

## 31. Elisha and Confidence

The story of Elisha is the repetition of many little episodes each containing, as we might call them, a “miracle.” Now, the name, ‘Elisha,’ is three Hebrew words stuck together, similar to ‘Elijah.’ Except they are “God-is-Savior.” That is, the last part is the same as “Joshua” or “Jesus.”

What is strange about Elisha is that he never wrote anything, that is, there is no book of “Elisha.” And so we see a bit of Abraham in Elisha, combined with a bit of Elijah, and even much similarity to Jesus, who also wrote nothing.

But Elisha was not a simple man like Abraham or Elijah.

**Elisha’s Role.** Elisha was complex in his makeup, more like Moses and Paul internally. That is, Elisha was both an idealist and a realist.

He carried a vision of heavenly realities AND he was very practical regarding earthly realities. The establishment of the “school of the prophets” in the history of Israel was Elisha’s practical work.

Elisha’s role in the Bible story runs from 879 BC when he became a disciple of Elijah as a young man until his death in 808 BC, 71 years later. Only Obadiah (c. 860) and Joel (c. 828) wrote through this time; the rest of the “writing” prophets came later.

Like Jesus. Of all the figures of the Old Testament, however, none other connected God, on the one hand, with the personal needs of people, on the other hand, as Elisha did. And in doing so, Elisha foreshadowed the ministry of Jesus.

This, then, is how we want to approach our study of Elisha, that is, confidence in God – meeting people’s needs.

This is why we see in Elisha's story no self-promotion. Elisha did not "do" miracles in order to show off, or to demonstrate a "miraculous" God, or any such. Elisha saw a human need, and he met that need, exactly like Jesus. Elisha KNEW God and cared about people.

The Summons. We can assume that Elisha was around twenty, out plowing with 12 yoke of oxen, which is massive, 24 animals pulling a plow. Elisha was with the team, so there must have been servants helping. Elijah didn't say a word. He just came up and threw his mantle over the top of Elisha.

When Elisha wanted to say goodbye, Elijah responded as Jesus (who did reference this incident.) But Jesus was not against saying goodbye to loved ones; His purpose was that nothing can stand between us and the summons of God.

Elisha was not about to be left out from such a call.

**A "Double Portion."** The next major event for Elisha was in 868 BC, when Elijah was taken up into the heavens. That means Elisha was with Elijah for just over ten years.

Sam Fife, of course, preached a word on 2 Kings 2, the transfer of anointing from Elijah to Elisha, that impacted me deeply.

Nonetheless, too much is made, I think, on "asking God for a double portion." It becomes, for many, a lust after "super-power-ness" in the face of other Christians. Connection with God does not come from "super-power"; it comes from confidence that God is telling us the truth.

Stay Here, Please. The thing is that I do not remember any of Sam Fife's word concerning the passage of the anointing. I do remember vividly the first part of the chapter and the last part, for those were the things God made real in my own heart.

Over and over, Elijah told Elisha not to follow him, "Stay here, please." "Stay here in the place of circumcision, the lowest place on earth (Gilgal)." I will not. "Stay here in the hill country,

in the house of God (Bethel).” I will not. “Stay here where the enemies of Israel were defeated (Jericho).” I will not.

I have never understood how anyone could ever turn aside from any word God has spoken and made real to them.

A Rock, Not a Mire. This is the word I heard from God as Sam Fife was preaching, not that “I” would “obey,” but rather as a description of the longing cry of my heart.

Passing through the Jordan, then, pre-figures our passage through the one death of Christ. That passage is the source of our confidence, the Rock upon which we stand.

Yet Sam Fife had made it the source of our jeopardy, “Die brother die,” and thus a quicksand in which we floundered. This is why God places confidence, *parrhesia*, as the rule over every other verse in the Bible.

No Longer Covered. But strangely enough, it is the last incident in the chapter that entered my understanding, something which I have then held deep inside my heart from then until now.

**“Go up, thou baldhead. Go up, thou baldhead,”** spoken by 42 foolish teenagers, the number of blasphemy.

Yes, I heard this word on tape at Bowens Mill, and thus after I had started going bald at the age of 22. But it was not about that. Rather, as Sam Fife preached, “hair” is a metaphor of covering. Thus it meant, by the Spirit, that Elisha was on his own, now, no longer having a covering in Elijah.

**“Turn Back.”** From 2006, when I first began writing *The Jesus Secret*, I have heard the press of “Turn back, you don’t have a covering.”

“Stop thinking you can know the truth; you’re all by yourself, no one is confirming what you write. You keep going further and further out there; only a handful of people are following you. You have no covering, no connections. No one confirms what you teach. Turn back. Stop all this imagining that God might be speaking to you concerning anything.”

I will not. – And it is Elisha who strengthens my heart.

To Full Measure. I know what it is to submit myself to leadership in the church, and I have done so to full measure. I know what it is to be taught through others, and I have sat under anointed teaching to full measure.

But I KNOW that no one is telling me what my Bible says, and I KNOW that they will not take me where I will go.

I have NO animosity towards any anointed ministry recognized by God’s people. I rejoice in anything taught by others that is truth. But I cannot live without knowing Father-with-me through every Word He speaks written fully upon my heart.

The Normal Christian Life. Now, I must re-iterate. When I compare Bible characters to myself, I am presenting the normal Christian life and myself as an example to you. I think this way because I have made the Bible my mind over many years.

Every believer in Jesus, but especially you who draw near, will find the patterns of Scripture and the examples given by Bible characters written all through your own life.

Yet those patterns will fit you as you have walked with God, in wonderful ways surprisingly different from how they might fit me. This is Christ our life, available to the least.

**The First “Need.”** Then the men of the city said to Elisha, **“Please notice, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the ground barren.”**

And he said, **“Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it.”** ...Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, **“Thus says the Lord: ‘I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.’”** So the water remains healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke.

This is the first, then, of the many times when people said, “I have a need,” and Elisha met that need through the provision of God.

The Water Is Bad. But it also shows me a powerful prophetic understanding that Sam Fife did not preach in his word. **“The water is bad, and the ground is barren.”**

You see, this is my dilemma. The word that is preached everywhere does not bring forth the life of the Word. Preachers take God’s people right up to the veil, but they will not take them into the Holy of Holies. And this is why I insist to you, over and over – You engage with God yourself, face to Face with the All-Carrying One.

God said through Elisha, “I have healed the water.” The word no longer carries impurities and falseness inside of it.

The Ground Is Barren. When I see these words, I just want to weep. – **“The water is bad, and the ground is barren.”**

When I read or hear anyone else’s word, now, I weep. For it all contains elements of the serpent’s gospel, and it all leaves out the ruling verses of the Bible. And I see the hearts of God’s precious people longing to know Jesus, but the word they are hearing cannot bring forth God-life inside of them and they are barren.

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men (Matthew 5:13).

Two Incidents of Life. **Then Elisha said, “Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors—empty vessels; do not gather just a few. And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones.”**

**Elisha said, “What then is to be done for her?” And Gehazi answered, “Actually, she has no son, and her husband is old.” So he said, “Call her.” When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. Then he said, “About this time next year you shall embrace a son.”** ...The woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her.

Life in Abundance. I am come that you might have life and that you might possess it abundantly, excessively, and beyond all expectation (John 10). This is a never-ending outpouring of LIFE in all of its many meanings, including abundant provision.

But in all these instances, Elisha is simply blessing people and meeting their needs, just as Jesus did. And the significant thing is the quiet certainty in which Elisha moved.

Elisha knew “God-with-me” and “God-not-with-me” never entered his mind.

The School of the Prophets. It’s an interesting thing that when the woman’s son died, Elisha did the same thing that Elijah did, he lay himself fully upon the boy, twice this time, until life returned. I’m not sure what this means for us, but it’s something good.

And Elisha returned to Gilgal, and there was a famine in the land. Now the sons of the prophets were sitting before him.

Elisha was a teacher, and the concept of a “school of the prophets” was developed fully under him. Thus through his ministry, a testimony of God was preserved throughout the northern tribes so that thousands of godly people migrated to Judah when Israel went into captivity.

Simply Meeting Needs. Elisha feeds many, then, in ways foreshadowing Jesus.

The account continues with seemingly insignificant problems, like a borrowed axe falling into the Jordan, in which Elisha simply met people's needs. This is how I came to understand Jesus' ministry after writing *The Jesus Secret I*. Jesus did not do miracles to show Himself as a miracle worker, but simply because people had needs, and He met those needs.

The person comes first, the need comes second, and the power comes only to serve. In fact, most of Elisha's "miracles" happened in daily interaction, with no "show" at all.

Normal Human Sight. And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, **"Alas, my master! What shall we do?"**

**So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.**

Elisha walked as a normal human being, seeing the heavens all around the same as seeing earthly things.

With Becomes Inside Of. We are considering the simple confidence in which Elisha walked. We know that he was a man just like us. And we know that our knowledge of God through Christ is greater than was given to Elisha.

Consider the difference between these two lines.

Those who are with us are more than those who are with them. And – You are out from God, little children, and have overcome and defeated them [the false spirits who speak contrary to Christ], because greater is He who is inside of you than he who is in the cosmos (1 John 4:4).

An Example of Confidence. Our God is inside of us and we are inside of Him and always coming out from Him every moment.

Elisha is an example to us of the confidence in which we walk, yet our confidence is greater, for it is Christ Himself.

And this brings us to the final incident in Elisha's life, which I have used to illustrate the ruling verse of our confidence, that we can ask anything in Jesus' name, and God will do it. That is, we can ask for God to be what He speaks in our lives and then believe that we have already received all we have asked.

Ask and Believe. Elisha was old when King Joash came asking for help. Elisha instructed him to strike the ground with arrows, but was angry with Joash when he struck only three times. **"You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times."**

The moral of the story is ASK God, believing you have received, and NEVER stop asking and believing.

Here is what I have come to know, that certain things God sets before us serve to cause us to KNOW Father sharing our lives with us. Asking and believing is one of them.

Our Confidence. This is the confidence, the freedom to speak boldly, that we have towards Him, that if we ask anything concerning the details of His desire [according to the speaking of Christ – **the Bible does not actually say that God can do "anything," it says that God does all the He speaks**], He hears us. [God hears Christ; He does not hear what is not Christ speaking]. And if we know that He hears us, we know that whatever we might ask, we possess the requests we have asked from Him (1 John 5:14-15).

This is the back and forth flow of union, of sharing life together, between you and a very Personal God who lives inside of you.

Reading for Next Time. Our next study is Isaiah, for whom we will have two chapters, “Isaiah and God” and “Isaiah and Love.” I am not sure how I will approach the next lesson, so the reading will be limited to Isaiah 6, the beginning of Isaiah’s ministry.

We don’t know much about Isaiah as a man, but we know a whole lot about Isaiah as a man who knows God.

**Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I! Send me.”**

**Let’s Pray Together.** We return to praying for God’s people across the earth, that they might enter into the knowledge of God. And I am finding that, as we allow the Bible characters and stories to shape our words, so our prayers come to fit the fabric of our world in surprisingly accurate ways.

“Lord Jesus, Your people across the earth, all who believe in You and who are calling upon You with anxious hearts, stand in great need, greater than they understand.

“Lord Jesus, we see how You and Elisha, Your foreshadow, simply met those needs as they happened. Lord Jesus, we ask for all of Your people right now, that You would meet their needs.

Abundant Life. “Lord Jesus, we pray that You would be a pure Word going forth from us, a Word that would bring forth LIFE in all who hear it. We pray that all impurity would be removed from the speaking of your ministry and that Your precious Bride would be barren no more.

“Lord Jesus, we ask that You be that abundant Life poured out into the knowledge of all who love You. And in asking, Lord Jesus, we believe and know that we have already received all we have asked.

We speak with all confidence in God to all who would hear a pure Word, “Be filled with a God who shares life with you.”

All Needs Are Met. “Lord Jesus, we ask for the sake of Your people, and we will never stop asking and we will never stop believing until You made the Church in the earth the revelation of Father.

“God, our Father, You are inside of each one who believes in Jesus, far greater than all the evil in the world. And God, as You share life with each of our brothers and sisters, so we CALL each one of them into Your knowledge, into Your Word and into Your life.

“Father, Your people are even now entering into the hour of their greatest need and they do not know. Through our confidence and bold speaking, all their needs ARE MET.”