

And, not only were they contented men; they were constrained men. They were wise men. They said in verse 9—look at it: "*this...is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.*" (2 Kings 7:9) And, they realized that men were starving. They had the answer. They were constrained to go. The gospel is good news. What kind of a criminal withholds good news?

*I'll sing it; I'll shout it wherever I go.  
I want all to hear it; I want all to know  
The joy of salvation that makes my heart glow,  
For I have been born again.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Constrained. The Apostle Paul says, "*The love of Christ constraineth us.*" (2 Corinthians 5:14) That's why I'm a soul winner. They wanted to know. They were saying, "Paul,

you're mad." He says, "No, I'm constrained by such love"—*"the love of Christ constraineth [me]."* (2 Corinthians 5:14)

## VI. God Used Convicted Men

But, I want to say something else about these men: not only were they constrained men; they were convicted men. I mean, on the one hand, they said, "This is a day of good tidings. We ought to tell it." But, they also said, "If we hold our peace"—verse 9—"some mischief is going to fall upon us." (2 Kings 7:9) They had enough moxie; they had enough common sense to know that God would surely hold them responsible.

Listen to me: we're saved by grace; we're kept by grace, and it's grace all the way. And, you're not—you're not—going to get to heaven by works of any kind. Now, I want to make that plain. But, I'm going to tell you, as surely as my name is Adrian Rogers, you're going to face the Judgment Seat of Christ one of these days, and He's going to find out why, in this day of good tidings, you held your peace when the morning light comes. I mean, when a new day dawns and when we face our Lord, as surely as I'm standing in this pulpit, I'm going to have to give an account of my life. *"As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give [an] account of himself [unto] God."* (Romans 14:11–12)

*Must I go, and empty-handed?  
Must I meet my Savior so?  
[Without] one soul with which to greet Him,  
Must I empty-handed go?*

—CHARLES C. LUTHER

If you can't win somebody in your family, win somebody in somebody else's family. If you can't win an adult, win a child. If you can't win my neighbor, win your neighbor. If you can't win your neighbor, win my neighbor. But, pray, "O God, lay some soul upon my heart and win that soul through me." What right do we have to call ourselves "followers of the Lord Jesus," who said, *"Follow me, and [I'll] make you [to become] fishers of men,"* (Matthew 4:19) if we're not fishers of men?

These men were men who were convicted that if they did not witness the good news, surely some mischief would come upon them. God, help me to lay it upon the hearts of my beloved people here that if we do not turn into a soul-winning church, God is going to judge us. He's not going to allow us to continue just simply to having services as usual. And, you deacons, I'm preaching to you. You Sunday School teachers, I'm preaching to you. All of those of us on the staff, I'm preaching to us. I'm preaching to me. I'm calling our church to soul winning. I'm calling us to witnessing. I'm calling us to one-on-one evangelism. You say, "I don't know how." Then learn how! You say, "I don't have courage." Pray God He'll give you courage. All you need He'll supply. None is

exempt. These men were convicted men.

## Conclusion

My message has come to a close, but I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, there was never a greater day to preach the gospel and to share Jesus than this day.

*“This...is a day of good tidings, [if] we hold our peace...some mischief [is going to fall] upon us.”* (2 Kings 7:9)

I want us to bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Father in heaven, I pray God that you'll remove the fear from our hearts, from our lives. Lord, I pray that, as the leaders of this church, you'll give us wisdom in training our people in personal evangelism. I pray, dear God, as staff members, and deacons, and Sunday School teachers, Lord, you'd help us to set a proper example. Lord, I pray that the secretaries who answer the telephones around here will have a note of evangelism in their voice. I pray, God, that the ushers who greet people at the door will have evangelism in their handshake. I pray, God, that you'll give the choir radiance even as they sing—as Tommy and Jim lead the music, Lord, that their heart would beat for souls. I pray, dear God, that if we sing any songs around here that are not evangelistic, Lord, that you'll take them from us—if I preach any message that's not evangelism, somehow, some way, Lord, that you'll take it. We believe, dear Lord, that even in praising you, true praise—real praise—will somehow result in evangelism. So, Lord, bless all that we do. God, give us a passion for souls. Give us a Pentecost. Give us, Lord, a fire that burns, we pray. O God—O God—burden our hearts for souls.

Now, while heads are bowed, eyes are closed—no one stirring, no one looking—I'm going to ask the organist just to play softly. And, while the organist is playing, I'm going to ask you to pray the message into your heart right now. I'm going to ask you to be praying, “God, what do you want me to do about the message?” Forget about what your neighbor is going to do. And, I'm going to be praying while you're praying, and I'm going to be praying about Adrian, not about you. I'm not going to be praying, “God, now bless them and make them soul winners.” I'm going to be praying for my own heart—that God will give me a fresh baptism of love, and fire, and unction, and wisdom, and that God will make me a soul winner. Now, I'm going to ask God that He deal with you—every member of this church—that He deal with you tonight. *“This...is a day of good tidings.”* (2 Kings 7:9) We're holding our peace. Surely, some mischief is going to fall upon us. You pray while I pray.

# The Thief Called Unbelief

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** August 19, 1979

**Main Scripture Text:** 2 Kings 6:24–31; 7:1–20

*“And that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.”*

2 KINGS 7:19

## Outline

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## Introduction

Tonight we're continuing our series on the miracles of Elisha. And I want us please to turn to 2 Kings chapter 7. Now I'm not giving these miracles necessarily in sequence in our study, but I believe before we're finished we will touch most of them. Second Kings chapter 7, and I want us to begin looking in verse 18 just to get the tone of the passage, and then we're going to read a lot more Scripture. But the title of our message tonight is "The Thief Called Unbelief"—"The Thief Called Unbelief." And I'm reading here in 2 Kings chapter 7, beginning in verse 18: *"And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria: and that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died"* (2 Kings 7:18–20).

Now do you know what success is? *Success is just finding out what God is up to and getting in on it.* Just finding out what direction God is going and joining Him. You see, God always has a plan. God is never static. God is always moving. And God knows precisely what He's going to do. There's no panic in heaven. God's not walking back and forth in heaven wringing His hands and saying, "What a revolting development this is! What am I going to do now?" *No panic in heaven, only plans.* And God has a plan to bless this world, and God is going to bless this world. And thousands and thousands and thousands are going to be in that blessing. And there are not enough demons in hell or out of hell to stop it. God has a plan, and God's plan is going to be fulfilled.

Now the question is, Are you going to be in that plan? Are you going to be out of that plan? God wants to bless you, and God will bless you if you're not robbed of your blessing by the thief called unbelief. Let me tell you tonight that unbelief is a terrible sin. It's not a minor sin; it is the major sin. When men die and go to hell, they don't go to hell primarily because they steal or lie or cheat or anything like that. *"This is the condemnation,"*—the Bible says— *"that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil"* (John 3:19). *"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed"* (John 3:18).

The sin that ultimately damns a man is unbelief. Unbelief is the greatest sin of all. Unbelief points the finger in the face of God and says, "Thou liest, O God." Unbelief is the father sin. It is the mother sin. It is the parent sin. It is the sin out of which all other sins grow. Why does a man tell a lie? Because he can't trust God enough to tell the truth. Why does a man steal? Because he can't trust God and believe God to meet his needs. Every sin that a man commits roots in unbelief.

And so dear friend, unbelief is the worst sin, it is the damning sin, it is the parent sin, and it is the sin that defrauds you and keeps God's blessings from you. Now we're meant to be fed by faith, but many are deprived by doubt, and they're robbed by rationalism—by the thief of unbelief.

## **I. The Serious Situation**

Now I want you to notice the situation that our text has come from tonight. First point in this little simple message tonight I want to call the serious situation. And I want you to notice what a serious situation there was in the land of Israel when our text was given. Look in chapter 6 and verse 24—chapter 6 and verse 24: *"And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria"* (2 Kings 6:24).

Now here's the situation: Samaria is besieged by the king of Syria. Back in this day,

they could not take the walled cities and cities built on a hill. They didn't have any tanks. They didn't have any jets. They didn't have any bazookas. But the way that they would take a city is just simply to surround that city and starve it out. And they called that *besieging* a city. And they would just put a siege round about that city. Suffice it to say, God's people were suffering, because there was an enemy, and a real enemy.

And may I tell you tonight, ladies and gentlemen, that we have an enemy, and a real enemy. And he is the unseen enemy that was behind the king of Syria in that day, and he's the unseen enemy that's behind all of our seen enemies today. He is the devil. You have a real enemy.

Now you might as well get ready for it, dear friend, and you might as well understand it. The devil is real and he has already laid a plan to hurt your life, to sabotage your children, to ruin your career, and to wreck your joy and your happiness. Satan is very real, and he's your enemy.

Now don't get puffed up about it. It's not that we're all that important. Evil persons have always known, if you can't hurt someone, hurt someone that someone loves and you've hurt them anyway. Satan's real war is with God, but he seeks to get at God by harming the children.

#### **A. It Was a Time of Hunger**

Now I want you to notice this serious situation. In the first place, it was a time of hunger. And in the second place, it was a time of hopelessness. And in the third place, it was of hellishness. I want you to notice, if you will, please, in verse 25, and notice the awful hunger. The Bible says, *"And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver"* (2 Kings 6:25).

Now how would you like to sit down to dinner to a donkey's head and dove's dung? Well, that's exactly what they were eating in this day. And they were glad to eat it. There was such a serious famine. There was a famine because the enemy had besieged them about. And the famine is worse than a donkey's head and dove's dung.

I want you to look again, if you will, in verse 28 of this same chapter and verse 29: *"And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son"* (2 Kings 6:28–29)—women eating their own children. Cannibalism stalked the city. There was a time of hunger—terrible, horrible hunger. And it was caused by Satan.

And Satan has caused a famine in this world today. And we see in the world a physical famine. More than half of the world will go to bed hungry tonight, and tonight on

the streets of major cities overseas, people will die of starvation. And sanitation crews will come up tomorrow and pick them up and haul them off to be buried like the sanitation in Memphis will pick up the trash and the litter that's been left on our streets. That's hard for us to understand, because America is an island of plenty surrounded by an ocean of need.

But you see, here in America, that's not struck home with us yet, and we don't see that physical famine—at least, many of us don't. But don't think, ladies and gentlemen, that Satan has not yet caused a famine. I want you to look in Amos chapter 8 and verse 11, and I want you to see there's another kind of famine that's in the world today—Amos chapter 8 and verse 11: *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of the hearing of the words of the LORD”* (Amos 8:11). There is coming a worse famine, God says, than the famine that was there in the days of Elisha, the prophet of God. Amos chapter 8 and verse 11: a famine for the Word of God.

And what was the result of the famine back in these days? Well, in the first place, there was a depraved diet. They were eating the head of an unclean animal, a donkey's head, the head of an ass. And they were eating dove's dung. Do you know why people today are eating a depraved diet? Do you know why millions of American are feeding on a depraved diet? Do you know why *Playboy* magazine—a depraved diet—is read by so many? Do you know why people are going to see these sick movies and these so-called adult-only films? You know why these dens of iniquity and hellholes are filled with people, these things called nightclubs? Do you know why? Do you know why? Because there's a famine for the Word of God. And anytime a man, a woman, a boy, or girl is not properly fed, he'll have a depraved diet. And he'll be glad to get a donkey's head. He'll be glad to feast on dove's dung.

You see, a depraved diet was the mark in this day. And a depraved diet is the mark in our day. Only today, we have a spiritual hunger, a spiritual famine. And today, we're feeding on all sorts of depravity and filth because we've not been fed on the Word of God.

Now listen, ladies and gentlemen. The way to keep from going into these places and doing these things is not primarily saying, “I'm going to be a good boy and I'm not going to do it.” The way to do it is just to load up on the Word of God, just to feast on the honey of God's Word, just to feast on the milk of God's Word, just to feast on the meat of God's Word—to fill up on God's Word.

I tell you, Joyce and I went out today for lunch. And poor Joyce just had a salad. But you know, I had a steak. I really did. And it was good. I tell you what: It was super. I just enjoyed that so much this afternoon, and we just sat down and enjoyed it, and after, I had a big baked potato, and I had sour cream on it, and I had melted butter on it, and I

put lots of pepper on it. I like a lot of pepper on it. And then I went to the salad bar and had a tremendous salad and some other things, and you know, if I'd come out of that restaurant and you'd offered me a little dove's dung, I'd say, "No, thank you." You'd say, "Wouldn't you like a bite of donkey's head?" I'd say, "No, thanks. I don't want to nibble on a donkey's head." And why not? Well, I'll tell you, friend. I was satisfied—I was satisfied.

You know, we need to learn how to feed on the Word of God. And the things of this world "will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace." Did you know that?

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.*

—HELEN H. LIMMEL

And *when you've been feasting on manna, you don't have to be back in the back alley eating tin cans with the devil's billy goats.*

But not only did they have a depraved diet. They were actually guilty of cannibalism. You say, "Well, Brother Rogers, how does that apply to us today? At least we're not eating one another." Well, I want you to see what Paul said here in Galatians chapter 5. I want you to look at it for just a moment—Galatians chapter 5 and verse 15. Here's the warning to the church at Galatia. Paul said, "*But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another*" (Galatians 5:15).

You know, there's a lot of Christian cannibalism going on today in churches. People who are not fed correctly and people who are starving spiritually are going to end up biting and devouring one another. Sheep, even sheep, when they're not fed well, get mean. Did you know that? And they turn on one another and bite one another.

My mother told me when I was a little boy a tale about two snakes that got in a fight. And one snake took the other one by the tail, and the other snake took that one by the tail. And one took a bite, and the other one took a bite, and they kept on biting till there was nothing left. Each snake had devoured the other one. I tried to figure that out all of my life. I didn't know whether that could happen or not.

But I want to tell you, friend, that can happen in a church. We can bite and devour one another. Well, I'm just trying to tell you it was a serious situation.

## **B. It Was a Time of Helplessness**

Friend, it was a time of hunger. And not only was it a time of hunger; it was a time of helplessness. I want you to go back to 2 Kings chapter 6 and notice verses 26 and 27 here: "*And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my Lord, O king. And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence*

*shall I help thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress?” (2 Kings 6:26–27).*

Now here was a king himself who had to say, “There’s nothing I can do.” This woman who was looking for redress because they’d eaten her son and now the other woman had refused to give her son had come to the king for help. And the king was absolutely helpless. There was nothing he could do.

I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, we’ve come to that place in our world. Even Winston Churchill, before he died, said, “The situation is beyond us.” And I want to tell you, it won’t do you one bit of good to look to Nashville. And it won’t do you one bit of good to look to Washington. That’s not where your help lies.

I was interested to read when I got back from a trip this past week, in the paper—the paper said I was one of the preachers that was going into politics. And oh, dear friend, I’m not trying to go into politics. I want to try to get a little Jesus into some politicians is what I’d like to do. I’d like to tell them that our hope is not in Washington, and our hope is not in Moscow, and our hope is not in Tokyo: our hope is in the Lord God Almighty. Until we realize this, dear friend, we’re going to be just as helpless as this king was so long ago.

### **C. It Was a Time of Hellishness**

It was a time of hunger. Ours is a time of hunger. It was a time of helplessness, and ours is a time of helplessness. And it was also a time of hellishness. I want you to continue to read here: *“Then he said...”*—verse 31—*“Then he said,”*—that is the king—*“God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.”*

Now here was time, dear friend, when the only man who knew the answer was thought of as the guy with the black hat. The king himself, who was so perturbed, and so frustrated, and so unable to do anything about this terrible situation caused by Benhadad, the king of Samaria, said, “I’m going to make Elisha the prophet a foot shorter at the top. I’m going to take his head off. And I’m going to do it this day.”

Now the strange thing is that Elisha was the only man who knew the answer. But here was hatred for the man of God. And I found out—and you’d better find out—that when you live for God in a time of hunger and in a time of helplessness, this world is not going to love you. You’d think that the world would be coming to say, “Is there a message from God?” But there’s something about a wounded animal that makes him want to bite the hand that feeds him.

Now I heard about a preacher the other day. He said, “My congregation really loves me.” He said, “They gave me an all-paid vacation on a DC-10 to Three Mile Island.” And I think that there are a lot of people who feel about the same way, who are in the ministry. They feel like the world doesn’t love them. And even their own people don’t

love them.

And here was a man sent to be a prophet to the king of Samaria, and that man had turned on him. Remember we were telling you last week about how to be filled with the Holy Spirit, but we told you to count the cost. You see, dear friend, there's always a price to pay as well as a prize to possess. And here's the price that you pay when you start to live for God: You're going to find yourself going against the stream all of the time. And this world is not going to honor you. This world is going to try to take your head, as we said last week, quoting Leonard Ravenhill: "When God opens the windows of heaven to bless us, the devil is going to open the doors of hell to blast us." And so point number one is what I call the serious situation: a time of hunger, a time of hopelessness, and a time of hellishness.

## II. The Spiritual Revelation

Now the second point in this simple message is not only the serious situation, but the spiritual revelation. Look, if you will, please, in chapter 7 and verse 1: *"Then Elisha said, hear ye the word of the LORD..."*—now remember, starvation was stalking the city, and Elisha said—*"Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria"* (2 Kings 7:1).

Now what he was saying is this: "There's going to be food at bargain prices tomorrow about this time." Now how did he know this? He was in league with God and he found out that God has a plan. And God always has a plan; God always knows what He's going to do. The gasoline shortage is not taking God by surprise. A downturn in the economy is not taking God by surprise. God always knows what He's going to do.

Do you remember when Jesus got ready to feed the 5,000, He called Philip and He said, "Where are we going to get bread to feed these"? But then the Bible says Jesus knew what He would do—He knew what He would do (John 6:5–6). He was only asking Philip to test Him. The Lord already knew what He was going to do. And I want to tell you, friend, I don't know what your problem is, but God already knows the answer to your problem.

Abraham thought he had a problem—didn't he?—when he was going up to sacrifice Isaac. He didn't know how that was going to be satisfied, he didn't know how that need was going to be met, but the moment Abraham started up that side of that mountain with Isaac, on the other side of that mountain a ram started up that was going to be the substitute for Isaac. Now Abraham never saw that ram, but God saw that ram.

And I want to tell you, God knows a way for you. And God has a plan for you. And God has a plan for all of us. And God's children are never to panic. Worry is an insult to Almighty God. And so here in this serious situation came a spiritual revelation. And I just

want to notice and mark three things about this revelation very quickly, because I'll run out of time if I don't.

### **A. It Was an Authoritative Revelation**

In the first place it was an authoritative revelation. Notice in chapter 7 and verse 1: *"Hear ye the word of the LORD."* And I want to tell you, friend, this book is the Word of God. You know, I've noticed that the more a liberal a preacher gets, he doesn't like to call the Bible "the Word of God." He likes to call it "the biblical record," or he likes to call it "the Pauline materials," or he uses some metaphor or some description other than "the Word of the Lord." But oh, dear friend, this is the Word of the Lord, spoken by his prophets, and it is authoritative. This wasn't a wild guess. It was a promise that was yea and amen in the dear Lord (2 Corinthians 1:20).

### **B. It Was an Appropriate Revelation**

Not only was it an authoritative promise, and an authoritative revelation; it was an appropriate revelation. You see, God had a plan for them in that day. It was very appropriate. They needed food, and they needed food under a certain situation. And God gave them food that was very appropriate to the need, as we shall see in a moment. And I don't want to anticipate that and get into it yet, because it will come in just a moment. But let me just say this and make this point: Don't ever try—don't ever try—to make God repeat a miracle. Don't ever try to get God to do now what He did then. God never changes. He's the same yesterday, today, and forevermore (Hebrews 13:8). But His methods always change. God never makes carbon copies; He always makes originals.

And that's the problem with sometimes our giving our experiences and telling what God did for us. Someone else will say, "Well, if I'll do the same thing, then God will do the same thing for me." But God doesn't do that.

Now this miracle that we're going to see was appropriate for this time. But that doesn't mean that God's going to do it the same way another time. God makes no two snowflakes alike. God makes no two fingerprints alike. God is always dealing in originals, never in copies. And that's one of the problems in trying to copy someone else's experience. You let God be original in you.

### **C. It Was an Accurate Revelation**

And so this revelation was authoritative. But this revelation was appropriate. And this revelation was accurate, as we're going to see, as the Word of God always is. That's the reason we speak of the Bible as inerrant and infallible. I quoted in my Pastor's Discovery Class this morning F. B. Meyer, one of the greatest devotional writers of all time. Any books by F. B. Meyer you can feel safe to buy and read, and they'll bless your

heart. But this is what F. B. Meyer said. He said, “If any promise of God should fail, the heavens would clothe themselves with sackcloth; the sun, moon, and stars would reel from their courses; the universe would rot; and a hollow wind would moan through a ruin creation the awful message that God can lie.” But God cannot lie.

There was a serious situation. And then, ladies and gentlemen, there was a spiritual revelation. And in our situation today, God has already spoken. God already has a plan. God already knows what He’s going to do and what He wants us to do.

### III. The Sneering Calculation

Now the third thing I want us to notice was the sneering calculation—the sneering calculation—that was the response to the spiritual revelation. Notice in chapter 7 and verse 2: *“Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said,”*—that is, the prophet said—*“Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat thereof”* (2 Kings 7:2).

Now the prophet said, “There’s going to be food—there’s going to be food in abundance, and it’s going to be sold in the gate of Samaria at cut-rate prices.” And about that time, one of the king’s advisors spoke up. “Oh,” he said, “listen. Even if God made windows in heaven, this thing would never be.”

Now you know, it’s a sad thing that the king had such an advisor, isn’t it? Isn’t it a sad thing that the king had a man at his right hand who was an unbeliever? *“A lord,”* the Bible says, *“on whose hand the king leaned.”* That is, the king looked to this man for advice. I really believe that we need to pray for our president, Jimmy Carter, that he will surround himself with godly men—that he will surround himself with godly men—that he will come to understand Psalm 1: *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly”* (Psalm 1:1), and that he might get godly men, if he himself is a believer in God, that godly men, and men who know our Lord, would give him advice.

And so here is man who was giving the king advice. But this man made a sneering calculation. He said, “This thing is impossible.” And here you have a study of two men: one, a politician; and one, a prophet. One man who dealt with figures, and another man who dealt with faith. But here was a man who spoke out with his unbelief, but his unbelief was spoken in religious terms.

Notice he brought God into his unbelief. Notice it again: *“Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?”* Now notice, he acted like he believed in God, but he was a practical atheist. And as I said recently, to me the biggest fool is not the man who says there is no God; but the biggest fool is the man who says there is a God and then doesn’t live like it. Here was a man who had a sterile religion. He believed in

God, in a way. He had “a form of godliness, but he denied the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:5). And he was the loser. He was robbed by the thief of unbelief. Because I want you to see what the man of God said to him: *“Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.”* Unbelief always withholds God’s blessings from us. We have a little saying, “Pray, believe, you’ll receive. Pray in doubt, you’ll do without.”

#### **IV. The Supernatural Demonstration**

Now I want you to notice, fourthly, not only the sneering calculation, but I want you to notice the supernatural demonstration. I want you to notice what God did in answer to this prophecy and this promise. And I’m reading here 2 Kings chapter 7, beginning in verse 3, and I want to read an extended passage of Scripture, so just hang on: *“And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?”* And incidentally, this is going to be our message for next Sunday night, about these four lepers, so I’m not going to comment too much on them. *“If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there. For the LORD had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life”* (2 Kings 7:3–7).

Now here are the Syrians, and they are encamped around some area, and they’re just having a wonderful time sitting out there by the campfire eating spam and K-rations and all of that, and they’re having a wonderful time. And about that time, they hear a noise, a terrible noise. It’s like the sound of many chariots and many horses descending upon them, and in consternation and panic they flee.

Now what do you think they heard? They really heard something. And I’ll tell you what they heard. They heard the host of heaven. You see, we’re reading here in chapter 7. Go back to chapter 6 a moment and look in verse 14. Now Elisha is at Dothan—not Dothan, Alabama, but Dothan over in the Holy Land, of which Dothan, Alabama is named. And he’s at Dothan. And, *“Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.”* Now this is the wicked king that is the enemy of Elisha. *“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?"* Have you ever said that? "What are we going to do?" Oh, woe is me! Glum, glum. What are we going to do? "*Alas, my master! how shall we do?"* Do you know why this man said that? All he saw was with his physical eyes. And he saw all of these horses and he saw all of these chariots on the mountainside. I've been to this same place in Israel and looked up there and seen the hills and so forth, and just imagined it full of horses and chariots. And so here's a man with his head between his knees saying, "Oh me, oh my, what are we going to do?" "*And he answered*"—that is, Elisha answered—"*Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.*" And I can just imagine this servant saying, "Who? I don't see anybody but you and me. And you don't look so good." "*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*" (2 Kings 6:14–17).

Did you know, ladies and gentlemen, that as I stand here tonight to preach, all over this auditorium there are angels round about me? Did you know that? Did you know, as you serve the Lord God, that encamped around about you are the angels of God, the ministering spirits? Oh, that we only had eyes to see!

Now that may seem like supernaturalism, but it's not, dear friend—well, it's supernatural, but it's not supernaturalism. I'm telling you that the angels of the Lord encamped round about them that fear Him (Psalm 34:7). And this noise, this noise that that these people heard, was just this great unseen army. God let them materialize a little bit so the Syrians would hear the host and the noise of this great army of God's angels.

Let me just give you a couple of verses to bless your heart here. Turn to Psalm 68 and verse 17 for a moment: "*The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels*" (Psalm 68:17). And now look at Psalm 20 and verse 7: "*Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God*" (Psalm 20:7).

I believe angels of God have helped me on many, many occasions. I remember one time I was preaching a revival meeting in a little church in South Florida and we had a boy on our heart that we wanted to see. And I said to the minister of music, "Let's see if we can find this man. I believe if we can just find him and talk to him, he'll be saved." And he was a young man who had shown an interest in knowing the Lord Jesus the night before. We found out he was working on one of those big Florida ranches. And I was driving a Ford automobile, and we drove up on that ranch and started across that ranch. And they had a paved road, at first, that turned to a dirt road, that turned to a cow trail, that turned to a squirrel's track, and went up a tree into a knothole. And so I was just out there going over the turf and just riding along, and way off on the horizon I could

see some bulldozers working, and I could see some men piling up palmetto stalks and burning them. And I described that group of men, and I said, “I just believe our man is there. And we’ll never walk over that far and get back in time for services. We’ll just drive this Ford automobile over there.”

Well, we were doing pretty good going over the pasture, but we came to a little creek, a little stream. And you’re not supposed to ford a stream in a Ford, but we stopped, and I said to this man who was with me, this minister of music, I said, “Didn’t we pray about this thing?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Didn’t we feel God the Holy Spirit telling us to go see that man?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Now, here we are. There’s a creek between us and that man. What are we going to do?” He said, “I don’t know.” I said, “Well, let’s pray.” So we stopped the automobile and we prayed, and we said, “Now Lord, show us what to do.” And I prayed, and he prayed, and I said, “I feel impressed to try to go out through that thing.” And he said, “Well,” he said, “I feel impressed, too, that we ought to drive through it. But,” he said, “what if we get stuck in the middle?” He said, “You know, you’re the preacher, and I’m the singer, and we’re a long way from anyone.” And I said, “Well, let’s just trust the Lord. If you feel impressed that way, and this is the man that God wants us to go see, and we prayed about it, and we really feel impressed of the Lord to do it, let’s do it.”

So I cranked it up and eased right over in that stream and it sunk right down to the hilt. I mean it was just resting, those tires spinning in the mud. There wasn’t any going forward, there wasn’t any going backward, and there we were up the creek, and dear friend, it was a terrible situation. And I felt just momentarily forsaken of the Lord, and I looked up, folks—and I’m not exaggerating at all—but I looked and it seemed to me that out of nowhere there appeared a man in a jeep with a winch on it. Where he came from I do not know, because I had surveyed the situation just right there. And he said, “You need help?” I said, “Yes, I do.” He said, “Well, all right.” And he got out and put that winch on the front of our Ford and just pulled us right on through.

I never knew angels drove jeeps, but you know now, I’m very serious about this thing. I have wondered all of my life whether that was really a human being or whether that was an angel from the Lord. I really have. I’m not exaggerating at all. I don’t know where he came from. I don’t know. Just suddenly he was there. And just at the right moment, just the right tools, and he just, you know, if I’d have been real smart, I would have watched him in the rearview mirror. But you know, all this came back to me, because I don’t know where he went or what happened to him. But we went on out there and saw our man, and he was gloriously saved and came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. I just believe that “God’s angels encamp round about them that fear Him.”

Sometimes I get in an airplane and it gets a little bumpy. I say, “Lord, put an angel on that wing, put an angel on that wing, and just put an angel right here beside me to sit

down.” *“The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him”* (Psalm 34:7).

Here was a supernatural demonstration. They heard a noise, and so they panicked, the Syrians, and they fled in consternation, and they left their supplies, and the devil became God’s grocery boy. And all of this food was left there for the people of God.

*Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,  
And looks to God alone,  
Laughs at impossibilities,  
And cries it shall be done.*

—CHARLES WESLEY

Then I want you to notice, in conclusion, what happened to this man who was the doubter. This man who said, “Why, if God were to make windows in heaven, such a thing is not possible, such a thing will not happen.” Well, notice here in verse 16 what did happen. I’m reading here chapter 7 and verse 16: *“And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD. And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him. And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria: and that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died”* (2 Kings 7:16–20).

Here was a man who was robbed by a thief called unbelief. Here was a man who could have been fed, here was a man who could have been blessed, but instead he was trampled.

## Conclusion

Now the point of the whole thing—it’s a very simple story, but the point of the whole thing is this: that God always makes abundant provisions. *“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:19). *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33). *“Your [heavenly] Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him”* (Matthew 6:8). But your sins have been withholding good things from you, and unbelief is the chief among them.

Friend, I want you to notice the same event that brought a blessing to God’s people

was the same event that brought judgment to unbelievers. Did you know that one of these days soon Jesus is coming, and that event is going to be a blessing to me, but it's going to be a judgment and a condemnation to some who are in this building tonight? Did you know that? Did you know that the preaching of the gospel that's a blessing to those of us who are saved, if you don't get saved, is going to be God's method of judging you, because the Word of God that I preach tonight is a sharp two-edged sword and it cuts both ways (Hebrews 4:12). It's a "*savour of life unto life*," or "*death unto death*" (2 Corinthians 2:16). That means if you're not saved by the Word I preach to you, or the Word that you hear some other preacher preach to you, you're going to be judged by it.

Do you know what our Lord told us to do? He said, "You go out and preach, and if people don't hear you, shake the dust off your feet." And then he says, "That dust off your feet will be used as a witness against them in the Day of Judgment" (Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5).

What I'm trying to say is here: that when God sent blessing to the believers, God sent judgment to the unbelievers. And Jesus is coming to rescue His own, but He's coming "*in flaming fire [to take] vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

Do you want God to bless you? Find out what God is up to, and get in on it. Find out which way God is headed, and join Him. And the very first step is to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

# Pressing Through to Victory

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 24, 1982

**Main Scripture Text:** 2 Kings 13:14–19

“And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.”

2 KINGS 13:15–16

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## Introduction

I'm speaking today on this subject: “Pressing through to Victory”—“Pressing through to Victory.” I want you to take your Bibles and turn to 2 Kings, the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter, and we're going to begin reading in verse 14—2 Kings chapter 13, verse 14. If you do not have a Bible with you, I believe you'll find one there in the pew rack that you may certainly use.

Second Kings 13 and verse 14: *“Now, Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them. And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed”—that is, “he hit the ground three times and stopped”—“And the man*

*of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest”—“thou shouldest”—“have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice” (2 Kings 13:14–19).*

What an amazing passage of Scripture! And yet, what a message it has for us today as we think on this subject: “Pressing through to Victory.” I believe that many of us are taking less than God’s best. And, many of us have no victory at all, and many of us are discovering partial victory and limited victory because we’ve not learned to press on through to victory and press the battle to the very gates. Many in this congregation, I say, have settled for less than the best.

You say, “But, wait a minute, Brother Rogers—I want God’s best.” Do you really? I believe I can show this morning from this passage of Scripture that you measure yourself the extent of your victory. The extent of your victory really lies in your hands. The measuring cup is in your hands. That is, really, you’re just about as victorious as you want to be. And, if you don’t have any more victory today, it is because you do not want victory, because God desires victory for you. And, we’re going to learn a lesson today about victory.

Now, let me give you the background of this passage of Scripture. Joash is the King of Israel, but Israel has been pressed hard by the Syrians. And, Ahaziah, the King of Syria, has just been torturing Israel by his constant attacks, and Israel’s military might is down very low. All they have right now is 50 horsemen, and ten chariots, and some other soldiers, and it just seems that they have become the plaything of Ahaziah, the demon-possessed King of Syria.

Now, Joash was a good man, but not all that good—a bad man, but not all that bad. He was a man who was just sort of lukewarm about the things of God, as we’re going to see in a moment. And, he finally gained a victory over the Syrians, but his victory was a half-hearted victory, when he could have had—and should have had—total victory. And, he was the one who measured out his own victory; he was the one that set the limits upon the victory that he should have had.

Now, Joash comes down to Elisha. Elisha has been the prophet of Israel for many, many years now, and he’s an old man. And, he’s about to die, and his hands are weak and trembling. And, he has a sickness, and he’s near death. And so, Joash comes down to see him, and Joash is heartbroken at the condition in Israel and the thought that the old man of God might be going on.

And, that’s the story as we pick it up here in verse 14: *“Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof” (2 Kings 13:14).* There were two sick men there in that room that day: Elisha the prophet was sick, but Joash the king was sick, also—not sick of body;

he was sick of heart, sick of soul, sick of mind. He was sick of defeat, and he's weeping over it. I, for one, am glad to see his tears. I, for one, am glad to see that at least he could weep over his failures.

You know the problem with many of us? Many of us are failing, but we don't weep over it. Many of us are not living victorious, but it doesn't seem to bother us. How many truly victorious Christians—how many genuinely victorious churches—are you aware of? God, forgive us because we're failing, and the hordes of Hell are mocking the average Christian. And, we know very little about victory, and yet we seem to be quite content to live day after day after day without victory. And, we seem to think that victory is for people like Tom Clayton, and victory is for people like Dan and Jim but not for you. You think that you were just kind of behind the door when the victory was passed out and it's not your fault. I'm going to show you from the Word of God, dear friend, that it is your fault if you're not victorious. And, like Joash, you ought to be weeping over your shame and over your sin and the very fact that the enemies of God and the hordes of Hell are laughing at your weakness and your incomplete victory.

## **I. The Weapons of His Warfare**

All right. The man of God, Elisha, begins to give now to Joash, the king, the recipe for victory. And, I want you to notice, first of all, the very first thing he shows him is the weapons of his warfare. Look, if you will, in verse 15: *"And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows"* (2 Kings 13:15). Now, we're going to see in a moment that this bow and these arrows symbolize the power of God. Now, it was not with a literal bow and not with literal arrows that the battle was to be won. We're going to see in a moment that these are highly symbolic. And, they speak of the power of God, and they remind us of that passage of Scripture in 2 Corinthians chapter 10, in verse 4, that says, *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds"* (2 Corinthians 10:4). We are to take up God's weapons.

### **A. The Blood of the Lamb**

And, God has given us weapons. What mighty weapons we have! Brother Jim just sang of one of the weapons of the Christian and the precious blood that covers us. For the Bible says, *"And they overcame him"*—whom? Who? The devil—*"they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb"* (Revelation 12:11).

### **B. The Word of God**

The Word of God is another one of our weapons. This book is to be our battleax. It is to be our sword. It is to be our bow, our arrow, as we go against the enemy.

### C. Prayer

Prayer, as we're going to see in a moment, is another one of our weapons. *"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but...through God"* (2 Corinthians 10:4).

You see, dear friend, you cannot overcome the devil with a bow and arrow. Billy Sunday... Many of you have heard Billy Sunday preach when he was here in Memphis; some of you senior saints remember Billy Sunday. And, Billy Sunday was a humorous preacher in a way, and he had ways of emphasizing his truth. And, he would talk about fighting the devil, and he would say concerning the devil, "As long as I have a fist, I'll hit him. As long as I have a head, I'll butt him. As long as I have a foot, I'll kick him. As long as I have a tooth, I'll bite him. And, when I'm old and gray and toothless, I'll gum him to death until he goes to Hell and I go to Heaven!" Friend, that is a little humorous, and I appreciate what ole' Billy had to say. But, the truth of the matter is, you can't butt him, and the truth of the matter is, you cannot hit him. And, the truth of the matter is, you cannot kick him, and the truth of the matter is, you cannot bite him. For we're not wrestling *"against flesh and blood, but against principalities, [and] powers"* (Ephesians 6:12). We have a spiritual enemy; and, therefore, the Bible says that *"the weapons of our warfare are not carnal"*—that is, "fleshly"—*"[they are] mighty through God [till] the pulling down of the strong holds"* (2 Corinthians 10:4). And, just as Elisha told this man long ago, "Take up your bow and your arrow" (2 Kings 13:15), God is telling us today to take those weapons that God Himself has placed into our hand.

Do you know, many of us wonder why we're losing the war against communism. I believe in a strong America, and I believe in a strong military. I believe it only makes sense, but I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, when you get to the bottom line, the answer against communism does not lie at the Pentagon, nor in the halls of Congress, nor in the Oval Office. You see, communism is a demon-inspired conspiracy, and it is a demonic idea. And, you cannot shoot down an idea with a bullet—you cannot kill an idea with a bullet. The only thing that can shoot down an idea is a better idea, and that better idea is not necessarily capitalism, though I believe in this way of government. What I'm trying to say, dear friend, is you cannot tell to a man starving in the jungles, "You may open a supermarket." "Big deal," he says. But oh, we can preach the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to that man and give him the gospel. And, if America fails to preach and export the gospel, we're going down—we're going down.

*"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal...[they are] mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds"* (2 Corinthians 10:4). And, mark it down big and plain—the devil does not have a stronghold that we cannot pull down if we'll use God's weapons. *"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God"* (2 Corinthians 10:4). And so, step number one: This man of God showed him the weapons for his fight.

## II. The Weakness of His Flesh

Step number two: This man of God showed him also the weakness of his flesh. Look, if you will, in verse 16: *“And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king’s hands”* (2 Kings 13:16). Now, get the picture. Here’s the king. The prophet says, “Take your bow. Take your arrows.” He takes them. Then, he says, “Put your hands on them,” and he puts them there. And then, the old man of God overlays his hands upon the king’s hands. The lesson is obvious—I pray that you’ll not learn it: Because of the weakness—that you’ll not forget it, that you will learn it—because of the weakness of our flesh, we need to have our frail hands overlaid by God’s omnipotent hand. When our hand is upon the weapon, His hand must be over ours. I want to tell you something, sir: the reason that many people are not overcoming the Lord—the devil, that is—is that they may be using spiritual weapons, but they’re trying to wield those weapons in their own strength.

Now, the Bible is the sword, but it is the sword of whom? The Spirit—not your sword. And, you can take a man who’s not Spirit-filled, and he can use this book, but it has no effect on the enemy because the Spirit is not wielding His own sword. And, as we take these weapons, we must also remember in our warfare that God’s hand must be overlaid upon our hands. Not only must we have spiritual weapons, but those spiritual weapons must be wielded by spiritual hands. And, there is omnipotent power.

Are you ready for a thought? Listen to it; here it is: God identifies Himself with our obedient weakness. Jot it down: God identifies Himself with our obedient weakness. You say, “I’m too weak to win the battle.” Friend, you may not be weak enough yet. You may not have realized just how weak you need to be. Your problem may be that you’re still trying rather than trusting. And, the battle is not yours; it is the Lord’s (2 Chronicles 20:15). And, that’s what God was showing to this king so long ago, as the man of God put his hands over the hands of this ancient king so long ago.

You see, your weakness is not a liability; your weakness is an asset. Your strength is not an asset; your strength is a liability. You say, “Brother Rogers, can you prove that?” Yes, indeed, I can. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 9 through 10, that *“[God’s] strength is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12:9). And, Paul said, *“When I am weak, then [I’m] strong”* (2 Corinthians 12:10). What he meant by that was when he finally saw that he could not do it, that he does not have the power to hold the bow, that he does not have the power to pull the string, that he does not have power to aim the arrow and to send it flying, but that God’s omnipotence is wedded to his obedient weakness and God will take His hand and put it upon the hand of the man who will obey Him... Dear friend, if we could only learn that God does not need our strength! God calls for our obedience. God has the strength. The battle is not yours, but the Lord’s (2 Chronicles 20:15). And, God wants to give you strength today—

supernatural strength beyond your own. It is not your scholarship; therefore, it is your relationship. It is not your ability; it is your availability. It is not your fame; it is your faith. It is not who you are; it is whose you are. Even this famous king had to have his hands overlaid by the hands of the man of God.

And, I want to ask you this question, Sunday School teacher: As you hold the Word of God in your hand, is God placing His hand over your hand? And, as you're speaking the Word of God, is God the Holy Spirit energizing your thought and giving you words? The battle is not yours, but the Lord's (2 Chronicles 20:15). And so, the first thing he showed him was the weapon for his fight. Secondly, he showed him the weakness of his flesh.

### III. The Window of His Fear

The third thing he showed him was the window of his fear. Look, if you will, in verse 17: *"And he said, Open the window eastward"—"Open the window eastward"* (2 Kings 13:17). Here they are in a closed room, and the blinds are drawn; the shutters are closed. And, there is this so-called "godly" king whimpering, sniffing, weeping, crying, failing. And, the man of God says, "Open the window!" And, he says, "Open it toward the east." Why toward the east? Well, if you know your Bible geography, you know that's where Syria is. That was his enemy; that's where ole' Ahaziah was. And, he says, "I want you to face the foe. I want you to let the sunlight come in. I want you to understand what the situation is." You see, dear friend, if you would be victorious, another thing that you must do is expose the place of your fear, expose the place of your failure, expose the place of your doubts.

Many of us are not willing to do that. I dare say that there's not a person in this building, including the one who's doing the speaking, who has completely opened up the windows of his life. There are areas in our lives that we don't want to face. There are failures that we do not want to honestly deal with. And, we're failing, and we continue to fail. And, we stay in these dark rooms behind these closed shutters for fear of failure and fear of facing the thing that we need to face. And friend, we're never going to have victory until we throw open those windows of fear. The devil has intimidated so many of us, and we need to look out into the sunshine of God's light and understand there is really nothing to be afraid of when it comes to the devil.

And, do you know what fear is—spiritual fear? F-E-A-R: **F**alse **e**vidence **a**ppearing **r**eal. The devil is a sinister minister of fear. And, do you know, you can be fooled by false evidence. A man can put his hand in his pocket like this and say, "Stick 'em up"—scare you to death with his finger. Isn't that right? False evidence. And, you say, "But, he might have a gun in there." That's right, but I want to tell you, dear friend, the devil's just pointing his finger; he has no real power. "Oh," you say, "he has power." Yes, but

his power is the power of deception; his power is the power of fear. *“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of [love], and of [power], and of a sound mind”* (2 Timothy 1:7). And, what God is saying is, “Open the windows, and open the windows to the east. And, face your foe—that place of failure and that place of doubt and all of these other things.” Friend, victory’s arrows cannot be shot through closed windows.

Now, I want you to think. I want you to ask yourself, “Is there an area of my life that I’ve been unwilling to open the window on?” You’ve been letting it pass day after day after day, and you really don’t even believe that you can have victory in that area; and you’re just kind of cowering in the dark.

Now, what this man of God did was, number one, to show him the weapon for his fight. Number two: He showed him the weakness of his flesh. Number three: He exposed to him the window of his fear and said, “Open that window, and open it eastward.”

#### **IV. The Warfare of His Faith**

Now, the next thing I want you to notice—not only the window of his fear, but I want you to notice the warfare of his faith—the warfare of his faith. Look, if you will now, in verse 17 of this same chapter: *“And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot”* (2 Kings 13:17). Now, my friends, what good is it to have a bow and arrow? What good is it to have someone’s hands laid upon your hands to pull the bowstring, to aim the arrow, and to do all of the rest if you do not let that arrow go? Listen. Are you listening? *It is faith that acts that brings the enemy to his knees*—faith that acts.

Do you know the difference between faith and belief? *Faith is belief with legs on it.* I mean, he is to let that arrow fly. Here it is—the bowstring is pulled back. God’s hand of omnipotence is upon it. It is properly aimed. But now, the king must let it fly; and when he does, it shoots with divine power right through that window. And, by that act of shooting that arrow, by releasing that arrow and letting it fly eastward toward the enemy, something highly symbolic happened.

In olden times, when the people were about to commence a war, the way that they would commence that war would be to take a spear and hurl it into enemy territory. It made no difference whether the enemy was there or not. It really wasn’t for the enemy to see. It was a way of declaring war, and it was an attitude of faith—to take an arrow and shoot it into enemy territory. It was sort of throwing down the gauntlet. It was a declaration of war, an affirmation of victory: “We’re getting into this thing!” Now, many of you are not going to win because you’ve not let your arrows fly. It was an arrow of faith; and when that arrow was released, something happened to it.

I want you to see what happened to that arrow: *“And he opened it. Then Elisha said,*

*Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD's deliverance" (2 Kings 13:17). That's the reason I told you to begin with that all of this is highly symbolic. This stands for God's mighty power, that God is moving into you, and that God gives you spiritual weapons, and God gives you spiritual strength to hold those weapons, and God gives you spiritual ability to open up the windows and to see the enemy for what he is and not to be overcome by fear. But, dear friend, you must release that arrow by faith. Faith that acts will bring the enemy to his knees.*

"Well," you say, "put it to me in a little more concrete way. I mean, after all, literally, I can't take a bow and arrow in my hands today, and I do need to bring the enemy to his knees. Put that over in New Testament language." Friend, prayer—prayer—is the arrow that is aimed at the enemy. Do you remember there in Ephesians chapter 6 where the Bible speaks of the weapons of our warfare? And then, the Bible says we're to be *"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit...for all saints"* (Ephesians 6:18). You see, our prayers are anti-continental ballistic missiles. Or, they are the arrows that we shoot at the enemy and cause the enemy to go down. Arrows, missiles, are prayer. When we pray by faith, when we face the foe, and when we let that arrow—that flaming arrow of faith—fly into his face, God moves in, and it becomes the arrow of the Lord's deliverance.

Now, let me illustrate what I'm talking about. I have a preacher friend who is a seminary professor. His name is Wayne Ward. He's a warm-hearted preacher of the gospel. And, Dr. Wayne Ward was preaching in one of our Southern Baptist Evangelism Conferences, and God blessed it. And, he was getting on a plane to go back to Louisville, and as he was getting on this plane, he was late. And, somehow the traffic snarl or whatever made him late. And, when he got there to the gate, the door was already shut on the airplane, and I believe they'd already taken that little walkway back. And, he said to the man—he said, "Listen, I need to get on that airplane." He said, "Well, there'll be another airplane." He said, "No, I need to be on this airplane." He said, "I'm sorry, but we cannot put you on this airplane. You're late." He said, "Please, I must be on this plane. Can't you do something?" And, he said, "Well, let me see if the pilot—the captain—will do it." And, they got in communication, and the plane stopped its rollout. And, they put the little walkway out; they opened the door. And, my friend got on the plane. The plane was absolutely filled except for a seat in the back. And, he said he had to walk down through that entire plane, all those people looking at him: "That's the guy that made us late. That's the guy that they opened up for." You know, they humiliated him going all the way to the back, but he went to the back and sat down at the back and got his things stowed away. And, the plane immediately rolled out and went out on the runway.

And then, the pilot started going through his checklist. Wayne Ward is an old Navy

pilot, so he said, “I just went through that list with him. As he did this, I said, ‘Now he’s doing this, and now he’s doing this.’” And then, on the airplanes, they have... It’s on the wings they have those flaps that go down—what do they call those things? Foilers. And, what’s the official name of those flaps? Airfoils? What is it, Buck? Ailerons? Is that right? How many of you say that’s what it is? Okay. Those flaps. And, he noticed on one wing the flap was going down but on the other wing it didn’t go down. They’re supposed to operate simultaneously, and he said to himself, “There’s something wrong here.” And, he said, “Am I going to just sit here just to keep from embarrassing myself? There’s something wrong on this airplane.” And so, he unbuckled his seats—said, “I’m not just going to sit here” and stood up. And, the stewardess said, “Sir, you’ll have to sit down. The plane’s about to take off.” He said, “There’s something wrong with this plane.” She said, “Sir, you must sit down! The airplane’s about to take off.” He said, “I’ll not sit down!” She said, “Oh yes, you will!” He said, “Oh no, I won’t!”

And, she had that telephone in her hand, and he took it from her and pressed the captain’s button and said, “Captain.” And, when he said that, she took it back and said, “Captain, there’s a man here on this plane, and he says there’s something wrong with the plane and it won’t fly.” The plane stopped. They explained the situation. The captain or one of the men got out of the airplane, and they made the flaps go up and down and one of them didn’t work. Wayne said to himself, “Boy, I sure hoped they didn’t work that time, because I’d be in prison.” You know, you can. And, sure enough, it didn’t work. The captain came on and said, “Ladies and gentlemen, we have a problem with this airplane. We’re going back for a while to get it worked on. It’ll be just a few moments, but a few moments turned into a few hours and a few more hours. And finally, they sent another airplane, and that airplane would not fly at all. They unloaded and loaded on another airplane and went on to his home.

He arrived very late, tired, weary—got home. And, when he got home, his phone was ringing, and a friend was calling him—Jim Hylton, another of my Baptist preacher friends, a man who loves God, a real prayer warrior. He said, “Wayne?” He said, “Yes.” He said, “Wayne, are you all right?” He said, “Yes, Jim, I’m all right.” He said, “Are you sure that you’re all right? Are you sure there’s nothing wrong?” He said, “Not now.” He said, “Wayne, I can’t explain this, but all this day”—and he named another friend—“have had a burden for you. We felt you were in grave danger, and we’ve been on our knees and on our face praying for you. And, God wouldn’t let us stop praying until just now. Wayne, are you sure you’re all right?” He said, “Fellows, praise the Lord. I’m all right.”

Now, you see, that’s the kind of an arrow that we can send across the United States. That’s the kind of an arrow that we can send around the world to aim at the heart of the enemy, who would try to destroy one of God’s preachers or try to destroy some of God’s people to work in a piece of machinery or to work in anything to hurt the work of God.

Thank God for arrows of deliverance—arrows of deliverance—that when we are obedient and we take God’s weapons and use them in God’s ways, where God’s hands overlaid upon our hands, and we aim them at God’s foes, then God moves in and God gives the victory.

What was the warfare of his faith? Just simple obedience—believing God. *A faith that acts brings the enemy to his knees.* The warfare is prayer.

## V. God’s Wrath at His Failure

Now, there’s one last thing I want you to see, and I’ll be finished: not only the warfare of his faith, but I want you to see God’s wrath at his failure—God’s wrath at his failure, because so far the story is a beautiful story. But oh, it doesn’t have a beautiful ending. Notice verses 18 and 19—after he said, “Shoot the arrow,” and he shot it. Now, in verse 18: *“And he said, Take the arrows”—*now, there are some more of the arrows—*“And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed”* (2 Kings 13:17–18).

Now, here’s a king. Can you imagine if the president of the United States were to come see Billy Graham, let’s say? He’d say, “Billy, I’ve got a real problem in the nation, and it looks like the Russians are about to get the upper hand on us. What are we going to do?” Suppose Billy Graham said, “All right, Mr. President, I want you to take your telephone and bang it three times on the desk.” “Do you mean it?” I mean, it’s stupid sounding, dumb.

Here he says, “Take your arrows and strike three times on the ground.” I mean, here’s a king—he says, “You want me to do what?” “Just take those arrows and...” No, he didn’t say, “Strike three times.” He said, “Just strike the ground. Just take your arrows and strike the ground.” Now, he says, “All right.” *Bangety, bang, bang*—three times he hit the ground, half-hearted, just doing the minimum, and the man of God was angry with him—extremely angry.

Look, if you will, in verse 19: *“And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice”* (2 Kings 13:19). And, look at the last part of this chapter: *“Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel”* (2 Kings 13:25). Three times! As many times as he smote the ground with those arrows, he had victory, but no more. That’s the reason that I said at the beginning of this message, you are the measure of your victory. You are the one that limits the extent of your victory. And, many times we fail to press the battle to the gate. What was wrong with this man? He did what the prophet told him to do. He said, “Take the arrows and smite the ground.” He did take the arrows, and he did smite the ground—once, twice, thrice, and he stopped! The man of God had not told him to stop.

He just simply said, “Take those arrows and strike the ground,” and he should have continued until the man of God said, “Stop.”

But, the point of the whole matter is his heart was not in it—his heart wasn’t in it! He did all that was required of him, but that was all that he did. His was form without force. The Bible speaks of those in the last days who will have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof (2 Timothy 3:5). Ladies and gentlemen, in this spiritual warfare, God does business with those that mean business. And, God meant business with this king. He wasn’t playing games with him. And, here was a test of his enthusiasm and a test of his ability to go on with God. And, he measured out his own victory. You see, God allows us to measure out our own victory.

Earlier in these materials dealing with Elisha, remember there was a woman who had poverty in her home. She had a handful of meal and a little cruet of oil. You remember that? And, Elisha said to her—he’s going to work a miracle for her. He said to her, “You go borrow some vessels, and don’t get a few. Get a lot of them.” And so, she went around to all the neighbors and got all the pots, and pans, and dishpans, and skillets, and frying pans, and bottles, and vases that she could get, and she put them in her home. And then, Elisha, the man of God, said, “Now, you take that little cruet of oil that you have and start to fill these vessels—one little jar of oil.” She filled this one, and it filled up; and the cruet of oil had not stayed. And, she filled another one, and she filled another one, and she filled another one. The ole’ gal had struck oil. She just kept on filling and filling and filling. And, the Bible says, “She filled till the vessels were all gone.” There wasn’t nothing else to fill, and then the oil stayed.

Now, had she borrowed more vessels, she’d have had more oil. That’s the point of the whole thing. She measured her victory—she measured her victory. Had this man smitten the ground and continued to smite the ground, he would have continued to be victorious. But, he went so far, and he stopped. Do you know what he represents? He represents so many in this building today who are half-hearted about this thing of spiritual warfare. And, you wonder why you’re not winning the victory? I’ll tell you why you’re not winning the victory: you’re lethargic. You’re indifferent. You don’t really care that much. You’re going to do just about what’s required of you, and that’s all you’re going to do. And, you’re going to win half a victory when you could have a whole victory and a great victory over the Lord. May God help us today, that we’ll get into this business with urgency and emergency with every inch, and every ounce, and every nerve, and every fiber, and every sinew of our being. If it’s worth anything, it’s worth everything. God, forgive our lukewarmness. God, forgive these one-milers who will not go the second mile.

We have a theological battle in the Southern Baptist Convention today, and there are some in that battle who call themselves “the moderates”—“the moderates.” Now,

friend, moderation's a good thing in some things. In eating, most of us need to practice moderation. Amen? All of us need to practice it—some are not practicing it—and in rest and recreation, moderation; in exercise, moderation; in finance, moderation. But, I want to tell you, when it comes to spiritual warfare, moderation is a sin—moderation is a sin. When it comes to believing the Bible, moderation is a sin. When it comes to loving the Lord Jesus, moderation is a sin.

Suppose a man—his wife asked him this question: “Honey, do you love me?” He says, “Well, moderately.” She’ll fix his wagon. “Moderately.” Ask a man, “Well, what do you believe about the Bible?” “Well, I’m moderate about the Bible.” “What do you believe about the blood of Jesus?” “Well, I’m moderate about the blood of Jesus.” “What do you think about this warfare?” “Well, well, I’m moderate about this warfare.” That’s the problem with this king: this king was a moderate. He struck the ground three times. He did what was required. He met the letter of the law, and he limited himself, rather than going all out for the Lord, rather than pressing the battle to the gate, rather than saying, “I am going to be victorious and victorious all the way.”

I heard of a man who was discussing with another man this matter of tithing, and this man said to the other man, “How do you figure your tithe? Do you figure tithing—your tithe before taxes or after taxes?” By the way, how do you figure yours? That’s an interesting question, isn’t it—before taxes or after taxes? Do you know what this man said? He said, “Oh, I figure my tithe before taxes.” He said, “Why do you figure it that way?” He said, “Because the Lord gets more that way.” Amen? Amen. I want to tell you something, friend: that’s the kind of man that’s going to get a blessing from the Lord. Jesus talked about the Pharisees, and He said, “[*They*] pay *tithe of mint [plants]*” (Matthew 23:23). You know what they do? They have a little mint leaf there, a little branch, and they say, “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine; those are my leaves. Ten—this one belongs to God.” They were so careful; they’re going to give just enough and yet not too much. Oh, how particular they were; how exacting they were. But, dear friend, give us people who really don’t even know what their right hand doesn’t know what their left hand is doing, and saying, “Dear God, I am going for God. I’m getting out of the boat with both feet, and Lord, if You tell me to hit the ground, I’m going to be hitting it until You tell me to stop.” That’s what this king should have done.

## Conclusion

Do you understand the story? Do you understand the implication? Do you understand what he’s saying? Here was a man who limited himself. He could have consumed Syria. He could have had complete victory. And friend, if we do not have victory, it is not God’s fault; it is our fault because the battle is not ours—it is the Lord’s. And, “*greater is he [that’s] in [us], than he [that’s] in the world*” (1 John 4:4). And, I’m asking you, dear

friend, to press the battle to the gates—to press on to victory. Now, the prophet said, “You should have continued.” I don’t want the Lord, when I face Him, to say, “Adrian, you could have had victory, but you stopped praying. You could have had victory, but you held back in your giving. You could have had victory, but you were moderate and half-hearted in what you did for Me.” Let’s press the battle to the gates. Father, we pray that You’ll teach us, Lord, the great spiritual lesson about pressing on to victory. Lord, we don’t want You to be angry with us at our failures because we take less than Your best. Lord, I pray today that You’ll help Christians to consider their lives.

And now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you’re a child of God—those of you who are listening by means of radio—I want you to ask yourself this question: Have you taken up God’s weapons—*“the weapons of [your] warfare [which] are not carnal, but mighty through God”* (2 Corinthians 10:4)? I want to ask you another question: Have you—have you—realized today the weakness of your flesh and allowed God to lay His omnipotent hands over those weakened hands of yours? I want to ask you another question: Have you opened that window eastward? Have you? Are you willing today to face that thing that’s been defeating you, that thing that you’re afraid of, that thing that’s reduced you to tears so many times? Are you willing today to face the foe, and just throw open the window by God’s grace, and let that arrow of faith fly out that window—let it become the arrow of the Lord’s deliverance—and by that act of faith gain the victory? And are you willing to do it wholeheartedly, enthusiastically, and to keep on doing it until there’s total victory? Are you? There’s one way, friend, that you can have total victory, and that’s just to keep in the fight until you have it and not to quit, not to let up, shut up, or back up until you take up. God help you to do it.

Now, those of you who are not Christians, let me speak a word to you. Would you like to be saved, born again? Would you like to know that your sins are forgiven and that Christ is in your heart? I want you to pray this prayer after me right now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Just pray out—pray silently, rather, in your heart: “Dear God”—just speak to Him—“Dear God, I’m a sinner”—friend, you are a sinner, for the Bible says, *“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23)—“and I’m lost.” And friend, you are lost, for the Bible says, *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). So, say to Him: “Dear God, I’m a sinner, and I’m lost. And, I need to be saved, and I want to be saved.”

Pray this way: “Jesus, You are the Son of God. You died for my sins. You were raised from the dead. I believe it”—confess your faith in Him—“You’re the Son of God. You died for my sins. You were raised from the dead. You said You would save me if I trust You. I do trust You. Tell Him that right now. I trust You, Jesus. I do trust You, Jesus. I do trust You, Jesus, right now, this moment with all of my heart. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Save me.” Oh, my friend, ask Him right now: “Save me, Jesus. Save

me.” Did you ask Him? Did you mean it: “Save me, Jesus”? You did? Then, by faith, without looking for any kind of a feeling, thank Him for saving you. He promised to do it. So, thank Him for doing it. Say, “Thank You for saving me, Jesus. I believe that You have because I receive it by faith like a little child, and that settles it. Praise Your Holy Name. Thank You for saving me, Jesus.”

Now, there’s one other thing I want you to pray: “Jesus, give me the courage to make it public.” Just ask Him that right now: “Jesus, give me the courage to make it public.” Why should you do that, friend? I’ll tell you why: the scripture says, “*Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed*” (Romans 10:11). And, Jesus said, “If you’ll confess Me before men, I’ll confess you before My Father, which is in Heaven” (Matthew 10:32).

# The Making of a Man of God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 16, 2000

**Main Scripture Text:** 2 Kings 13:19–21

*“And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it.”*

2 KINGS 13:19

## Outline

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### Conclusion

## Introduction

Find 2 Kings chapter 13, would you please? I want to speak to Brother Larry. But, as I speak to Brother Larry, I want to speak to each of us. And, what I want to talk to you tonight about is “The Making of a Man of God.” How does a man of God get to be a man of God?

I’m reading here from 2 Kings chapter 13, beginning in verse 20: *“And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet”* (2 Kings 13:20–21). Now, the Bible abounds with all kinds of exciting stories, but this is

one of the most exciting in the Bible.

Here's a little band of discouraged men. They're fleeing from the enemies, and their progress is impeded by a corpse. They have a dead man that they're carrying with them. Maybe the man died of sickness; maybe he died in battle. But, they need to bury him; and so, they're preparing to put him in the grave, and, evidently, they're going to bury him in the grave where Elisha was already buried. And so, the tomb has been sealed, but they move away the stone there. They're in a hurry—no time to be choosy. And, they lower this dead man into the grave where the man of God is already there; the prophet Elisha is already buried there. And, when they put the fresh corpse into that hole in the ground where the former occupant is still there, something happens. When the man that had recently died touched the bones of Elisha, the man of God there in that tomb, the man that is lowered into the tomb revives; he comes back to life. He stands up and, evidently, climbs out of that grave.

Now, I've always believed the Bible gives us everything we need to know, but I wish the Bible had told what happened to those pallbearers when this particular thing happened. It was kind of an experience, to tell you the least. It reminds me of a man who said he was in the cemetery, and he thought he saw a ghost. And, he put out his hand to see if the ghost was there, and he said the ghost was not there. Then, he said the ghost put out his hand to see if he was there. He said, "I wasn't there either." Perhaps that might have happened at this particular place.

But, the key to all of this is found in the scripture, here, in verse 19, where this man, who was first buried there, is called "*the man of God*"—"the man of God" (2 Kings 13:19). The first occupant in that tomb was called a "man of God." His name is Elisha, and we're going to learn a lot about a man of God, as we look at Elisha for a few moments, as we ordain Larry Thompson.

## **I. The Memorial to a Man of God**

The first thing I want you to see is what I'm going to call "a memorial to a man of God." Why did this happen? Why did God allow this miracle? Well, on that tomb—I don't know whether there was an epitaph or not—but had there been an epitaph, it would not have said, "Here lies Elisha, man of influence." It would not say, "Here lies Elisha, a man of power," nor "Elisha, man of denominational prestige." It would have said, "Here lies Elisha, man of God." I love that title—"man of God." I want for my own life for people to think of me as a man of God. I want people to think of Larry Thompson as a man of God.

Now, why did God give this memorial to this man of God? Why did God do this astounding miracle? Well, I think for several reasons:

### A. **It Was a Great Encouragement**

I think, one: It was a great encouragement, because these people needed to be encouraged. Elisha was their leader; Elisha was Israel's prophet, and now he is dead. And, what I think God was teaching them is that, while men come and men go, God stays. God is not dead; God is not getting old, and God is not sick. And, we need to remember that—that men come and men go, but God stays.

And, sometimes we think of the heroes of yesteryear. This church has known wonderful pastors in past times. I think of Dr. Robert G. Lee that I knew. I knew Dr. Lee well and loved him, preached his funeral. And, Dr. Ramsey Pollard—I knew him well and loved him, and preached his funeral. These were men of God, but they have gone on to Heaven. But, Bellevue Baptist Church has continued to go on with her ministry. Sometimes we think that when the heroes of the past have gone on that maybe God's work is not going to go on. But, I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, it will go on. And, Jesus said, *"I am with you always, even [to] the end of the [age]"* (Matthew 28:20). God is alive and well. And, listen to your pastor, and Brother Larry, you listen to me: there has never been a greater day, a greater time, to preach the glorious gospel of Jesus than this day and this house. And, God forbid that we should ever get discouraged. Well, God was just saying, "Look, people, I am still in business."

We talk about sin today—and sin is running rampant—but the Bible says, *"Where sin [abounds]"*—what?—*"grace [does] much more abound"* (Romans 5:20). People say, "Well, all kinds of demon powers are let loose on the earth today." Yes, they are. One-third of the angels fell. That means we have two angels for every demon. We're on the winning side. I mean, *"if God be for us, who can be against us?"* (Romans 8:31). "Well," you say, "people are so sinful today." Well, men have always been totally depraved. You can't get worse than that. Adam was totally depraved. "Well, conditions are not just right." God doesn't have to have conditions just right. "Well," you say, "look who's in the White House." God doesn't have to rout revival through Washington. Now, what we have to understand is that our God is a great God, and we need to stop moaning, and groaning, and complaining about living in the last days, and stop singing, "Hold the Fort" and start singing, "Onward, Christians Soldiers." There are enough people in this room to turn this city inside out for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Men come; men go. Men die, but God is mighty. And, I think one thing that God did for these people that day was to encourage them by this miracle.

### B. **It Was a Great Lesson**

I think something else that He was doing was to teach them a great lesson—that the man who lives for God never really dies. I think of the great heroes of the past. Dwight L. Moody—he still lives. Preachers are quoting him often. Mr. Finney—people are

quoting him. George W. Truett—people are quoting him. Vance Havner, R.G. Lee, these men—they continue to live through their influence and through their power. I believe a man ought to preach 'till he dies and then just keep on preaching. Being dead, he ought to still be preaching. That's what Elisha did. His power survived him. So, here was a memorial to a man of God.

## II. The Making of a Man of God

But, let's move, secondly, and think a little bit about the making of a man of God. How did this man gain this title, Larry? Why did they call him a man of God?

### A. He Was Divinely Appointed

Well, I want to tell you, first of all, he did not choose to be the man of God; he was divinely appointed. Do you believe in a God-called ministry? I do. Now today, some people are taking up the ministry as a “profession.” Friend, it is absolutely the worst profession; it is absolutely the best calling. A man ought to never choose the ministry as a profession; he ought to never refuse it as a calling, if God calls him.

Now, Elisha was divinely appointed. If you were to go back to 1 Kings chapter 19—you're in 2 Kings, but if you were to go back to 1 Kings chapter 19—you would find that Elijah, who was Elisha's mentor, was the one who recognized the call of God upon Elisha's life. And, here's what it says: “So he departed thence, and found Elisha”—that is, *“Elijah, his mentor, found Elisha”—“son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him”* (1 Kings 19:19). Now, what does it mean—*“he...cast his mantle”* (1 Kings 19:19)? Well, the prophet wore a cape, like a mantle, over his shoulders. It was the sign of a prophet. And, the old prophet takes his mantle off and puts it on the young farmhand who's plowing with twelve oxen. And, what was that symbolizing? It's symbolizing that he is not becoming a prophet by his own choice; he's not becoming a man of God by his own choice. But God, through the elder prophet and the mentor who was obeying God, has set him apart for the ministry.

I don't believe that Larry Thompson just simply woke up one day and said, “I want to be a man of God.” I believe that he has been divinely appointed. I believe that God called me into the ministry. As a matter of fact, I'm as certain of my call as I am of my salvation. And, only God can make a preacher. No seminary can make a preacher. No university can make a preacher. No mother, no father, can make a man of God. Only God can do that.

I was thinking about Jeremiah. Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 1, verses 4 and 5: *“Then the word of the LORD came unto me...Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a*

*prophet unto the nations*” (Jeremiah 1:4–5). Now, we’re going to ordain this man, but really, we’re going to recognize here on Earth what God has already ordained in Heaven, amen? Before Jeremiah was born, God said, “Hey, while you were in your mother’s womb, I ordained you” (Jeremiah 1:5). And, by the way, what would that say to an abortionist today who believes that’s merely a blob of protoplasm there?

## **B. He Was Divinely Anointed**

He was divinely anointed as well as divinely appointed. It’s one thing to be appointed, but it’s another thing to be anointed. And, if you want to find something of the anointing of this man of God, go back, if you will, to 2 Kings chapter 2, and read with me the first six verses—2 Kings chapter 2—and you’re going to find out how the man of God who had been appointed now is anointed to do the work of God: *“And it came to pass”*—I’m in 2 Kings 2, verse 1—*“And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal”*—I’m going to mention a lot of places that you may not be familiar with, but listen to me now—*“And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel”*—now, they’re at Gilgal, and Elijah is saying to Elisha, “You stay here. I’m going to Bethel”—*“And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel”* (2 Kings 2:1–2). Elijah said to Elisha, “You stay here. I’m going on.” He said, “Oh, no. I’m going with you. Where you go, I go.” And then, I’m going to skip down to verse 4: *“And Elijah said unto [Elisha], tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth...as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee”*—“I’m going with you to Jericho”—*“So they came to Jericho”* (2 Kings 2:4). And then, I’m going to skip to verse 6: *“And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they...went on”* (2 Kings 2:6). Now, here’s the elder prophet saying to the younger prophet, “You stay here; I’m going.” He said, “I’m going with you.” “You stay here, I’m...” He said, “I am going with you.”

Now, what does all of this mean?

### **1. There Was Determination**

#### **a. In Spite of Discouragement**

Well, here was a man who was determined to be a man of God in spite of seeming discouragement. The elder prophet, the mentor, said in verse 2: “Stay here,” but he said, “No, I’m going with you” (2 Kings 2:2). In verse 4, he says, “Stay here”; he said, “No, I’m going with you” (2 Kings 2:4). In verse 6, he says, “You stay here”; he says, “No, I am going with you” (2 Kings 2:6). Now, what does this mean? It means determination.

Do you know that sometimes God will test us to see if we’re really determined? You

remember old Jacob wrestling with the angel? And, the angel said to Jacob, “Let me go,” and Jacob said, “No, sir. I’m not going to let you go, except you bless me” (Genesis 32:26). That’s what he wanted to hear. This is what Elisha wanted to hear when Elijah said, “You stay here.” Elisha said, “No, I’m going with you.” That’s exactly what he wanted to hear.

Larry, sometimes it will seem that God is discouraging you, but God is not discouraging you; God is testing you, because *God does business with men who mean business*. It’s not easy to prepare yourself. You’ve gone to the university; you’ve gone to the seminary. You have already had all kinds of discouragement come your way, but, thank God, you’ve stayed.

#### **b. In Spite of Difficulty**

And, not only in spite of discouragement, but in spite of difficulty. If you’ll see these various places, Brother Larry, where Elisha, the man of God, went, you’re going to find that each one of them was hostile to the gospel of Jesus Christ—at Gilgal, at Bethel, at Jericho—all of these were centers of idolatry at this time. There were places that were very hostile to the Word of God (that we would call, today, “the gospel”). And, if you are a man of God, you’re going to face discouragement. And, not only are you going to face discouragement, but you’re going to face genuine difficulty. Leonard Ravenhill said, “When God opens the windows of Heaven to bless us, the devil will open the doors of Hell to blast us.” There’s no way possible you can be a man of God today without taking some slings and some arrows from the devil’s crowd.

#### **c. In Spite of Derision**

But, not only was there difficulty and discouragement; there was also derision. If you were to look in these verses—in verse 3 and in verse 5—Elisha is actually being mocked: “*And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? ...he said, Yea, I know it; hold...your peace*” (2 Kings 2:3). “Shut your mouth” is what he’s saying. And, if you will, look in verse 5: “*And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold...your peace*” (2 Kings 2:5). What they were doing was they were mocking him. They were saying, “Hey, son, you’re going to be lost without the old guy. You’re not going to be adequate,” and they were jeering at him and laughing at him. And, the truth of the matter is that this was coming, Dr. Spradlin, from a seminary crowd. They were laughing at this man of God.

How was he divinely appointed? Well, God called him. How was he divinely anointed? He said, “I’m going with God in spite of discouragement, in spite of difficulty, in spite of derision.”

Well, Larry, I don't know how much of God you have—I think you've got a whole lot—but I'm going to tell you one thing, brother: you've got all you want. If you don't have any more of God, it's because you don't want any more of God. It's not our job to persuade God to fill us, to anoint us, but to permit Him to do so. God wants you to be an anointed man of God. So, there was determination.

## **2. There was Appropriation**

But, not only was there determination; there was also appropriation. I want you to look, if you will, in 2 Kings now—chapter 2, verses 11 through 14: *“And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven”*—can you imagine? There, as they're walking along, suddenly out of Heaven there comes a chariot of fire being pulled by horses of fire. I don't know what that really must have looked like. It must have been incredible. And then, there's something like a cyclone, and here's this man of God going up and up and up in the chariot of fire right up into the Glory—*“And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took...of his own clothes, and rent them”—or “tore them”—“in...pieces. [And] he took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over”* (2 Kings 2:11–14).

Now, this was the kind of a miracle that Elijah had already done. And, now that Elijah has done this miracle, Elisha takes the mantle. He walks up to Jordan with that mantle, and he strikes the water. And, the waters separate, and the man of God walks on through.

Now, the question we're asking today is, *“Where is the LORD God of Elijah?”* (2 Kings 2:14). And, I'll tell you where He was: He was in Elisha. And, this is the point that I'm making over and over and over again: preachers come, and preachers go; God's power remains the same. And, what this young preacher did was just simply to pick up the mantle and appropriate the mantle. When Elijah went up and the mantle came down, it symbolizes to me Christ ascending to Heaven and sending the Holy Ghost. As one wise man said, “Jesus went up; the Spirit came down. The disciples were out, and the lost came in.” What a glorious day to preach the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

## **III. The Ministry of a Man of God**

Now, here's the final thing. I want you to see the man of God and the memorial to this man. I want you to see the making of this man. But, for just a few moments, Larry, I

want you to see the ministry of a man of God. Then, we're going to have the laying on of hands.

Here is this man who just simply appropriates, now, the blessing. He picks up the mantle. He says, "I don't deserve it. I'm unworthy. But God, You've called me. Therefore, God, You have empowered me to be a man of God." Now, he moves back across Jordan; the waters of Jordan part, and Elisha moves through Jordan. And, when he does, Larry, he meets three categories of persons that you will meet and I will meet.

### A. He Met Skeptics

First of all, he met what I'm going to call "the skeptics." You're in 2 Kings now. Look, if you will, in verses 16 through 18: *"And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send. And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not. And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?"* (2 Kings 2:16–18).

Now, what does all of this mean? Well, there were fifty of these preachers who were liberals. They couldn't believe this. They couldn't believe that Elijah had been raptured, that he'd gone to Heaven in a whirlwind, a chariot of fire. They said, "Look, he's fallen into some crevice somewhere; something has happened to him. He's lost out there in the wilderness. We'd better get a posse and go look for him." Well, Elisha had seen him go up to Heaven. He said, "You're wasting your time. Don't go." "No," they said, "listen, we've got to go find him. He's out there somewhere. He's got a broken leg. He's in a valley somewhere. We've got to..." He said, "Look, don't go." They said, "Oh, but we've got to go!" He says, "Okay, go," and they went. They didn't find him. He said, "I told you so."

Now, you're going to meet—and I'm going to meet—people just like that. I call them "skeptics." They don't believe in a miracle-working God. They don't believe in the same kind of God that took Jesus to Heaven bodily, and He's going to come back bodily. They don't believe in a bodily resurrection. They don't believe in a bodily rapture. I want you to know I do. I hope you do.

Well, when you meet these people, how do you deal with them? Well, you speak to them once; you speak to them twice, and then you stop arguing with them. You know, there's a perfect cure for doubt. Do you know what it is? Time. There are no atheists in Hell. Did you know that? And, you can spend too much time—waste too much time—arguing with people. The Bible says, *"A man that is an heretick after the...second admonition reject"* (Titus 3:10). You'd be surprised at some of the mail I get. People

want to get me sidetracked, arguing with them about this thing or that thing. I'll give a reasoned answer; I'll give a careful answer. But, if I were to spend my time trying to answer every skeptic, every Bible-doubter, I'd be out of business. And so, somebody has asked a good question: Why should anybody hear the gospel twice before everybody's heard it once? I mean, there are people who are hungry for Jesus.

So, he met the skeptics, and you'll meet the skeptics.

## **B. He Met Scorners**

I'll tell you, not only did he meet the skeptics; he met the scorners. In 2 Kings 2, verses 23 and 24: *"And [as] he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the woods, and tare forty and two children of them"* (2 Kings 2:23–24).

Now, evidently, this man was "follicle-challenged." He had a crew-cut, and the crew had bailed out. And so, there were some people there who were making fun of this man of God. And, in the Middle East, baldness—whether a man is bald or not, if they call him "baldy"—it's a term of derision. Now, a lot of people have been confused over this story. And oh, how the Bible-haters—they love this story, because this is the idea of a petulant prophet who's had his vanity wounded, and he calls some bears to gobble up forty-two children. No, this is not a story of little, innocent children and a bald preacher's vanity. Actually, where this took place was just outside Bethel, and there was a rival altar to Jehovah God right there. And, these were not little children. And, the *King James Version* may call them "little children" because that word can be used for little children, but it is also used in the Bible for men who were old enough to go to war. In 1 Samuel chapter 16 and verse 11 and verse 18, this same term is used for valiant men of war (1 Samuel 16:11). These were young men sent out to discredit the man of God. What you have here is a battle between light and dark, truth and error, Heaven and Hell, and this was an encounter.

Now, when the Bible says that Elisha *"cursed them in the name of the LORD"* (2 Kings 2:24), it doesn't mean he cussed them; it doesn't mean that he used profanity. What he was doing was giving the Word of God. He pronounced the mind of God upon these people. The apostle Paul did something of the same thing in the New Testament, in the Book of Galatians, talking about people who would pervert the gospel of Christ. And, here's what he said in Galatians 1, verse 9: *"As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that [which I have preached unto you], let him be accursed"*—*"let him be accursed"* (Galatians 1:9). What Elisha was doing was the same thing in the Old Testament that Paul did in the New Testament.

He's saying the wrath of God is against this wickedness, this blasphemy of the Word and the way of God.

And, these were scorers who were sent out to belittle, to ridicule, the man of God. And Larry, there are plenty of them around. If you're a man of God, if you stand up for God, get ready for some derision. Get ready for people to minimize you, to ridicule you, to try to neutralize you by derision.

Well, how do you deal with these people? Well, I'll tell you not to deal with them. You don't have to get in a contest with them. Again, just like the skeptics, don't get in a contest with them. Just like the skeptics, so as these scorers—don't get in a contest with them. What the man of God did was to pronounce the mind of God and go on his way. You don't have to bite them. God's got a bear for every one of them. Just give them the Word of God, give the mind of God, and go your way. Just leave them to the bears; the bears will get them.

### C. He Met Seekers

Now, here's the third category he met, and we're coming to the conclusion. He met—this man of God, divinely appointed, divinely anointed, a man with determination, a man with appropriation—here he meets the skeptics. Doubt is the cure. He meets the scorers. The bears are the answer for them. But, he meets one other category—and believe me, folks, there are plenty of them in Memphis; there are plenty of them where you live—he meets the seekers. He meets those who are hungry, those who are thirsting for God. You'll find it in 2 Kings 2. Look, if you will, in verse 19: *“And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught”*—that is, “It's nothing,” it means—*“and the ground barren”*—there was bad water there, and nothing would grow—*“And he said, Bring me a new cruse”*—that is, “a vessel”—*“and put salt therein. And they brought it to him”*—*“Bring me a vessel, and put some salt in it”*—*“And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he [spoke]”* (2 Kings 2:19–22).

Now, what does that say to me? They said, “Look, Elisha, the situation in this city is beautiful. What a fair city! But, the water is no good.” Like Americans today, they have so much. Everything is so wonderful, but the water is not there—the water of life. They are thirsting, and they are living, in spite of a seeming wonderful situation, in barrenness and thirst. Salt, in the Bible, speaks of the saving life of Jesus Christ. You're going to find people all around who are thirsty. I am convinced—I am totally convinced—that there's more spiritual hunger today in the world than there has been since I entered the

ministry. I'm seeing people more open to the gospel, more anxious to know Jesus Christ. I refuse to spend all of my time with the skeptics and the scorners. I want to spend some time with the seekers. And, I want to take the healing salt, and sweeten the water of life, and preach the gospel. And,

*Friends all around me are trying to find  
What the heart yearns for, by sin undermined;  
I have the secret; I know where 'tis found:  
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.  
Jesus is all this...world needs today.  
Blindly they strive, for sin darkens their way.  
O to [pull] back the grim curtains of night,  
One [look at] Jesus and all will be [light]!*  
—HARRY D. LOES

## Conclusion

Larry, be a man of God with a determination to be a man of God, with an appropriation of everything that God wants you to have. And, the question is not, today, “*Where is the LORD God of Elijah?*” (2 Kings 2:14). The question is, where are the Elijahs of God? I want you to be one of them. I want you to be a man of God—divinely appointed, divinely anointed. If you meet the skeptics, tell them what God says, and time will cure them. If you meet the scorners, pronounce the mind of God, and leave them to the bears. But, when you find people who are thirsty, you have the answer. And, there are thousands—yea, millions—in this world who will respond to the gospel of Jesus when they hear it.

# The Man of God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 23, 1979

**Main Scripture Text:** 2 Kings 13:20–21

*“And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.”*

2 KINGS 13:20–21

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles please and turn, if you will now, to 2 Kings chapter 13, as we continue this series on the miracles of Elisha. Now we know that many men have been participants in the miraculous while they were living. We're going to read tonight the story of a man who participated in a miracle after he was dead. I want to begin reading here in 2 Kings chapter 13 and verse 10. You will remember that Elisha is the man that we've been studying about. Second Kings chapter 13 and verse 20: *“And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man*

*was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet” (2 Kings 13:20–21).*

I’m going to enjoy preaching the message tonight for several reasons. This is a message, really, that I preached about seven years ago, and it has a very deep significance for me, because I preached it at the Southern Baptist Convention, the Pastors Conference, and two of our men were there who were on the pulpit committee at Bellevue Church, and that was the first time they heard me preach. And I thought about that as I looked over this scripture, as we continue our series in the messages on the life of Elisha, and it brought back sweet memories to me. I’m going to enjoy preaching it also because it’s easier to preach something you’ve already preached than to prepare something that you have not preached. I am also going to enjoy preaching it because it speaks to me. This message has been a great source of comfort to me through my ministry. And it has been a great source of comfort to me in recent days. And I want to entitle the message, “The Man of God”—“The Man of God.” And I want you to look at this story here because it is a remarkable story.

I hope you paid attention as we were reading it from the Bible. Get the scene now. There are many exciting stories in the Bible, but this is one of the most exciting. Here is a little band of discouraged Israelites. They are scurrying along. They are fearful, no doubt, because the land has been invaded by the Moabites, and they were cruel and fierce. And these men are trying to do something to protect themselves, and, perhaps, to fight back, but their progress is impeded by a corpse. They’re carrying along the body of one of their dead fellows. They are saying to themselves, “If we could only get rid of this guy, perhaps we could go on a little further,” but there was no place to bury him. And then they spied a sort of cave like a sepulcher, a hole in the rocks or whatever, some sort of an open grave. There was already a man in the grave who had already been buried. He is the man that we are studying about in this series of messages—his name: Elisha.

Now whether or not they knew that Elisha was in that grave to begin with I know not. But they said, “This is a good place to stash this guy,” and so they took their fresh corpse and began to lower him into the grave that was already occupied. Now no sooner had the dead corpse touched the bones of the tenant of that tomb than the first corpse revived and came back to life. Now I have always believed that the Bible gives us all things that we need for our instruction and for our inspiration. But I have often regretted that it didn’t go on and say what happened to the pallbearers.

Now I’m sure it was a very exciting thing, to say the least. I believe that fellow may have felt like the man who was in a graveyard and he thought he saw a ghost, but he wasn’t sure, so he put out his hand to see if the ghost was there, and the ghost wasn’t there. He said, “Then the ghost put out his hand to see if he was there,” and he said,

“He wasn’t there either.”

And I believe that’s the way I would have been had I been one of these pallbearers. But this is an actual event; this was not folklore. This literally, actually happened. Now why? Why such a miracle? Why did God allow Elisha to participate in this miracle even after he was dead? I believe that it was tied up in the character of that first man buried in that grave, and his name was Elisha, but his title was *man of God*. Notice in verse 19 the Bible calls Elisha *man of God*. That was God’s title for Elisha. And had this grave had a tombstone on it, and had that tombstone had an epitaph upon it, this would have been the epitaph that would have been upon that tombstone, had God written that epitaph. It would have said something like this: “Here lies Elisha, man of God”—not man of denominational influence, not man of eloquence, not man of wealth, not man of prestige, but man of God.

Now I say that there is nothing greater that could be said about any man than that he is a man of God. There is nothing that could be said about a woman that is any greater than this: that she is a woman of God. Now I want us to divide our study tonight under three headings, and we are going to kind of put some things in together. But really, I want you to see, first of all, the memorial to a man of God. Then secondly, I want you to see the making of a man of God. And then thirdly, I want you to see the ministry of a man of God.

## **I. The Memorial to a Man of God**

First of all, the memorial to a man of God. Why did God allow this to happen? I believe as a memorial unto the man of God. I really do. I believe that God was just saying that this fellow is so important that I’m going to prepare a miracle as a memorial unto his honor. And this memorial served a twofold purpose.

### **A. It Encouraged God’s People**

Number one: It encouraged God’s people. You see, Elisha had been their leader. They had been depending on him. He had been leading them. He had been defending them. He had been protecting them. He had been preaching to them. And now he was gone and the situation was dark indeed.

What was God showing them? What was God telling them? I believe that God was telling them by this miracle that Elisha was dead, but God was still alive. I think we need to learn that today. You see, men come and men go. Situations change, but God changes not. And sometimes we get into a desperate situation and we lose the things that we are depending upon, whether person or possessions or whatever, and we tend to get a little desperate. God is still alive. You see, Elisha was dead, but God was still alive.

Now a while back in the sixties they were trying to tell us that God is dead. I'm glad that "God is dead" is dead. I mean, I'm glad that philosophy is gone. Those poor old theologians. They call themselves theologians, because *theologian* comes from two words: *theo*, which means "God"; and *logos* which means "word." They don't know God and they don't believe the Word, so they call themselves *theologians*. That's a misnomer if ever there has been one. But these erstwhile, so-called, self-styled theologians were telling us there for a while that God is dead.

I like what one country preacher said about that. He said, 'That's ridiculous!' He said that, "When someone dies, they always notify the next of kin, and no one has told me about it, and I'm His child." And then he went on to say, "How would they know if He had died anyway? You have to know someone sufficiently enough to identify the corpse, and they don't even know Him." And he said, "In the third place, what if He did die? He'd just go to heaven and start all over again." I like that.

Well, listen. We know that God is not dead. But you know, a lot of people think God is sick. You know, "Poor old God: He may not be dead, but He's getting old. He's not able to perform miracles like he used to. His ears are getting heavy, His arms are getting short and palsied; and His ear is dull that he cannot hear, and His arm is shortened that He cannot save (Isaiah 59:1). Poor old God!" There used to be a day when he could save multitudes, when he could shake cities, when he could perform miracles, but now some of us must think in these last days that God is mighty sick.

Well, I want to tell you, God is alive and well. And God, by performing this miracle, I believe it encouraged them, and I believe, by performing this miracle, God wants to encourage us tonight. God is alive. And I think that's one reason that God allowed this miracle to be performed.

### **B. It Taught God's People a Lesson**

And then I want to tell you another reason I believe that God allowed this miracle to be performed and for this memorial to a man of God: not only to encourage them, but to teach a wonderful, wonderful lesson. And you want me to tell you what it is? It is this: The man who lives for God never really dies—the man who lives for God never really dies. You see, Elisha was dead, and yet his influence lived on. And he being dead yet spoke (Hebrews 11:4).

You see, Dwight L. Moody is dead, but he never really died; he lives on. Charles Grandison Finney died, but he lives on. Charles Haddon Spurgeon died, but he lives on. George W. Truett died, but he lives on. Robert G. Lee died, but he lives on. You see, the influence of a man of God, a woman of God, a person of God, goes on and on and on. I believe we ought to preach till we die, and then go on preaching. Amen? I just believe that our influence just ought to go on more and more. I believe that Elisha had

more power dead than most preachers have alive. And I thank God for this man. And so God allowed this miracle, first of all, I believe, just as a testimony to the man, as a memorial to the man of God.

## **II. The Making of a Man of God**

But now, let's go back and think a little bit about the making of the man of God. How did he get to be a man of God? He wasn't always a man of God. He wasn't born a man of God. How did he get to be a man of God? Well, turn left in your Bible now. We're in 2 Kings. Go back to 1 Kings chapter 19, and we're going to look at something that we preached a whole message on about three or four weeks ago, and that is "The Making of the Man of God." Look, if you will, in 1 Kings chapter 19 and verse 19. And I'm just going through a few threads of the Scripture because this tells of how Elijah, the prophet that preceded Elisha, anointed and appointed this man of God. Now I'm reading here in 1 Kings chapter 19 and verse 19: *"So he"—that is, Elijah—"departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him"* (1 Kings 19:19).

Now the mantle was sort of a garment that a prophet wore and it was the mark of a prophet in that day. A prophet wore a mantle, a prophet's mantle. And here Elijah, who was a prophet, an authenticated legitimate prophet of God, took his mantle and cast it upon this young man, whose name was Elisha. Do you remember that Elisha was out there plowing in the field? He was just a farmer, plowing with 12 yoke of oxen.

### **A. Elisha Was Divinely Appointed**

But the point I want you to learn is this: that Elisha, the man of God, became a man of God because he was divinely appointed. He did not choose to be a prophet. God chose him. He didn't say, "Now what shall I do? What are the various professions? Somebody tell me the benefits of the ministry, and law, and medicine, and dentistry, and business, and I will choose." Oh, no! Oh, no!

We have too many in the ministry that way. And I think very foolishly, so as a matter of fact, I would never choose the ministry had God not chosen me for the ministry. Now I'm not sorry that I'm in the ministry. I'd rather do this than anything I know of. But I certainly wouldn't choose it of myself. And here was a man who was divinely appointed.

And we need to learn this, ladies and gentlemen: that only God can make a prophet; only God can make a preacher. No mother can do it. Too many preachers have been called by their mothers. No seminary can do it. No college can do it. No bishop can do it. No denomination can do it. And we need to preach and teach as long as we have breath the authenticity of a God-called ministry. Paul said, *"I thank [God]...that he*

*counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Timothy 1:12).*

And if I were a preacher and I were not divinely appointed, I would get out. If I did not know that I know that I know that God called me to preach, I wouldn't preach. I tell you, dear friend, it would be too easy to tuck tail and run, it would be too easy to look for something else, unless you knew that you knew that God called you to preach. I am more sure of my call to preach—you've heard me say this—than I am my salvation. Now it's not that I'm not sure of my salvation. I don't have any doubts about that, but on a few occasions I've doubted my salvation. I've never doubted my call to preach.

## **B. Elisha Was Divinely Anointed**

But not only was Elisha divinely appointed, he was also divinely anointed. Go back now to 2 Kings chapter 2 and look, if you will, please, in verse 9—2 Kings chapter 2 and verse 9. And here's a wonderful episode. Here is Elisha now. He's following after Elijah. Now remember that Elijah was the fiery, Spirit-filled prophet of God. And I begin to read now in 2 Kings 2, verse 9: *“And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I am taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said”—that is, Elijah said to Elisha—“Thou hast asked a hard thing...”*—that is, dear friends, to have the anointing of the Spirit is not something easy, not something simple. It takes more than glibly reading through some little tract—*“Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan”* (2 Kings 2:9–13).

Now again, I'm just picking up the thread of the thought, but I want you to notice how this man was divinely anointed, how the Spirit of God came upon Elisha and enabled him to perform so many miracles.

### **1. A Sheer Determination**

Well, first of all, I want you to notice he had a sheer determination for this power. Now I've not read all of the scripture, but if you were to go back here to 2 Kings the second chapter, beginning in the first verse, you would find out that Elijah is teacher and prophet and father-confessor, who would be moving from place to place. And he would go to one place, and he'd say to Elisha, “Now you stay here. I'm going over here.” And Elisha said, “As God lives, and as my soul lives, I'm not going to leave you or forsake

you. I'm going with you." And then the old prophet moved over here and he said, "Now Elisha, you stay here." He said, "No, as my soul lives, I'm not going to leave you nor forsake you" (2 Kings 2:2, 4, 6). He had eyes for just one, and that was his spiritual master. And he followed him—and he followed him. Why? Because he was determined—he was determined that he was going to have the power of God upon his life.

I wonder, are you really determined to have the power of God upon your life? Are you really? I honestly believe—and I'm checking my statement mentally, and it's not a glib statement—I honestly believe I'd rather die than to preach without power. I really believe that. And I guess if I could sum everything that I want, more than anything else I want the power of God upon my life. I want it. I need that. And you need it. But you see, so many people do not have a determination. They do not say, "This one thing I do." They have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude towards spiritual power. They think it may be nice if they are divinely anointed, but not necessarily. And oh, in a prayer meeting they may give a prayer meeting request for more power, easily uttered and soon forgotten, as soon as they get back and turn on the television, but they do not have a burning, blistering thirst that will not take no for an answer.

I don't know how much of God you have, but I am persuaded of this: that you have all you want. And if you don't have any more, it's because you don't want any more. It is not God's fault that you don't have any power in your life; it is your fault. Sometimes we act like God is the tyrant and we're the heroes. "Mean ole God! If we could only persuade God and tell God how badly we need to be anointed with power, maybe we could talk Him into doing what we need." It is not our job to persuade God to fill us with His Spirit, but to permit Him to do so.

## **2. A Sincere Humiliation**

Here was a man who was determined; he had, dear friend, a sheer determination. But not only did he have a sheer determination; he also had a sincere humiliation. Look in verse 7: "*And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground*" (2 Kings 2:7).

Do you know what in Bible type, typology, and symbolism crossing Jordan symbolizes? Taking death to self—taking death to self. You see, the reason that many of us are not filled with the Holy Spirit is that we are so stuffed full of self and even God can't fill that which is already full.

Now the first step to being filled is being empty. Jesus said, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself*" (Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23). And self doesn't want to be denied. Self loves self, and self will plead eloquently for itself. It's easy to preach

sermons on taking death to self, but it's much harder to take death to self. You see, denying things is not denying self. You can go without things and haven't denied yourself. You can move off into a monastery. Peter forsook his nets, but it was a long time before Simon Peter forsook Simon Peter.

And here was a man who not only had a sheer determination, but he had a sincere humiliation. I believe he was saying—at least typically, and by typological preaching, it symbolizes to me—taking death to self. And whether or not that is true in this instance, I know that it is true in life that you're never going to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God until you say no to self and yes to Christ. Have you done that? Have you done that?

Remember what we said the other morning? As long as self is on the throne, Christ is on the cross. It is only when Christ is on the throne and self is one the cross, however, that we have power with God. And if you have any other king in the throne room of your life other than the King of kings, you, madam, you, sir, are guilty of high treason, a crime worthy of death. And Jesus *is not going to be some moonlighting God with a duplex for a throne room, with self and Him on the throne at the same time.* Someone has well said, "It doesn't take much of a man to be a Christian; it just takes all there is of him." But I want to say, dear friend, it takes all there is of Jesus to let Jesus have all there is of you, to enthrone the Lord Jesus.

### **3. A Simple Appropriation**

And so here was a man who was divinely appointed, but he was divinely anointed. There was a sheer determination. There was a sincere humiliation. And I want to say, ladies and gentlemen, that at the same time there was a simple appropriation. Sometimes we can have the determination, and sometimes we can have the humiliation, but we never get around to the simple appropriation. Look at verse 13: *"He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan"* (2 Kings 2:13).

Now the mantle that fell was symbolic of power. It was the symbolic instrument of the power of God. Now I want you to notice that Elisha rent his clothes. It was off with the old. He took the mantle; he appropriated it, he took it to himself. There comes a time also when you must do the same thing.

Do you know the problem with many of us? We hear too many sermons. And we get facts in our notebooks, but we never get things down into our hearts. It is said that a modern education is that system whereby the facts on the professor's notebook get into the students' notebooks without getting into the heads of either one. And I'm afraid that sometimes this is true in church—that people come and they listen to messages like the message I'm preaching tonight with no more thought about doing anything about it than they are going to do anything about what they watch on television. It's a sort of sanctified entertainment, sort of a form of doing your duty.

I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, my heart yearns and burns within me for the people who are listening to me tonight to have a sheer determination, a sincere humiliation, and a simple appropriation of the power of God in their lives. You must appropriate the power of God. It's a lot like being saved. You know, the Bible says, "As you have received the Lord, so walk ye in Him" (Colossians 2:6). Now you live the Christian life like you receive it. You receive it by faith, but that's faith that appropriated Jesus. You just simply said, "I receive; I believe; I take Christ as my Savior by faith." Now in a very real sense, you believe and you take the fullness of the Holy Spirit. You just receive His power. Time to stop begging and whining, and by faith say, "Lord, I receive of your power upon my life. I want you to anoint my life."

And let me hasten to say that some of you may be saying, "Now wait a minute: I'm no preacher. You are talking about those who have been divinely appointed. They're the ones who need to be divinely anointed." May I say, ladies and gentlemen, there is one sense in which everybody who is in this room who is a child of God is divinely appointed; no one is left out. Jesus said, "*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain*" (John 15:16). And the context to that scripture is that it was not given merely to the apostles, the disciples, or the so-called preachers, but given to those who are to abide in the vine—and that means every believer. And you, my friend, have been divinely appointed, and therefore you should be divinely anointed. Brother Lane, what would happen if everyone whom God has chosen were anointed with the power of God to do the work of God that He wants done here in this particular place?

### **III. The Ministry of a Man of God**

Well, I must rush on. And I want us to go on and look not only at the memorial to a man of God, and not only at the making of a man of God, but I want us to look at the ministry of the man of God. And really, this is the heart of the whole business right now. And so I want you to see what happened now after Elisha, who has been divinely appointed and divinely anointed, begins to serve. He moves back across the river Jordan, he takes the mantle, he smites the water, and says, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" and the waters part, and he goes through, going back into the world to minister. And as he does, he immediately meets three classes of persons, the same three classes of persons that every God-appointed, God-anointed man of God and woman of God is going to meet.

#### **A. He Met the Skeptics**

First of all, he met the skeptics—the skeptics. Look in 2 Kings chapter 2 and verse 15: "*And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed*"

*themselves to the ground before him. And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send. And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not. And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?"* (2 Kings 2:15–18). In other words, "I told you so. You weren't going to find him."

Now what does this mean? Well, he met some young theological students. See, they had a seminary next door to their church. And he met some young theological students. They were called the sons of the prophets, and these young theological students had come to Elisha and they were worried about Elijah. The old seminary professor had gone, and there was a new seminary professor there to take his place. And they said, "We'd better go look for our old seminary professor. Something bad has happened to him. He's fallen into some valley somewhere; he's fallen off some cliff somewhere. He's in desperate shape. We're afraid that he's lying down there groaning and moaning with a broken leg somewhere."

Well, Elisha knew better than that, because how did Elijah go to heaven? You remember. He was taken to heaven supernaturally. He was translated. He went to heaven in a whirlwind and in a chariot of fire. And Elisha was right there, and he knew what happened to Elijah. Well, when he explained it to these preacher boys, I believe, you know, they were modernists, liberals, and it was hard for them to believe in, you know, a man just going to heaven like that. Why, it's like some people today believing in the Rapture, amen? So that's what had happened to Elijah. And they said, "Now we'd better go look for him. After all, we're of a scientific and philosophical bent of mind, and we've had a committee meeting and we've decided it's time to go look." He says, "Now fellows, don't go, because you won't find him." And they said, "We'd better go." He says, "No, don't go." "Oh, we think we ought to go." He said, "All right, go."

Now I want you to learn a great lesson. Every Spirit-filled man of God, boy, woman, whoever they may be, is going to meet this class of persons, just as Elisha met them. I call them the skeptics—the skeptics. It's hard for them to believe in the supernatural. It is hard for them to believe in the things of God.

Now how do you deal with the skeptic? How do you deal with the man who doesn't want to believe? How do you deal with the doubter? I'll tell you how to deal with him: You deal with him the same way that Elisha dealt with these. You warn them once, you warn them twice, you explain to them, you do the best you can, and then just leave them alone—just leave them alone. Don't waste too much time with them. Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says, "*A man that is an heretick after the first and*

*second admonition reject*” (Titus 3:10). Don’t just waste all your time. It’s like beating your head against a stone wall. Jesus said, “Don’t cast your pearls before swine” (Matthew 7:6). What they will do is they’ll neutralize you.

And you spend too much time out here talking with the town atheist, the skeptic, the infidel, the cultist, and do you know what so many of those arguments are? Just ego against ego. Tell them the truth, and then just leave them alone. You see, there’s a perfect cure for doubt. Do you know what it is? T-I-M-E—time—perfect cure.

Now you see, finally, when they went through this whole thing, they came back and he said, “I told you so.” Do you know what we’re going to do one day to this whole universe? We’re just going to say, “I told you so”—“I told you so.” You see, there won’t be an atheist in hell. Now I’m not saying atheists are not going to hell. I’m just saying there won’t be any in hell. Jess Moody said, “Old atheists never die; they just go to hell.” And that’s true. But once they get there they won’t be atheists because *“every knee shall bow...and every tongue shall confess to God”* (Romans 14:11). You see, the perfect cure for skepticism and doubt is time. And so don’t spend too much time arguing the Bible. Don’t do it. Someone has said, “Why should anyone hear the gospel twice before everyone hears it once?” If a man just wants to argue and argue, just give him the word and go on.

## **B. He Met the Scorners**

All right now, he met another class of persons. Not only did he meet the skeptics, but he met someone I think even worse than the skeptics: what I call the scorners. Look, if you will, please, in chapter 2 and verse 23: *“And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them”* (2 Kings 2:23–24).

Boy, have the Bible-haters had a field day with this story! They say, “Wow, this proves that the Bible is certainly not a book to be dependent on,” and they just enjoy ridiculing the Bible over this particular story. But there’s a great lesson, you see. Elisha may have been a bald man—we don’t know—but it seems evident that he had a crew cut, and the crew had baled out. I’m not really sure whether he was bald or not, because in the Middle East the term *bald head* is a term of derision, whether you have hair or not. And but the point of the matter is there was someone there who was ridiculing him and making fun of him: *“Go up thou bald head, go up.”*

Now here’s the way the Bible-haters say this story happened: that here was a bunch of little children who started to make fun of a grown man, and his vanity was wounded,

and his pride was hurt, and he turned around and gave them a tongue-lashing and used abusive profane language and cursed at them, and then mean ole God sent some bears out of the woods and gobbled up 42 of those precious little children.

Well, folks, that isn't exactly the way it happened. I want you to learn several things. Number one: The term *bald head* is a point of vile derision in the Middle East. Number two: I want you to see where this happened. It happened at Bethel. Now at Bethel by this time there was a rival altar to Jehovah, and it was a headquarters for evil and for sinfulness. Number three: This term *little children* does not mean "toddlers" or "babies" or whatever. It is a term unfortunately translated in our Kings James Version of the Bible "little children," but it is the same word that was used for David when he slew a lion and slew a bear. It was the same word that was used in the Bible of those who came into the court and gave advice to the king. It was the same word that was used of young men who were old enough to be conscripted into the army and go off to war. Actually, it means "youths," and it could mean men of 18, 19, 20, 21 years of age.

And what was this? What was this? Here was a group of men who had been sent out from headquarters to discredit the man of God, to scorn the man of God, to belittle the man of God. What you see here is heaven and hell meeting. What you see is light and darkness locked in conflict. What you see is the forces of God and the forces of Satan. You see, every Spirit-filled man of God, every man of God, every woman of God, is not only going to meet the skeptics; he's going to meet the scorers. Not only is he going to meet the doubters; he's going to meet the despisers.

And notice when the Bible says, "*And [he] cursed them in the name of the LORD,*" that doesn't mean he used profanity; that doesn't mean he cussed them—not at all. It means that he pronounced the mind of God. He spoke as a prophet and put a solemn curse upon them, the same thing Paul did in Galatians chapter 1 and verse 8 where he said if any man "*preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*" (Galatians 1:8). He pronounced the mind of God on the matter.

But then I want you to notice what he did. He went his way. He didn't engage in a long argument with him. He didn't get in a fight with him. He pronounced the mind of God, and he went his way, and God sent two she bears out of the wood to get them. Now we're going to learn a great lesson here, and I want all you preachers to learn it, but not just you preachers; I want us all to learn it. I want you preacher boys to learn it. You're going to have, when you stand for God, people who won't like you. You're not going to please everybody. You please everybody, there's something wrong with your ministry. It was Leonard Ravenhill who said, "When God opens the windows of heavens to bless us, the devil will open the doors of hell to blast us." And he will. And you're going to meet them. But you'd better be very careful how you react to them.

Now you can't compromise. You can't back up. You can't let them browbeat you and beat you down. You have to be God's man. And you have to tell them what God says. But once you do then leave them alone. Leave them to the bears. You don't have to go around with your enemies between your teeth. God's got a bear for every one of them. I'll guarantee you. Just leave them to the bears. You don't have to go around avenging yourselves. *"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord"* (Romans 12:19).

I've seen it happen so many times in my ministry, you know, it's just almost frightening. I just don't want somebody to get that way against me because I feel so sorry for them. I really do. Now I don't mean that as a threat to you. I don't mean that. But what I'm trying to say is I've just seen it happen so many times. I say, "Oh, no, I wish he hadn't done that. Poor fellow, you're going to get in bad trouble." And he just opposes God's man. And not because of me—I'm not anybody special. If you're God's man, the same thing will happen. Friend, it's dangerous—it's dangerous—to oppose someone who's God's man. God has a bear for every one of them. And how many sleepless nights we would avoid if we'd just learn to leave them to the bears.

Now what's the cure for doubt? It's time. What's the cure for despite? It is God's vengeance. God will take care of them. God's got a bear for every one of them.

### C. He Met the Seekers

But then I want you to notice finally that he met a third class of persons. And I'm so glad I can get to this. Not only did he meet the skeptics, and not only did he meet the scorners, but he also met the seekers. And every Spirit-filled man of God will meet the seekers. I want you to notice, if you will now, in 2 Kings chapter 2 and verse 19: *"And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren."* I don't care how beautiful a situation you have for a city: If you don't have water, you're not going to have a city there. It takes water to have a city. And they said, "Look, we've got everything we need but one thing: the water." *"And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake"* (2 Kings 2:19–22).

When we go to Israel, so many times we go to a place called Elisha's spring. And they say that's the spring where Elisha healed the waters. Whether it is or not, I know not. But I tell you, I know this happened. And you see, here were some men. These were not what I call the skeptics. They were not what I call the scorners. They were the seekers. They were desperate and they knew that the man of God had the answer.

Can we apply that to our day and our age in which people have everything, but the one thing they need is the water of life? The one thing they need is the water of life. It seems like they have everything, yet if you don't have water, you have nothing. And we, dear friends, have the water of life. And what does salt stand for here? He cast salt into that barren spring. Salt always stands for the saving life of Christ. Jesus said, "*Ye are the salt of the earth*" (Matthew 5:13). "*Let your speech...always...be seasoned with salt*" (Colossians 4:6). "*Have salt in yourselves*" (Mark 9:50). Salt is a symbol of the saving life of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion

Oh, listen—listen. You get the power of God on you, you be God's man, God's woman, and God will constantly be bringing into your life seekers, people who want to know God. He really will. It's just so amazing.

I think I told the eleven o'clock service, I didn't tell the eight o'clock service: I got into a cab last week and I just learned over so easily and I said to the cab driver, I said, "Did you go to church yesterday?" "Oh," he said, "no, I didn't, but I should have." I said, "Well, are you a Christian?" He said, "No, not really." I said, "May I explain something to you?" He said, "Yes." I explained the plan of salvation to him. Then I said, "You know, Jesus said, '*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him*' (Revelation 3:20)." Do you know what that man said? "Oh," he said, "if He wants into me, He's certainly welcome; my heart's door is open." And we just parked that cab and he prayed a simple little prayer, a sweet prayer, inviting Jesus Christ into his heart.

There are so many like that. Oh, there are so many. They'll fall off in your hands like a ripe apple if you just get the power of God upon your life. I like what Manley Beasley says: "You get right with God and you'll have to backslide to keep from winning souls." You really will. They're all around us, friend—all around us.

*Friends all around me are trying to find  
What the heart yearns for, by sin undermined;  
I have the secret, I know where 'tis found:  
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.  
Jesus is all this poor world needs today.  
Blindly they strive, for sin darkens their way.  
O to draw back the grim curtains of night,  
One glimpse of Jesus and all will be bright!*

—HARRY D. LOES

# The Man of God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 20, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** 2 Kings 13:20–21

*“And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.”*

2 KINGS 13:20–21

## Outline

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- I. The Memorial to a Man of God
- II. The Making of a Man of God
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Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles tonight, if you have them with you, and turn to 2 Kings 13. I want to speak to you tonight on this subject: “The Man of God”—“The Man of God.” Second Kings 13—and we’re going to begin reading in verse 20. In 1972, I spoke from this text in Philadelphia, and some men from the Bellevue Pulpit Committee were there; and this was the scripture that I was using. Second Kings 13, beginning in verse 20: *“And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.”* (2 Kings 13:20–21) Did you know that story was in the Bible? That

is a remarkable story. The Bible abounds with exciting stories, but none, I don't think, more exciting than this little story tucked away here in the history of God's people.

Now what had happened was this: Israel was sore oppressed. The Moabite armies had invaded, and they were hurrying and scurrying to try to get away from the Moabites. And, here's a little band of men, and they're fleeing, perhaps, for their lives, but their progress is impeded because they have with them a corpse. And so, they decide that, "We'd better get rid of this corpse that we have so we can move a little faster." And so, they spy a grave that was little more than a cave, a hole in the ground. And, they rolled the stone away from the mouth of that cave—that grave—and they lower this fresh body into the grave. But, there was already another tenant of that tomb. His name was Elisha, and the Bible calls him, over and over again, "the man of God"—"the man of God." And, when the body of the fresh corpse touched the bones of Elisha, who was already buried there, the Bible says that the fresh corpse, the new tenant, revived, came back to life, and came out of the grave. (2 Kings 13:21)

Hmm, now I've always thought that the Bible gives us everything we need to know, but I always have wished that it would have told what happened to the pallbearers when that happened. A remarkable story—not a fable; a story. You say, "Well, Brother Rogers, I have difficulty believing that story." Well, if you don't believe in God, I can understand why. But, if you believe in God, you'll have no difficulty believing any miracle. The God who created this world, and swung this planet into space; and scooped out the seas; and heaped up the mountains; and flung out the moon, the sun, and the stars and keeps them all in their orbits—that great God, who is a self-existing God—can do anything He pleases, and He doesn't have to get my permission and yours, either one. You say, "Well, it's contrary to the laws of nature." There are no laws of nature; there are laws of God that nature obeys. And, God has made it all. And so, God, here, did something very wonderful and very strange.

Now, why did God do that? Well, I want us to think—and, Brother Phil, the message is about a man of God, and that's what I want you to be—I want you to think on a little simple outline with me tonight.

## **I. The Memorial to a Man of God**

First of all, I want you to think of a memorial to a man of God—a memorial to a man of God. Why did God do this? It was a memorial to His man, Elisha, and it was a lesson that all of us need to learn. You see, had God put an epitaph on the tombstone of this grave, I don't know what that epitaph would have read, but I think I know what it would have said: "Here lies Elisha, man of God." Not "man of prestige," not "man of wealth," not "man of genius," not "man of persuasion," not "denominational leader"—but "Here lies Elisha, man of God." I think that's the greatest thing that could be said about any

man: “He’s a man of God.” I’d rather have that said about me than to say anything else about me—that “Adrian Rogers is a man of God.” Somehow the idea has gotten out that we have to be rebels or slaves, but we don’t have to be either. We just ought to be men of God, a man upon whom God rests.

And, but why did God do this miracle as a memorial to this man of God? Why? Well, I think, really, there were two major reasons. First of all, I want to tell you that Israel was hard-pressed—Israel was hard-pressed. And, I think what God was showing them was this: that though their leader, Elisha, was dead, God was still alive—and we need to learn that. Phil, times are tough. You read the newspaper—I’ve never seen more bad news in my life than I am reading these days when I pick up the newspapers. And, I want to tell you, folks, cheer up: it’s going to get worse—it’s going to get worse. But, what was God showing? This was a terrible day in the land in Israel. The Moabites had invaded the land, and God’s people were sore oppressed. But, what was God saying? He was saying that Elisha may be dead, but God is not dead. And, because God is not dead, I, for one, am a perpetual optimist. I believe *“if God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31)

I believe there was another reason that God performed this miracle—not only to show that God was not dead, but I believe that God performed this miracle to show this: that the man who lives for God never really dies. The influence of Elisha there, in his bones, caused another man to come to life. And, here was a man who had power after he died—that a man who lives for God, his influence goes on, and on, and on, and on. I believe that Charles Grandison Finney still lives. I believe that Dwight L. Moody still lives. I believe that George W. Truett still lives. I believe that Dr. Robert G. Lee still lives. I believe the influence of these men goes on and on.

Sir, you may not know this, but it was funny to me. I was talking to Dr. Lee, and I said, “Dr. Lee, before you go to heaven, isn’t there some way that we could take your brain and put it in my head?” He said in his humorous way, “My boy, that would be like putting a grand piano in a closet!” But then, he laughed, and I laughed. This was on his deathbed. He never lost his sense of humor. But, I want to tell you that Dr. Robert G. Lee lives, and every man who has lived for God has an influence that will go on, and on, and on, and on. Elisha had more power dead than some preachers I know have alive. Here was a man of God—a man of God. And so, God left a memorial to a man of God.

## **II. The Making of a Man of God**

But, I want to move quickly on from the idea of a memorial to a man of God to the making of a man of God. How did this man get to be called the man of God? Why is it that over and over again, Phil, in the Bible, he’s called the man of God? Well, we’re in 2 Kings, but we’re going to have to turn backward to 1 Kings to find out how this man

became a man of God. Turn back, if you will, to 1 Kings 19, and look, if you will, in verse 19. And, there are two things I want you to notice about this man of God that I pray, Phil, will be true about you, and I sincerely believe that they are true about you.

#### A. **Elisha Was Divinely Appointed**

First of all, 1 Kings 19:19: now, this speaks of a man named Elijah, who put his mantle upon Elisha, and 1 Kings 19:19 says, *“So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.”* Now, the mantle was the sign of the prophet’s office. Now, Elijah came and cast his mantle upon Elisha. Now, why did Elijah do that? Because God had told him to do it. This was the ordination of Elisha. This was God’s way of separating Elisha to the gospel ministry. Now, the point I want to make right here is this: that Elisha was divinely appointed—he was divinely appointed.

Every now and then, someone will come to me to want to counsel with me and say, “Mr. Rogers, I want to talk with you. I am thinking about going into the ministry, and I want to know what you think about it”—I mean, like he was thinking about being a plumber, or thinking about being an electrician, or thinking about being a banker, or thinking about being a lawyer. He says, “I think perhaps that would be a wonderful profession for me to be in.” I always smile to myself, first of all. Friend, if a man could call himself into the ministry, he’d be insane to do it—I really believe that. I am as happy as I can be preaching the gospel, but I will guarantee you, I would never choose to be a gospel preacher of my own, knowing what I know now. I would never, ever even think of choosing if God had not put me in the ministry. I don’t want you to feel sorry for me. You’re looking at a man who is tremendously fulfilled. You’re looking at a man who is gloriously happy. But, I want to tell you, dear friend, that this thing of being in the ministry is a divine appointment. The Apostle Paul said, *“I thank [God], who hath...counted me [worthy], putting me into the ministry.”* (1 Timothy 1:12) Again, the Bible says, *“Separate [unto] me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”* (Acts 13:2) I kind of agree with that country preacher who said, “The problem in many churches and in many pulpits today is too many has went when they ain’t been sent and God has not called them.” Here was a man who was divinely appointed. No mother can make a preacher. No seminary can make a preacher. No college can make a preacher. No denomination can make a man of God. He must be divinely called. He was divinely appointed.

#### B. **Elisha Was Divinely Anointed**

But, that’s not all. He was also divinely anointed, because it takes two things for a man to be a man of God—not only to be appointed, but to be anointed. I want you to see

how he was anointed with a double portion of the power that was on Elijah. Turn now to 2 Kings 2. We're going backward again in the materials. And, I want to read an extended passage of Scripture, but then I want to comment on it.

Second Kings 2 and I begin reading in verse 1—and this also is a remarkable passage of Scripture: *“And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou [not] that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace”*—that's Old English for “shut your mouth”—*“And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets...were at Jericho”*—*“that were at Jericho”*—*“came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I [am] taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me”*—now, what he was saying is, “I don't want just to be called; I want to be empowered. I don't want just to be appointed; I want to be anointed”—*“let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. [And] he took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he...had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.”* (2 Kings 2:1–14)

Now, I know that is a very convoluted passage of Scripture. I know it is an extended

passage of Scripture, and I know that you had to concentrate to pay attention to it. But, if you'll listen, you're going to learn a rich lesson today, because this was put in the Old Testament not just to fill up the space between those leather covers but to teach us a lesson, who live in these New Testament times, how to have the power and the anointing of God on our lives. And, there are three things that stand out to me as I see this man, who was divinely appointed—how he was divinely anointed.

### **1. Sheer Determination**

And, the very first thing that I see—there was a sheer determination. Over and over again, Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here. I’m going there.” And, Elisha said to Elijah, “As the Lord lives, as your soul lives, I will not leave you.” He stuck to the man of God like glue on flypaper. He would not leave him; he would not forsake him. Why? Because he knew that he knew what he wanted. He wanted that anointing; he wanted that double portion of power. I wonder, do you want it? Do you know the trouble with many of us and many who are in the ministry field? They say they want to be men of God, but they really don’t. They give up so easily. They will not pay the price. They will not follow on. There is not that sheer determination.

Now, I don’t have to talk God into filling me with the Spirit. I don’t have to persuade God to do that. But, my dear friend, I have to permit Him to do so. And, when I get to the place where He can fill me, where He can use me, He’s willing to do that. And, I tell you, I came to a place in my life where I said, “I want—more than anything else, more than life itself—I want the anointing of God on my ministry. I do—I do.” I know something, people. You may not know it. You may not even believe that I mean it. You may think this is rhetoric. But, as surely as I stand here, if God takes His hand off of me, I’m dead in the water. My ministry will be zilch—I know that. I know that there is a supernatural dimension to my ministry, and there ought to be—and there ought to be to every man of God’s life. There ought to be something about that man that cannot be explained. And, I determined as a young man that I would have the anointing of God upon my life. And, there was a sheer determination of this man, who said, “I’ll not leave you. I’ll... You go to Gilgal; I’m going to Gilgal. You go to Bethel; I’m going to Bethel. You go to Jericho; I’m going to Jericho. You go to Jordan; I’m going to Jordan.” Now, Elijah kept saying to him, “Go on back—go on back.” Elijah didn’t really want him to go back. It was a test. You’ll find that type of thing all the way through the Bible—where God seems to discourage us to see if we mean business. Ladies and gentlemen, *God does business with those who mean business.* There was a sheer determination.

### **2. Sincere Humiliation**

Secondly, there was a sincere humiliation. If you’ll read this passage, they were making fun of this man all along the way; they were ridiculing him. They said, “Don’t you know your master—your head’s—going to be taken from you today?” and so forth. And, there

were some young, embryonic theologs from a theologian seminary there, a liberal seminary, that were making fun of the man of God. That's exactly what was happening—young preachers from a liberal seminary were making fun of an old-fashioned believer who said, "I want the power of God upon my life." If you'll read it correctly, you'll understand that's what was happening. That's the reason why he kept telling them to shut up—"I know what I want." Perhaps he said it a little nicer, but that's what he said. And, there was a simple, a sincere humiliation. He was able to take that ridicule.

Did you know, if you really live for God, somebody will think you're a freak? I mean, there are people, Phil, who think you're nuts. And, *you are a nut, but you're fastened to a good bolt. His name is Jesus.* They say, "Why would a man get out of the business world? Why would a man take that brain that he has, and that background that he has, and that education, and pour it down a rat hole called a Baptist church?" I mean, some people honestly believe that. They believe that you're wasting your life, and they'll ridicule you for it. And, they'll ask smart questions of you.

### **3. Simple Appropriation**

But, I want to tell you, not only did this man have a sheer determination and a sincere humiliation, but he had a simple appropriation. What happened is this: Elijah said to him, "If you're with me when I'm taken up, you'll have what you asked—a double portion of power." (2 Kings 2:10) And, as God took Elijah to heaven—and actually, He raptured Elijah. Elijah went up to heaven bodily, without dying, in a whirlwind, in a chariot of fire. He went up into Glory accompanied by the horsemen of Israel, those angels. Right up into heaven he went—but as he went up, he dropped his mantle, which was the symbol of the prophet's office. Now, when Elisha saw what happened, he did two things, according to this scripture. First of all, he took his own garments—and he must have been a mighty man—and with one stroke he tore them in two pieces. One part of his tunic fell on this side, the other on that side. And then, he picked up the mantle of Elijah. Now, what was that? It was a simple appropriation. He had asked. He meant business. He had received a promise, and, therefore, he said, "Because I've asked, because I have received this promise, I now appropriate that which is mine," and he took it.

Did you know that there are some men of God who are afraid to appropriate that which is theirs and to take the power of God? They think, "I dare not appropriate it. God can't use me. I can't be that way. I can't be filled with God's Spirit. God's power can't rest upon me." It can! Appropriate the power of God. Take the prophet's mantle. God did not call you to serve in your own weak way. Whom God calls, God empowers. There came a time in my life. I can tell you, so many times I've been in my study crying and weeping, banging my head on the floor, and praying, "O God, I want you to fill me. God, I want you to anoint me. God, I want you to use me." And, one day the Lord said,

“That’s enough of that, my son. Take the blessing of God. Appropriate the blessing of God; claim the blessings of God”—and, bless God, I have. I’ve never been worthy of it. I never will be worthy of it. But, you can appropriate. Every one of us, not just Phil—every one of us—can appropriate that filling in, that place.

You see, when he—when he—rent his garment, that’s highly symbolic. That’s saying the old life is gone. When he was called, when Elisha found him, when Elijah found Elisha, he was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen. Now folks, in that day, if you had one ox, you were wealthy. He was a wealthy man—twelve yoke of oxen. Do you know what he did? He took those oxen; he killed one of them. He broiled the flesh. He took the hickory handles of that old plow and made a fire, killed an oxen, had a barbeque, fed everybody around him, and then left. What he’s saying is that “these burning plow handles and this aroma of cooking flesh symbolizes that the old way is gone. I’m turning from this line of business.” And then, he went, and he told Elisha—he told Elijah, rather, “Let me go tell my father and my mother goodbye.” Now, he didn’t go to ask leave; he went to take leave. I want you to see what he’d already forsaken: position, possession, and parents.

But now, he takes his garment, and he tears his garment. What does that symbolize? Did you know that a person can turn from position, and possession, and parents? And, I’m not meaning that he was cruel to his parents. We’ve got parents here tonight. But, he went to tell his parents, “God has called me, and I can’t turn back. I love you, but God has called me.” But now, listen, when he tore his garment and took that mantle, that was symbolic that now he is forsaking self. Simon Peter forsook his nets, but it was a long time before Simon Peter forsook Simon Peter. Do you understand what I’m talking about, friend? When a man is a man of God, he’s got to say “no” to self, and that’s not easy. Self doesn’t want to die. It’s easier to preach about taking death to self than it is to die.

I heard about a man, one time, who wanted to commit suicide. So, he did a study on suicide, and he found out you can drown, you can burn yourself to death, you can take poison, you can shoot yourself, or you can hang. So, he decided he’d do all of them. And, he got him a jug of kerosene, doused himself, rode out in the middle of the lake, and took a rope and put it over a limb and tied it around his neck. And then, had a bottle of poison, drank it, struck a match, set himself on fire, and kicked the boat out from beneath him, put a gun up to his temple and pulled the trigger. He said when he did, he missed his head and shot the rope in two. He fell in the water and put out the fire. He said, “I swallowed some of that water. It made me so sick I spit up the poison.” He said, “You know, if I hadn’t been a good swimmer, I would have drowned.” I want to tell you something, folks: self doesn’t want to die. I mean, it’s easy to preach about it.

But, here was a man who said—as he’s taking these garments, he’s saying, “Off

with the old way. I want to be a man of God.” That doesn’t mean that God’s going to change your personality. That doesn’t mean, Phil, that you’re going to be a wallflower. It doesn’t mean that you’re going to be no fun to be around. It doesn’t mean that you can’t have a good time. It doesn’t mean that God doesn’t want to bless you. It doesn’t mean that God doesn’t want to feed you or give you material possessions. It doesn’t mean any of that, but it does mean that Phil Weatherwax is under orders—not what Phil wants, but what God wants from here on. That’s what it means. Listen—listen—there was a sheer determination. There was a sincere humiliation. There was a simple appropriation, where he said, “I want this. God has promised it. I take the mantle. I receive it,” and he became the man of God.

### **III. The Ministry of a Man of God**

Quickly now—I must finish the message—but I want you to think not only about the memorial to a man of God and not only about the making of a man of God, but I want you to think for just a moment about the ministry of a man of God. *“And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send. And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, [and they] found him not. And when they came again...”* (2 Kings 2:16–17)

I want you to see something. We’re in 2 Kings 2, and I want you to see that Elisha took the mantle of Elijah. He smote the waters of the River Jordan. The waters parted, and he went back across the river back into his ministry. And, when he did, Phil, he met three categories of persons. You’ve already met them, and you’ll continue to meet them. Every man of God meets these three persons. This is the ministry of a man of God.

#### **A. He Meets Skeptics**

First of all, he met the skeptics. Look in chapter 2, beginning in verse 16: *“And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send. And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, [and they] found him not. And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?”* (2 Kings 2:16–18)

Now, what does that mean? I’ll tell you what it means. How did I tell you that Elijah went to heaven? He went to heaven; he was raptured. You say, “That’s supernatural.”

That's right—it is. I'll never take that out of the Bible. I believe that, exactly as the Bible says, he went to heaven without dying. He went up supernaturally. Well, again, there were these theological students from this liberal seminary, and they said to Elisha, "Hey, we'd better go look for Elijah. He's fallen off one of these cliffs. He's down there in some valley with a broken leg." And, Elisha said, "No, you don't have to look for him. He's gone to heaven in a chariot in a whirlwind, in a whirlwind chariot of fire." They said, "No, we'd better go look." He said, "Look, I'm telling you, it won't do you any good to look." They said the third time, "Look, we'd better go find him." You know what he said? He said, "Go. Send." And, they sent fifty men, and they looked for him. And, after a while, they came back and said, "We couldn't find him." He said, "Didn't I tell you?"

Now, you're going to meet, Mr. Weatherwax, you're going to meet the skeptics. You're going to meet people who are going to have difficulty believing this book and the stories of this book. It's going to sound like a bundle of fairy tales, a collection of fables. And, when we talk about such things as people being raptured out of this world and taken up to heaven and all of these things, they arch an eyebrow and they say, "Well, that might be your opinion, but that's not really the way it is."

Now, when you meet a skeptic, what do you do? Give him the Word of God. You meet him again and he's not satisfied—what do you do? Give him the Word of God. The third time he comes back to you, you leave him alone. Now listen: *"a man [that's] an heretick after the...second admonition reject."* (Titus 3:10) We're talking about a man who's supposed to be a man of God, but he's a heretic. You see, you know what the devil would like to do with you, Phil, and with me, and with these gentlemen on the platform? He would love to get us embroiled in arguments with skeptics, spending a lot of time spinning our wheels, arguing with people. Did you know that I could argue with people all day long? I have people who challenge me to debates. They want to debate this issue with me and debate that issue with me. They want me to explain this and debate that and reason this with them. I'm going to give them an answer—I'll give them an answer once; I'll give them an answer twice. But, if...

You know what so many theological arguments are? Ego against ego—people trying to explain something to somebody else who really don't want to learn anyway. Listen, a good question has been asked. Why should anybody hear the gospel twice before everybody hears it once? Don't waste your time with the skeptics, arguing with people who merely want to argue. If a person wants to learn, spend as much time with that person as he wants. But, there's a perfect cure for doubt. Do you know what it is? Time—time. There won't be any atheists in hell. Atheists are going to hell, but there won't be any atheists in hell. Jess Moody said, "Old atheists never die; they just go to hell." But, they won't be atheists when they get there. There's a perfect cure for doubt, and it's time.

## B. He Meets Scorners

Now, not only did he meet the skeptics; he also met the scorners. I want you to look, if you will, in chapter 2:23: *“And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going...by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head”—that’s what they said to him. Where there used to be waves was just beach now—“And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them. And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.”* (2 Kings 2:23–25) Now, what on earth is this? Not only did he meet the skeptics; he met the scorners.

This took place at Bethel, and that Bethel there was a rival altar to Jehovah. And, these... Where the Bible says in the King James, “forty-two children,” don’t let the word *children* there throw you off. These were not little boys and girls. The word for *children* that is used here is the same word that was used for King David when he was a valiant, mighty man of war. These were young men, young hoodlums, young punks, and they had come out to discredit the man of God. And, he may not even have been bald, but *baldhead* is a term of derision in the Middle East. And, what they were saying about him was—they were ridiculing the man of God. And, what you have here was a place where the forces of heaven and hell met, where light and darkness met, where Christ and Satan met, and here was a conflict with the enemies of God.

Now, I want you to notice what the man of God did: he cursed them in the name of the Lord. Now, if you’re not careful here, you’re going to be misled also. He did not cuss them. He did not use bad language. He did not say, “You *blab-ba-ba-ba*.” He didn’t say that. He cursed them. Do you know what he did? He brought the wrath of God down on them. He did the same thing that Paul said in the book of Galatians: *“[if any man] preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:8)—“let the judgment of God be on him.”

But Phil, I want you to learn this, because you’re going to meet not only the skeptics; you’re going to meet the scorners—not only the doubters, but the despisers. And, when you decide you’re going to be a man of God, there are some people who are automatically going to be your enemy just because you’re a man of God. Now, how do you deal with them? You’d better learn to deal with them like Elisha did. He cursed them in the name of the Lord and went his way, and God sent two she bears out of the woods to take care of them.

Now, I’ve gotten a lot of comfort from this. You know what God has told me? I don’t have to bite my enemies. I don’t have to go around with my enemies between my teeth. All I have to do is to give the mind of the Lord and go my way. God’s got a bear for every one of them—every one of them. God’s got a bear. God will take care of them.

I've seen it happen time and time again. I have seen people who have taken upon themselves to ridicule the man of God and try to hurt the ministry of the man of God and the work of a man of God. And, we don't have enough time—you don't, I don't, they don't, nobody does—to follow up on that or to lower yourself to answer. Give the Word of God about the matter and leave them to the bears. It'll save you a lot of sleepless nights.

### **C. He Meets Seekers**

You'll meet the skeptics. You'll meet the scorners. But, there's another class that he met that day, and I'll be finished: he met the seekers. I want you to notice here in chapter 2:19: *"And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth"—that is, "The scenery is beautiful around here"—"but the water is naught, and the ground barren. And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake."* (2 Kings 2:19–22) I've been to the place in Israel where this miracle took place—Elisha's fountain. Salt, in the Bible, is a symbol of the saving life of Christ. He met people who said, "We're thirsty. We need help. We need something from God." And, the man of God had it. Jesus said we're the salt of the earth. (Matthew 5:13) We're the ones who can take the bitter water and the barren land and heal it in the name of Jesus.

I want to tell you something, folks: there is nobody that has an answer to this world's problems but the man of God—nobody but the man of God. There is no answer but the answer of this book. There is no power but the power of God. There is no Savior but Jesus Christ. And Phil, there has never been a better time to preach the gospel. More people are hungry for Jesus today than they've ever been. I tell you, I'm having the most glorious time. If you would have told me that I would ever pastor a church where people would be crammed in on Sunday night like this, I never would have believed it. People are hungry for the Word of God. If you would have ever told me that I would pastor a church where we were see, year after year, more than seven hundred baptized... And, I believe, in the next ten years, we're going to see ten-thousand-plus souls baptized—I believe that. People are hungry. You'll meet the skeptics—there are plenty of them. You'll meet the scorners—there are a lot of them. But, you'll meet the seekers, and you will have the answer because you'll be a man of God, divinely appointed, divinely anointed—a man of God.

## Conclusion

Let's pray. Father, I pray in the name of Jesus that you'll bless Phil Weatherwax, and Janie, and their precious children and their ministry. And, Lord God, as we lay hands now upon this man to ordain him to the gospel ministry, I pray, God, that you'll look down from heaven, Lord, and, as it were, Lord, let the mantle of the prophet fall upon him. God, let him tonight, in a very unique and even in a new and a special way, be divinely anointed, because, Lord, we believe he is divinely appointed. In Jesus' name. Amen.