

Elisha

Part 1

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[00:00:00] You might ask, why have we desire to give a few addresses on Elisha, the man of God?

I would say the reason is simple, that Elisha served God in a very difficult day, a very difficult day, and I believe the circumstances surrounding his call and testing, and then the incidents we find in his life, will be an encouragement to us.

Not so much the miraculous things that he did, but rather the features that we see coming to light in Elisha, an encouragement for us in our day when we too find ourselves in difficult times.

First of all, we learn that Elisha comes onto the scene in a very abrupt manner, we don't [00:01:04] read much, we don't read anything of his boyhood or who his parents were and how he was brought up and so on.

He comes onto the scene most abruptly.

We understand he served as a prophet for 55 years, which is a considerable time, and faithful to the Lord in the midst of varying circumstances.

Perhaps the greatest honor that was given to Elisha was that he was mentioned by the Master himself in Luke chapter 4.

That a great honor, to be mentioned by the Lord in terms of honor and dignity.

He lived in conditions that were far from encouraging.

Great division had taken place amongst the people of God.

Elijah had served as a prophet in the Northern Kingdom, the Ten Tribes, tribes given over [00:02:05] to the worship of Baal and idols.

Very sad thing that when we read the history of the Ten Tribes, not one good king reigned over them.

Not one.

They were all worse and worse and worse. Very sad picture. Thank God in Judah there were some bright kings, kings who did that, which was right in the sight of the Lord. But Elijah, he served his God in the midst of very trying conditions, a king and a queen who hated him, the nation largely given over to the worship of Baal, not much to encourage. He didn't even know that there were 7,000 who had never bowed the knee. Now it was a great encouragement to learn that there were 7,000 who had never bowed the knee, but it was very sad that not one of them ever came out in public witness to support Elijah.

[00:03:04] I think here we have a feature of 2 Timothy, when it says, the Lord knoweth them who are his. It's a very sad thing when only the Lord knows them. We should all be known as people who are genuinely here for the Lord in the circumstances in which we are found.

And so though the Lord had to open Elijah's eyes and say, Elijah, you're not the only man. There are 7,000 who have been faithful, yet I think it is right to say that he was the only man who stood out publicly in the face of all that was evil and declared openly that he was on God's side. A courageous prophet indeed.

And he got discouraged, as I suppose most servants of the Lord do. Great deal of discouragement, lack of results, one's own inadequacy, all this kind of thing [00:04:02] presses upon the Lord's servants, and it did on Elijah. So much so, he says, Lord, I'm finished. I want to go.

I've served my God, I've served my day and generation. In other words, I've had enough. Let me finish. All right, says God, I'll take you at your word.

And so we find him here saying, I want you to go and anoint Elijah the son of Shaphat.

He'll take your place. If you want to go, I'll carry on the testimony. The Lord always carries on his work. It's been aptly said, he buries his servants and he carries on his work. And so it was with Elijah, he's put aside and Elijah comes along and he fills up the position.

Then we find the call of Elijah through Elijah, most ungrudging man.

It's a lovely sight to see when we find a lack of envy amongst the Lord's servants in [00:05:04] relation to each other.

Elijah doesn't look upon Elijah as an upstart and say, hmm, that's the man that's to take my place.

Ungrudgingly, according to the command of the Lord, he goes and he puts his mantle upon Elijah.

And as far as we can see from the narrative, it gives him every encouragement to take up the service for the Lord. So when it comes the call of God through Elijah to Elijah, we find this wonderful attitude of the lack of envy or jealousy.

I believe this comes out distinctly in the life of the New Testament servant, Paul. Oh, how he commended the service of others.

Timothy, why he says he serves the Lord the same as I do.

And he commends Timothy as a man after his own heart. No man, he says, so like-minded as Timothy.

Epaphroditus, oh, this man was ready to give his life. [00:06:04] And so on, as he writes his epistles, unjealously he commends others for their work for the Lord. Good lesson for us all.

Not to be marked by any spirit of envy in relation to the work of others, but rather to commend what we see.

So very often we put aside the service of others because of something that we see in the servant, and we discount all that's worthwhile and all that's valuable.

Paul didn't do that.

Paul commended the servants of the Lord for what he saw. And then we find in the second book of Kings the testing of Elijah as to whether he was really prepared to follow in the footsteps of Elijah.

So if we were to write a heading over a simple message this evening, it would be the servant's call, sorry, the servant's choice, the servant's call, and the servant's testing.

[00:07:09] Now God chose Elijah, and God doesn't make any mistakes when he calls his servants.

I mean outstanding servants.

He has called us all, every one of us, and we're all pygmies compared, and very small pygmies at that, compared to those who have gone before serving the Lord. Never mind.

There's something for us to do in our generation. But now we're referring to outstanding servants of the Lord, and Elijah was one. I think it's right to say, and you check it for yourselves, that there are more references to Elijah as a man of God than any other.

Perhaps Moses is the next.

A man of God, and you'll find that the term man of God comes to light when things are [00:08:02] difficult.

And so Elisha, the man of God, is chosen by God to serve in Elijah's place, a divine choice.

Now we find this all through the Bible. God chooses his servants. He has a right to choose. Who has a better right to choose? After all, it's God's work. So very carefully and wisely, he chooses his servants, and he chooses them for a particular purpose.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was here, he chose 12.

He said so himself. Have not I chosen you, the 12, and one of you is a demon?

He chose another 70, sent them out two by two.

He chose them carefully.

They did the work he wanted them to do, and his choice was vindicated. Oh, you say they were a poor lot.

They made so many mistakes. They all forsook him and fled at the time of his greatest need. [00:09:02] Well, perhaps that's true.

Before we criticize them, let's all take a look at ourselves. But the point is this, that after the Lord went on high and the Holy Spirit was sent down, oh, how wonderful, in such a wonderful way they served the Lord.

What faithfulness, what diligence, what sacrifice.

And if we are to believe tradition, and there's no reason to disbelieve it, each one laid down his life for the Lord, with the exception of John, who died at a very old age.

They laid down their lives willingly in sacrifice for their master, and it takes a lot of courage to do that, and it takes a lot of faithfulness to do that. So the Lord was vindicated in the choice of the 12. Judas Iscariot, we know, is a mysterious character and chosen for a specific purpose.

When we come to the Acts of the Apostles, we find two men who are chosen by the disciples [00:10:05] at that time, and a lot is drawn to choose one to take the place that was vacated by Judas Iscariot in his unfaithfulness.

And they didn't make the choice in an arbitrary fashion, they didn't say, well, we'll draw lots and the winner of the lot will be the one whom we choose. Well they did that, but they said something else, they prayed. And they asked the Lord to support them in this matter, and they said, the Lord knows the hearts, we don't know the hearts, these two brothers outwardly, they all have the same qualifications, they've been with us, they know all about the Lord from the time he was baptized until the time he died and went back to glory. They've got all the qualifications, but Lord, thou knowest the hearts. Choose the one that is to fill up this place, and the Lord made the choice, and one was chosen and one was put aside.

This is always right, the Lord knows best.

[00:11:03] We come to the choosing of people who are to look after the administration in relation to the widows, and a choice was to be made with certain qualifications, and the choice was made, and the service was completed, and as far as we can understand, the problem was resolved.

We find a church making a choice in Jerusalem, they chose two men to go along with Paul and Silas, Paul and Barnabas rather, in connection with another company of believers in another part of the world, and it says men who had given up their lives for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, qualifications were attached to the choice.

When Paul sent Titus to Crete to choose elders there, he says, Titus, don't look for the men who are most influential, the best educated people, or the people with most money, or [00:12:05] the people

who are some standing in the world.

He says, choose persons with spiritual qualities, persons who can be relied upon to do the service that is necessary. So you can see this question of choice is one that's associated with quality, and that's very important in times of great difficulty.

Now we come to ourselves. Has God chosen us?

Without a shadow of a doubt. There's one very important choice that we can all take to our hearts this evening and rejoice in it.

Before ever time began, before ever worlds existed, before ever sin and failure became a known thing, God chose us in Christ for the greatest possible blessing.

In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul unfolds a wonderful choice [00:13:04] of God, that he chose us in his sovereign love and grace that we might be with him eternally in sonship's dignity for his praise and glory and for our blessing for all eternity. Dear brethren, that's a wonderful thing. He knew us each by name before ever we existed, and he chose us. His own sovereign choice and will.

But then when we come to the first chapter of the Epistle to the Corinthians, we find another kind of choice.

God has chosen the weak things of this world, the things that are not, that he might confound the things that are mighty. God takes up the weak instruments in order to testify to the outside world that in his power those weak instruments can overcome for his name and for his glory. I believe this is what we find illustrated in Elisha, the son of Shaphat.

[00:14:03] A weak instrument?

He had to face the king.

He had to face those who were lukewarm. He had to face those who were enemies. In himself, a weak instrument.

In the power of God, a different story.

An instrument in the hand of God to overcome the enemies of the truth. And God chose Elisha for this, and I think we can say humbly, God has chosen us for this. Not to occupy a place like Elisha, man of God in dignity and power and wonderful miracles performed through him. No, not that kind of thing.

But in our humble situations wherever we are, at home, amongst our neighbors, in school, in business, wherever we are found, I believe God has chosen us that in our weakness might be demonstrated his power so that there might be a testimony for us. You might say, what use am I?

[00:15:02] That's a commonplace statement, what use am I?

All the great servants in the scriptures have said that. Jeremiah says, me, a servant?

I'm only a child, what can I do?

Moses, most reluctant to perform the service that God had in mind for him. Jonah, run away.

Find this often in the Bible, a great deal of reluctance. And oh, when God takes hold of his servant, he forms him and molds him to his will so that he can do great things through the servant's weakness.

Must always be so. The moment we begin to think that we are able to do this, that, the next thing, we are heading for a fall.

But Elisha was chosen by God, and we're very thankful for the way he reacted to the call.

Elijah, he goes along and he casts his mantle upon Elisha.

[00:16:08] Now he didn't find Elisha sitting down enjoying himself or having a snooze in the heat of the day.

He found a very industrious man plowing twelve yoke of oxen, an industrious man.

And I think this is a good thing to see in the Lord's service. And we find this all through the Bible, that God chooses men of action, men of industry, men who can do things. There are many, many instances of this. Take the Lord calling the fishermen.

What were they doing? Sitting chatting about their exploits at sea and the large catches of fish they have. That's quite a common topic amongst fishermen. We come from a fishing village, and when you see some fishermen congregated together, very likely that's what they're talking about. Their boats and nets and their catches and so on. But these men were mending their nets. [00:17:01] They were industrious. They were busy. They were concerned about the welding of the nets in view of catching more fish. Careful, concerned, and industrious.

When God called Moses, he too was occupied in tending sheep. David was a very, very industrious man and a very reliable man. And so we could go on.

And God calls this man, a man of industry, a man who's concerned about his daily calling and performs it in a correct manner.

Many, many great men of God have been called from very, very active lives to serve the Lord. They prove themselves in their secular callings, and then they prove themselves in the calling of God.

I know when there is so much to do, it does require some energy to follow out the Lord's will in the midst of difficulties and opposition.

[00:18:01] And so Elisha is found with the twelve yoke of oxen, and he's carrying out his daily calling according to God.

And also, I believe that this little incident would indicate to us that he was a man who was deeply concerned about the word of God.

He wasn't ploughing with an unequal yoke.

I remember when we were in Israel some years ago, we saw an unequal yoke. We saw an Arab ploughing in Israel, not in Jordan, in Israel, ploughing with an ox and an ass, the living expression of the unequal yoke there before our eyes.

But Elisha, he's ploughing with oxen, not an unequal yoke, ploughing with something that was commended by God.

I think this is a very important thing, that in our lives, without necessarily being engaged in some particular service for the Lord, are governed by the word of God. [00:19:01] What we do in our outlook is governed by the word of God. You see, if we become habitually governed by the word of God, it's very easy to be submissive to it when God makes a special claim upon our allegiance.

I think the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews presents this, at the end of it, if I remember rightly, that those who are feeding upon strong meat are those who have their senses exercised habitually, it's their habit, their senses exercised habitually to discern between what is right and what is wrong. So I think the fact that Elisha is ploughing, and ploughing with twelve oxen, it indicates he's the kind of man who can be relied upon, industrious, and his life governed by the word of God, why, an ideal man to serve the Lord.

And so Elijah cast his mantle upon him. And Elisha immediately knew what this involved. [00:20:03] It meant he was being called to the service of God. I suppose Elijah's mantle would be the hairy garment that he wore that was indicative of his place as a prophet for God.

You remember this was the way Elijah was identified. What kind of man was he, said the king? Always a man wearing a hairy garment, ah, that's Elijah, that's the man of God, that's the prophet of God, and this mantle was thrown upon Elijah, and immediately he knew that he was called of God.

No reluctance, no hesitation.

He says he's prepared to forsake his father and mother, he's prepared to forsake his calling, his secular calling, and he's ready to follow Elijah, and he did.

Now I think this is a very wonderful attitude.

How easy it is to reason, how easy it is to say, well, I'm not qualified for this kind [00:21:05] of thing, I have no credentials that give me the right to take up this service, and so it's very easy to turn away.

Maybe too the sense of sacrifice is too great. But Elisha showed no hesitation.

I think this is a wonderful picture of this man. It doesn't mean that he set his father and mother aside, oh no. The scriptures are so plain that we are to honor our father and mother, we are to respect those natural ties, God honors them, and we are to honor them. That's not the point. Here was a claim, a claim that God was placing upon him that was far greater than any earthly tie, and God is virtually

saying to Elisha, now Elisha, I want your time, I want your service, I want you.

And if my claim comes along with a claim from your parents, my claim is paramount. [00:22:03] My claim is first, and Elisha is prepared to face that.

And he says, Elisha, you're not going to have any time to spend in anything else, I want all your time to spend in this service that I have called you for. And he says, I am prepared to do that. And so he burnt, he killed the oxen, and he burned the implements of service, and in other words as we say ourselves, he burned his boats, he's finished, that's at an end, a new life is beginning for him, and that life involves his time, his talents, everything about him, he's thoroughly devoted to the interest of the Lord.

And so dear brethren, we have to ask ourselves, is this our attitude to the service of the Lord? We're not all called upon to leave our secular calling, we're not even called upon to actually leave our parents, but we are called upon to answer to the claims of the Lord when he [00:23:05] makes a claim upon us.

When there is some particular call for some particular service, then it's right that that should be listened to, and we should serve him accordingly, and do it without any hesitation, without any reluctance. Now I know it's easy to say that, but it's a right thing to say, because the Lord himself indicated this in the 14th chapter of Luke's Gospel, that if any man loves his father and mother more than he loves me, he's not worthy of me. Now again it doesn't mean that we forsake our father and mother, and we don't show them the respect that we ought to show them, it doesn't mean that at all. The Lord is saying, my claims come first. Oh dear brethren, what a wonderful position it is to be in at all times, to say, well, yes, really, I've got the things of God at heart, and his things come first in my life, and my whole life is geared to this, where I go, the plans I make, my outlook in life [00:24:06] is governed by this, that I belong to God, and this must govern all that I say, and all that I do, and all the plans that I make.

I am perfectly sure that we would all be in a healthy condition spiritually if this were true of us in every day of our lives.

And so, Elisha showed how ready he was to answer to God's claim, and so he followed Elijah.

Let me quote it correctly, then he arose and went after Elijah and ministered unto him.

You might have said, well, Elisha has been called by God to fill Elijah's place, and now we find Elisha, he's ministering to Elijah.

He might have said, well, if I'm called to fill this place, I'm going to start right [00:25:02] now. No, says God, there are a few lessons to be learned, you have some experience to go through, no one better to teach you than Elijah. Now just you go along with Elijah. And so Elisha, he goes along and he ministers unto him. He is in the place of a subordinate servant, and he's prepared to accept this place. And we find this all through the scriptures, the young man, well, Joshua, along with Moses.

We find Elisha here along with Elijah, we think of a Timothy along with a Paul, and we could quote other instances where the young go along with the old and they learn from them in their spiritual experience and in spiritual maturity.

Now this is a great challenge to those of us who are older. Do we in any way influence the young in the right direction? That's a very solemn thing. [00:26:02] We should be sufficiently mature, we should have sufficient spiritual experience and power to influence the younger into a pathway of devotedness to God.

And the truth is, dear brethren, if we are not in it ourselves, we can't influence others to be in that pathway.

We have to have the power, the spiritual influence to direct others. Nobody could doubt for a moment that Elijah was such a one. How courageous he had been, how faithful, how obedient, and in times of trial and stress and danger, he had represented God and had followed God faithfully. Such a man was spiritually qualified to help this young man, and so Elisha, he went along with Elijah.

I don't know what they talked about when they were together. I'm sure Elisha would ply him with some questions as to the great experience he had, Mount Carmel [00:27:02] and bearding Ahab and Jezebel and all sorts of things of that character. And talking with this man of God, he would learn many things, I'm sure, that would stand him in good stead when he was in the place of responsibility and representation. So we have this divine choice chosen by God, and then this call from God through Elijah and how readily he answered to it, and now the test.

That's always a problem, the test.

We think of the call of God, and we're very thankful that we are called of God, but very often the testing time comes, and our faith gives way, and the difficulties are too great, and the problems are too many, and we wonder, have we stepped out in the right pathway? Have we done what is right? And God tests us and tries us, and it's right that he should. [00:28:04] You think of the master himself, thirty years in obscurity before he served for three years in public.

That's a good ratio.

They say there is more of an iceberg under the water than is showing above the water, and perhaps it ought to be in our lives, more devotedness in private in view of our public service. Thirty years of the Lord in obscurity before he stepped out in public service for God. Oh, how wonderful those years were.

We get an idea of their worth.

When the Lord Jesus was at Jordan, the heavens were opened upon him, and God declares his delight in his well-beloved Son.

Just for that moment, no, I believe those thirty years of obscurity were revealed to us in one great statement, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

[00:29:05] Well pleased in those thirty years where everything was so pleasurable to God, although hidden from our eyes.

And then three and a half years, to be exact, where the Lord walked here in public witness for God.

Oh, how wonderful that six days before he died, this is my beloved Son, hear him.

This is God's testimony to his own beloved Son.

So I believe that the testing time comes, as it did in the life of the Lord, after the Father's delight was expressed in him forty days in the wilderness, tempted of Satan. We heard about this on Saturday afternoon.

And went through the cities and villages and towns, preaching the kingdom, the testing of the Son of God. So we are not surprised if we are tested by difficulties and trials and oppositions, that [00:30:02] God might prove us to be reliable servants.

I believe, dear brethren, that more often we are faithful in private, in secret, there will be more indication of this in our public lives for God. So briefly now, we'll look at this incident in the second chapter, in the second book of Kings, chapter two.

There are four places mentioned here, Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, and Jordan.

Well they're in the first place, Elijah and Elisha, they're standing in Gilgal. And Elijah says to Elisha, now Elisha, you stay here, I'm going to move on a little further. And Elisha says, no, I'm going to follow you.

This is what I desire, this is why I'm called, I'm going to follow you. [00:31:02] And they go to the next place, and Elijah says, stay here. No, he says, I'm going to follow you. And so they go through the four until they come to the end, and then we find the wonderful evidence that the mantle of Elijah has definitely fallen upon Elisha, and he's able to perform a mighty act of power that indicated God was with Elisha just as he had been with Elijah. But I believe these four places represent principles that ought to govern us if we in our day want to follow the Lord.

What does Gilgal represent?

You remember there came a moment in the history of the nation of Israel when they arrived at Gilgal.

Now all those who were there, the Naals, were all the new generation.

Not those who had come out of Egypt, they had all perished because of their unfaithfulness. Only two remained, Joshua and Caleb.

[00:32:02] Now this new generation had to enter into God's land, God's purpose for them, not as uncircumcised persons, because that's what they were at that time. They were to be circumcised at Gilgal, and then enter into the land as circumcised persons reminding them of God's covenant with Abraham.

And so at Gilgal they were circumcised, and it represented that they were no longer just like ordinary persons.

They were persons who belonged to God through covenant. They were persons who belonged to this great line of promise and blessing, and as such were the true representatives of God. Gilgal

represented the cutting off of the flesh, the reproach of Egypt.

And there's a great deal of ministry in the New Testament that helps us to understand this. Oh, if there's anything that hinders us in our service for God, it's the flesh. [00:33:05] Oh, what a wicked thing it is.

Pride, anger, envy.

We read all about these things in the epistle to the Galatians, indeed in all Paul's epistles. What an awful thing the flesh is.

Paul encourages us to see that at the cross of Jesus, the flesh was condemned in all its evil features and was put aside.

And in the power of the Spirit, believers today are enabled to live for Christ, to follow God, and to do the things that are pleasing to him. And so what Elijah is really saying to Elisha, now look, Elisha, are you prepared to stay here at Gilgal?

Are you prepared to answer to the principles regarding the destruction of the flesh? Or are you prepared to move on with me?

[00:34:02] And Elijah says, I am prepared to answer to these problems. I am prepared to enter into the principles regarding the destruction of the flesh and in the power of that move on to the next step, whatever it might be. And so, dear brethren, this is one thing that we must all learn if we are going to serve God effectively in whatever place he puts us, and that is we can place no reliance upon the flesh, no reliance whatsoever.

We can't serve in our own strength.

We can't serve as men of the world serve. We must serve in the power of a judged flesh, prepared to put it aside and answer to the claims of God.

And I believe Gilgal is a very important place for us to be, to learn those lessons, and having learned them, move on for the glory of God. And Elijah says, I am prepared to learn these lessons. I am prepared to move on, and he did so. [00:35:01] And then they come to Bethel.

Well, we know what Bethel represents, the house of God. Jacob, in Genesis 28, had that wonderful vision that made him waken up and say, this is a dreadful place.

The presence of God is here.

This is none other than the gate of heaven. This is the house of God.

And I believe Bethel represents just that, the presence of God and the holiness of God. And Elijah is saying in principle to Elisha, get out of here. Stay here.

Are you prepared to learn the lessons that are involved in Bethel, and having learned them, move on?

And Elisha says, yes. He says, I'm not going to wait here. I'm going to learn these lessons, and I'm going to move on. I'm not going to stay here. I'm not going to be held up by refusing to learn these things. I'm going to learn them and move on. [00:36:03] Oh, how wonderful it is that we serve with this in mind. It's God whom we serve.

How we ought to behave ourselves in the house of God. Oh, what lessons are to be learned. This is the subject, how to behave ourselves in the house of God. God's presence regulating our lives, our thoughts, whatever we do or say.

What a lesson to learn.

And Elijah said, Elisha said, yes, I'm going to learn it, and having learned it, I'm going to move on.

And he did, and he come to Jericho.

He said, what does Jericho represent? Do you remember when the children of Israel went over Jordan and into the land? Standing afoot their way was the city of Jericho.

It was no use bypassing it. If we read in our history books about the olden days when they had no guided missiles or bombs or that kind of thing.

Castles were very, very important in the defense of one's country.

[00:37:05] Found about the border where we live, there are castles galore. Found about the coastline, castles galore, because these were the places where the English came up and bothered the Scots, and the Scots too went down and bothered the English. And they were there, and they couldn't be bypassed. No good an army invading Scotland and saying, well, we won't bother about these castles. Because from the castles came out companies of soldiers and harassed the communication lines of the army. So they had to be overcome. And so it was in Israel's history.

There was Jericho. A walled city standing there right across the path.

And it had to be overcome. And we know the story how it was overcome. By the ark circling around it. The priest blowing the trumpets and down came the walls. And Jericho was overcome. But what does it represent? [00:38:01] We believe that cities in scripture represent what is good sometimes, especially in Jerusalem. But very, very bad in other senses, a compact system of administration against God.

Now that's the world. That's exactly what the world is.

A compact system without God, energized by Satan.

The power of this world in opposition to God.

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke about Satan, or rather the New Testament speaks about Satan in two different ways.

The prince of this world and the God of this world. As the prince or ruler of this world, he has his

power and influence in politics, in business, and in all the affairs of men in a general sense. The ruler of this world. And he makes his presence and influence felt in such a way that it militates against the [00:39:01] spread of the truth.

Now I know that nine people out of ten would say, well you're talking nonsense. This is what the Bible tells us. The ruler of this world.

As the God of this world, he has his influence and power in all the religious affairs of this world.

In all the different faiths that are in opposition to the truth of God. And sad to say, his influence has infiltrated into that which we call Christendom.

And the power of Satan is now making itself felt in a very distinctive way in the spread of obnoxious doctrines that bring down the glory of Christ, that bring down the truth of God, that challenge the authenticity of the scriptures. And in a thousand ways we find his power in many ways bringing down the truth.

The God and the Prince of this world. [00:40:02] But we are particularly concerned about Jericho as representing the world in opposition to the people of God. And how well we know it.

Oh if we waste our time in the things of this world, how soon our spiritual strength goes.

And so Elijah saying to Elisha, now you tarry here at Jericho. What he says, tarry here at Jericho, a place where the world's power and domination is seen. No, I'm going to overcome that and I'm going to move on. Oh remember poor Demas.

He loved this present world and he left Paul.

And when he left Paul, he left the vessel whom God was using for the spread and maintenance of the truth. He says, I'd rather have the world.

How many have we seen come back to the world? Oh what a sad thing when a Christian gives up his testimony and would rather have the [00:41:03] world.

The world of business, the world of entertainment, the world of fame, the world of advancement. Doesn't matter what shape it takes. If it's the world and we seek after it, it will deprive us of all strength and energy in serving the Lord.

And Elisha says, I'm going to move on from Jericho. Having learned the lessons that Jericho would represent, I'm going to move on and become to the Jordan. Going to tarry here Elisha? No he says, I'm going to learn the lessons that are to be found at Jordan. And what are the lessons? Do you remember the children of Israel came to Jordan and they were told, now just wait here. And when the ark begins to move, you follow the ark. But keep that distance of 2,000 cubits, that reverential distance. And then when the ark moves, you follow it. And when the ark went through, whenever the priest's feet touched the water, the river [00:42:02] of Jordan flowed back.

When the priest went over in dry land bearing the ark, the children of Israel followed 2,000 cubits behind him.

And it represents for us our death with Christ. The teaching of the epistle to the Colossians. And you know what Paul says in chapter 3, set your affections on things above where Christ is.

The truth can be easily illustrated in those 40 days when the Lord Jesus Christ was a man out of death and spoke to his disciples. And there was a man who had been into death. He had no longer any interest in this world. He never appeared in it publicly.

He didn't go out and testify in the villages and streets as he had done before. He was finished with this public presentation. He was bound for glory.

In a few days, he was going to ascend back to his father. He was finished entirely with all that was down here. All the earthly relationships had gone forever. [00:43:02] And he was a man who was bound for heaven. And that's exactly what Colossians teaches us. Oh dear brethren, that it might be true of us. And Elijah says, I'm moving on. And he goes on, having learned that lesson. And he moves on. The two of them went together and they were talking together. And they come to the river Jordan. And I think we ought to stop there and perhaps speak about the rest tomorrow evening if the Lord will.

But oh how well Elijah answered to the test.

Four times, three times, he was told to go back.

To start to Tariq.

And every time he says no, I'm going to go on.

That's resolution, isn't it? That's determination.

Might easily have said, well the man of God says I'm to Tariq here. I'll do what he says. Might have been an easy way out. I know he says, I've been called, I've been chosen. I feel the dignity, the responsibility. [00:44:03] And I'm going to go on and fulfill what the Lord desires of me. Dear brethren, oh let us have this determination to go on. So easy to give up.

Not necessarily to stop coming to the meetings. Not necessarily in our outward profession as a Christian. But how easy to give up in spirit and say, well what's the use? To have the energy that faith provides, that the spirit of God provides, to do what we can to help the testimony at the present time in its weakness and in the opposition against it. Oh may it be so that we may be those who are marked by the spiritual determination. Very interesting to know that there are two other persons in the Bible who were told to go back and they said the same. And one is well known to you, I'm sure. Ruth. Then Naomi said to her, now you go back. Go back to your own people. [00:45:01] Go back to your own gods. No, she says, I'm steadfastly minded to go on. Thy people shall be my people. Thy God, my God.

Where thou diest, there will I die. And there will I be buried. Oh the determination that marked Ruth. Then there was the other one. The one who was said to go so by David. David?

Iti? The Gittite? Iti? You go way back. I'm in reproach. There's no future for you here, Iti. Go back.

No, he says, wherever my Lord the King goes, there will I be found. Determination. Determination to go on.

Oh dear brethren, let's go on. It's well worthwhile.

May we do so for his name's sake.