

**2nd Kings 2: 9-15; “Learning From Your Godly Father”, A Sermon prepared for
Father’s Day, by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 21st, 2015,
and Delivered in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

The question that I gave to you in the Morning Worship was this: How can we honor our godly fathers? And by extension, how can we honor not only our earthly fathers but our spiritual fathers as well? I said to you that Elisha was a model for us to learn from, in this regard. He was a model to us in some very meaningful ways. I set before you 2 truths that show us how it was that Elisha honored Elijah. 1st of all – He honored him by his determination to stick close to his spiritual father. And 2nd – He honored him by his determination to see what God was doing through him, even in his final days. And now, this afternoon, this leads me to open up these further truths which will show us how we can learn from our godly father. 1st of all, You can learn from him by seeking to obtain from the Lord a double portion of your father’s spirit. And 2nd – By picking up the mantle of your spiritual father, the mantle which he leaves to you. In each of these points I am giving you, I trust that the Holy Spirit will give you understanding of what it might mean for you to have a spiritual “father”, and what it will mean for you to learn from his life, the great lessons which the Lord would teach you.

1st of all, You can learn from him by seeking to obtain from the Lord a double portion of his spirit. (verse 9-12)

Verse 9 says: And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Ask!’ “What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?” Elisha said, ‘Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.’ So he said, ‘You have asked a hard thing.’ “Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.” What was Elisha asking for, when he asked Elijah for a double portion of his spirit? Was it that he wanted to be a greater man than Elijah? No, I am quite sure it was not that. He knew what God was requiring of him; to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God. I believe that, actually, it was just the opposite of spiritual ambition. It was, that he saw himself as so inadequate to the task of taking Elijah’s place as a father to the prophets that he knew in his own heart that he needed just as much or more of the Spirit’s wisdom and power as Elijah had received, in order to be able to speak for the Lord and to lead the nation spiritually; perhaps in his case, twice as much. He was asking Elijah for what he knew only God the Holy Spirit could give him. When he voiced this desire I am sure that he knew that he was in the presence of God, and that God was listening. He knew, as it says in Psalm 139, that God had enclosed him behind and before and knew all of his words before he spoke them. He comprehended his path and He understood his thought from afar. Elisha was bold to speak this request because He believed that it would be glorifying to God for him to have a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. He wanted to have Elijah’s zeal for truth and righteousness. He wanted to be able to do the miracles which Elijah did, and others too, that would attest to the truth of the word of God and God’s wisdom; His power, and glory. He wanted to be able to be just as effective in ministry as Elijah had been, and even more so, if God would permit it.

But we need to also understand that sometimes, also, there may be other things that God wants to teach you through a spiritual father; things which are not so apparent, and which involve God’s purposes. There may be things which He wants to accomplish through your life as an extension of your spiritual father’s ministry, the one who has gone before you. The spiritual father has to learn the lesson before “the son” of the prophet can receive it. The lesson that Elijah had to learn is one which you and I need to learn as well. It involves your coming to understand how the Lord does His greatest spiritual works; what the exercise of true spiritual power really looks like. I think that it will help us to understand what it really meant for Elisha

to ask for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. If you will turn over with me to 1st Kings 18, verse 1, you will begin to see what I mean. You will recall that in 1st Kings 17, and the first 14 verses of chapter 18, that Elijah had been sought for by King Ahab, because Ahab knew that Elijah had said that there would be no rain in Israel except by his word. (verse 1 of chapter 17) Elijah was a man with a nature like ours," it says in James 5: 17, "and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months." Truly this was a marvelous proof of Elijah's walking in the Spirit, walking closely and faithfully with his God; having a straight and true heart. This ability of his to pray earnestly and to receive the answer to his prayers in an immediate way, should show us that Elijah was God's man for the hour in Israel. This is the first portion of his spirit. This just judgment of draught fell upon king Ahab and all of Israel because of those persons that followed Ahab and Jezebel in their false worship of the Baals.

But Ahab did not see himself and his sinful idolatry as the problem; he saw Elijah and his praying for the draught as the problem. He did not see the connection. After there had been this judgment for almost 3 ½ years, Elijah knew by God's revealing it to him, that he should go and show himself to Ahab, because God was going to do a very great thing through his instrumentality to show Israel that He was God. Look at verse 15 – "Then Elijah said, 'As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today.'" "So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah." "Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, 'Is that you, O troubler of Israel?'" "And he answered, 'I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and have followed the Baals.'" "Now therefore send and gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." "So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. "And Elijah came to all the people, and said, 'How long will you falter between two opinions?'" "If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." "But the people answered him not a word." You can see how hard the people's hearts were; just how taken up with false worship they were. But Elijah was bold enough to say this to them in verse 22:

"Then Elijah said to the people, 'I alone am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.'" "Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it." "Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God who answers by fire, He is God." "So all the people answered and said, 'It is well spoken.'" You probably remember the how things went. The prophets of Baal prepared their bull, laid it on the altar and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying: "O Baal, hear us!" "But there was no voice; no one answered." They even leaped on the altar and cut themselves with knives and lances until the blood gushed out on them. By this time it was noon and Elijah mocked them and said: "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened." And when mid-day was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But their god Baal never answered a word.

So Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken. He took 12 stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name". Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. He also made a trench around the altar, filled it with water, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and had some of the men standing by, pour water on the whole thing 3 times, and also pour water into the trench around it. And then at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, he came near (it says in verse 36) and he said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and

Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word.” “Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.” And you know what happened; the Lord answered, and the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench.” And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The Lord, He is God!” “The Lord He is God!” And Elijah told them to seize the prophets of Baal, and he brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.” This was the first portion of Elijah’s spirit; zeal for the Lord of hosts. But God knew that something more was needed to make Elijah into a man who could teach Elisha the ways of God.

Truly it is amazing, what is related to us about Elijah’s zeal in verses 41-46. “Then Elijah said to Ahab, ‘Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.’” Ahab went up to eat and drink and Elijah went up to the mountain to pray. He bowed down on the ground he put his face between his knees, and he said to his servant, ‘Go up now, and look toward the sea.’” And the servant saw nothing, so he sent him back again. And seven times he sent him back, and on the seventh time he saw a cloud the size of a man’s hand rising up out of the sea. So Elijah said to Ahab – “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.’” So Ahab rode away, and went to Jezreel, and the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel. My brethren, these are true acts of zeal; these are the true acts of the power of God. God make even old men strong in zeal. And Elijah thought at first that revival had come to Israel. But look at verse 1 of chapter 19. “And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword.” “Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, ‘So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as one of them by tomorrow about this time.’” How did Elijah react to this?

It says in verse 3 – “And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.” “But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree.” “And he prayed that he might die, and said, ‘It is enough!’” “Now Lord, take my life, , for I am no better than my fathers!” What had happened to this great reformer? He had become tremendously discouraged. He thought that the Lord would grant that all the false worship in Israel would be taken away and many people would be brought to a saving faith in God through his efforts. And certainly his efforts were great. But he did not understand how God does His greatest work. This God had to teach him. So Elijah goes off to Mt. Horeb. It took him 40 days and night. He went into a cave and that night the word of the Lord came to him saying: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” So he said, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword, and I alone am left: and they seek to take my life.” Elijah, although he had done these great and mighty works of reformation in Israel, he was utterly defeated in his spirit.

And this leads us to our 2nd point about learning from your godly father. You must pick up the mantle of your spiritual father, the mantle which he leaves to you.

Let’s think about Elijah’s mantle for a few moments. What was it a symbol of? It was a symbol of His authority as the prophet of God. It symbolized Elijah as the reformer/prophet of Israel. Look what it says in 1st Kings 19: 11. “Then God said, ‘Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord.’” “And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.” “So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave.” He wrapped his face in his mantle because he thought that all of his life’s work had

been in vain; that revival had not come to Israel, that the hearts of the people had not been turned back. And so he repeats his words of discouragement to the Lord in verse 14 once again. "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword." "I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." And what is God's response to him? Verse 15 – Then the Lord said to him: "Go return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria." "Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel." "And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place." "It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill." "Yet I have reserved 7,000 in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." There were some very important things that Elijah had to learn here on Mt. Horeb. The greatest lesson was that God knows how to appoint others to take up the work that you have been engaged in for many years; people who will do these spiritual and righteous works just as well as you did them, even go beyond you in terms of the great things accomplished in the hearts of people, by the mercy and grace of God.

There were three great manifestations of power which took place upon the mountain that day. They all took place because "the Lord was passing by". The first was a great and strong wind which tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but interestingly it says, "the Lord was not in the wind". Next came an earthquake, but it says, "the Lord was not in the earthquake". And finally there was a fire, but it says that the Lord was not in the fire. The reason that the Lord was not "in" any of these works of power, I believe, was because there was no accompanying revelation by the Lord's word as to His purpose to establish these works to bring about change for the better for His cause and kingdom. They were a grand display of His power, but they were a display without God's purpose to change a single person by it, even Elijah. However the next thing that Elijah heard was a still small voice. This I believe was the Lord's still small voice speaking to his heart and mind; the voice which convinced him not only of his own problem of wanting things to change because of his own efforts, but it also spoke to correct his thinking. This still small voice convinced Elijah that God was doing all things well; even if the results were not what he would have liked to have see at that time. It is this still small voice which must be heard for truth to prevail in a sinful heart so that men might be brought to repentance and have a right view of God.

This was the very thing that happened to Elijah at that moment in relation to his own strong and stubborn heart. Elijah thought that he had understood the situation correctly. He had been zealous for the reformation of the nation and he had done everything that he could to bring about the turning of the hearts of the people. But Jezebel's heart had not changed at all, and so Elijah took this as a great sign that the turning of the people's heart could not take effected by his own holy efforts. In this He was right, but he had forgotten about God's more particular purpose; that he, Elijah, had something to learn about God and how he does his work. His discouragement at this point was not good for him. God had honored and blessed Elijah's efforts, but he could not see how. He thought that he alone was left, when there were 7,000 whom God had reserved for Himself. Elijah was coming to see that true reformation was more an outward work of men confessing that the Lord is God because they are forced to it by His power. His greatest work is having His word come with power, bringing regeneration and the New Birth and salvation through the preached word. This work no man can do on his own, and even when God is with Him, God will sovereignly work as He will, according to His sovereign purpose.

But as a man labors for the Lord, he ought to trust that God will work according to His sovereign good pleasure. And so Elijah received this great spiritual lesson. Great works, such as

calling fire down from heaven do not necessarily change the hard hearts of men, except in a temporary and outward sense. They might be forced to confess that “the Lord He is God” for a time, but their hearts may remain hard to the truth that they themselves need to change. But the still small voice of God speaking to the heart of a sinful person can, and it does, change the heart according to the purpose of God. Elijah having learned this great lesson, and he could now pass it on to Elisha because his own ministry was drawing to a close. Now Elijah really could give “a double portion of his spirit” to Elisha if God would do the gracious work. And so Elijah “took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.” “And when they crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Ask!’” “What may I do for you before I am taken away from you?” “Elisha said, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.” “So he said, ‘You have asked a hard thing.’” “Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.” “Then it happened, as they continued on and talked that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” “And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, ‘My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen.’” “And he took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan.” “Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan.” “Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, ‘Where is the Lord God of Elijah?’”

And when the sons of the prophets who were from Jericho saw him they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” “And they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him.” Certainly we can say that the ministry of Elisha was no greater than Elijah’s really. But it was just as effective, if not more so, because God would use Elisha’s acts of kindness and gentleness in relation to the preaching of God’s word, to bring revival to the nation. Where Elijah felt that he had failed, he had really succeeded. His ministry of preaching to men of how they had broken God’s law and had brought down the judgment of God upon themselves had prepared the way for Elisha’s ministry of preaching grace in many ways and portions, to the nation and its needy people. He learned from his godly “father” in the faith, and became an extension of the work that he began. Let us conclude this message with this thought. When you learn from your godly father what things he has gone through to learn the ways of the Lord, will you not respond by saying to Lord, “Give me a double portion of this man’s spirit”? And the Lord who sees your heart and his will no doubt let you understand how you can take up the mantle of your father’s faith and work, and build upon it.