

Losing The Anointing of God

by David Ravenhill

This sermon focuses on the theme of recovering what has been lost, drawing parallels from biblical stories of lost items like the man who lost his axe head. It emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers for effective ministry, highlighting the need for honesty, faith, and a desire for restoration. The message encourages individuals to seek a fresh touch of God's Spirit, acknowledging the borrowed gift of the Holy Spirit entrusted to them.

Scripture: 2 Kings 6:1, John 7:37, 2 Kings 4:1, Jeremiah 29:13, Acts 1:8, Ephesians 5:18

Topics: "Restoration", "Empowerment by the Holy Spirit"

Description

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Transcript

Good morning. I would like to take a moment of silence because it has been a joy to be with you the past few days. My wife and I will be leaving tonight and flying to Wales.

Brother Chris here will be not only my interpreter but my chauffeur. So I want to thank him for both of those things. I've discovered that he's got a lot of messages of his own.

So I'm not always sure if you're getting my message or his message. So I'm not always sure if you're getting my message or his message. But hopefully he improves the message as it's being translated.

But I do want to thank him for the task he has carried out. I want to share with you this morning about recovering something that has been lost. There's nothing worse than losing something of value.

You lose your car keys. Or your house keys. You lose your dog.

Or worse yet, lose a companion. And the Bible is full of stories of people that lost things. We have Saul out looking for his father's sheep.

Oh wait, his father's donkeys. We have Saul out looking for his father's donkeys because they've been lost. We have the story of David who went out to fight with the Philistines.

And when he returned back to Ziglax, he had lost everything. We have the man with a hundred sheep and he lost one. We read about a man who had a hundred sheep and he lost one.

The woman who had ten coins and she lost one. We read about a father who had two sons and he lost one of them. It's one thing to lose something and it's another thing to regain it.

And so this morning we're going to look at an individual who lost something. You'll find the story in 2 Kings. 2 Kings chapter 6. As you're turning to that passage, let me describe where we're going.

We're going to be visiting a Bible college. Or a Bible school at least. A school that was the school of the prophets.

It was begun by Samuel. And now it is under the leadership of the prophet Elisha. We're told that the school had around 50 students.

And as we step into this chapter, these students have gathered together. I don't know if it was a conversation that developed the way it did, or if it was called for a particular reason. But they are discussing their future.

What is going to happen in the days ahead. They are concerned about the direction they're going. They're not concerned about the past.

They're not talking about the past. I appreciate what has happened in the past. But we can no longer live in the past.

These are no longer the days of Luther. These are not the days of John Calvin anymore. God said, behold, I do a new thing.

All things have to pass away. As good as they were, there is a future that lies ahead of us. And so these students are discussing the future.

They're concerned about the situation where they are. And the result of their discussion is they are dissatisfied. And they come to the conclusion that they are dissatisfied with where they are now.

They are not happy with the way things are. And that can be a good thing. I am always in a state of dissatisfaction.

Not discouragement. Discouragement is something you can neglect. But dissatisfaction motivates you.

One of the worst things that can happen in the Christian life is that we become stagnant. We become satisfied. We settle down.

We lose our vision, our passion. And so these students have come to the realization we're not satisfied where we are. Something needs to change.

We pick up the story then in verse 1. They go to the prophet. And they said, the place where we are living is too small for us. We're limited, we're restrained.

We can't move any further. There's no room for growth. We're not satisfied in staying in this condition.

Let me say that I believe many of you are in a place where it's too small for you. You're too restricted. God is wanting to enlarge you.

He's wanting to increase your vision. He's wanting to take you into another realm. And so they say the place where we're living, again, it's too small.

In other words, there is more. The Bible says, eye has not seen and ear has not heard. It hasn't even entered into the heart of man all that God has prepared for us.

The Christian life begins again with salvation. But that's just the beginning. And many of us settle there.

Many of us never grow. We never develop. We remain small and restrained.

And God is wanting to enlarge us. The Christian life is always one of growth. We go from faith to faith.

From victory to victory. We should be increasing and abounding in our knowledge of God. The Bible says, lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.

God has so much more for us. And we can no longer remain in that position of confinement. It cripples our spiritual life.

And so they make a decision. A constant decision. That we are going to move from where we are.

You and I have the ability to make a choice. We can choose to remain where we are or we can choose to move on. And so they say, listen, we've stayed here long enough.

You recall in the life of the children of Israel. That God says, you've been around this mountain long enough. He says, turn and set your journey.

Some of you have gone around the mountain so many years. And some of you have been here long enough. And I believe God would say to you this morning, turn and set your journey.

God has so much more in store for you. But it is a decision that has to be made. And they go to the prophet and they said, please go with us to the Jordan.

The word Jordan means to descend. We grow by descending. We grow by losing our life.

Jordan was a place of circumcision. It was a place of separation. And when we are prepared to die to our own desires and we're prepared to allow God to be in control of our life and so these students seek permission from their master.

They recognize they're under authority. And we need to recognize too the authority of God over our life. And say, God, I want to move on.

And so they are determined. God is looking for men and women with a determination. You find all the way through the word of God, men again with that passion, that zeal for God.

They said to Elisha, let us go and we will work. We're prepared to make things happen. Notice in verse two, please let us go to the Jordan.

And each of us will take a beam and we will make a place for ourselves. You know, God is looking for people that are willing to work. And Jesus wanted to establish his kingdom.

He did not go down to the unemployment line in Jerusalem. And here are a bunch of men just standing there idle. No, instead he went to men that were already working.

God is always looking for those that are willing to work. David was looking after the sheep. Moses was looking after sheep.

Elisha was ploughing with his father's oxen. God never uses idle hands or idle people. And there has to be that desire within us to say, God, I'm prepared to do something.

I'm prepared to pray. Seek your faith. Fast if necessary.

But Lord, I'm not satisfied staying the way I am. You have more for me, I know that. And I believe some of you this morning, this is a prophetic word to many of you.

You've gone around this mountain long enough. And God wants to increase what he wants to do in your life. And so they come and they submit to this man's leadership.

You'll notice they refer to themselves as servants. In verse three, please be willing to go to it. Go with your servants.

Or they're not referring to themselves as young prophets. They're not full of themselves or their call. They recognize that they are servants.

God has called us to serve him. We shouldn't be into titles. We should be doing the job of the ministry.

And so they say, go with us to the Jordan. And so we have the school closing down, if you like. Packing their belongings.

And they go and they begin to rebuild. And finally they get there to the new place, the Jordan. And they begin working.

It says, we will take a beam. And so here they are, they're cutting down the various streets. And as one man, one student, as he begins to cut down the tree, I'm sure he has tremendous joy for a while.

He's fulfilling that dream that he's had. He's reaching his goal. Things are beginning to advance.

He's no longer where he was. He's broken out of that place of limitation. There's nothing wrong with the past, like I said.

But there comes a time when we need to advance. And maybe these students were somewhat competitive. And maybe he's got a greater pile of beams than his roommate.

And he begins to maybe get a little bit of pride. And as he's using that axe, all of a sudden there is a calamity that takes place. The head of the axe flies off.

It sails through the air and lands in the river. And all of a sudden his power is gone. All of a sudden he's lost his cutting edge.

The sharpness in his life is gone. And many a man of God has started off well. They've heard the voice of God.

They've responded in obedience. They've left the place where they were. And they've stepped out on faith, believing God.

And they've seen things progress. They've experienced the joy of the Lord. And then all of a sudden something happens.

And suddenly they find themselves powerless. Unable to continue. The results that they had are no longer the results that they're seeing now.

And I believe that describes many a believer. You can look back to a time in your life when you had a greater joy, a greater zeal, a greater passion, a greater longing for the Word of God, greater desire for revival, but something has happened. And you find yourself powerless.

A passion has gone. Your strength spiritually has gone. And here we have this man in that situation.

The book of Ecclesiastes says, if you fail to sharpen the axe head, you have to exert more strength. I don't know about you, but I have a chainsaw at home. We have a number of trees in our backyard.

And every once in a while, I'll start up that chainsaw. And if the blade is sharp, the chain is sharp, I can just cut right through those limbs. But after a while, it gets dull.

And I literally have to lay on that thing to get it to work. The cutting edge has gone. It's no longer effective.

And I believe that the axe head represents the ministry and the work of the Holy Spirit. You see, this man could not accomplish his goal without the sharp edge of the axe. Nor could the sharp edge of the axe work without the man.

You see, God has called us to be in partnership with him. We are laborers together with God. God needs your life.

He needs my life. But I need the Spirit of God. You need the Spirit of God.

We need the Spirit of God. It's the Spirit of God that gives us the cutting edge. Jesus said, you shall receive power after the Holy Ghost has come upon you.

Even though they'd been through the finest Bible school in the world. Day after day, they sat under the world's greatest teacher, the Son of God. They watched and observed him.

And after three years, instead of Jesus giving a graduation ceremony, he said, I'm going to leave. But you're not ready yet. Something is lacking.

Something is missing. Oh, you've got great knowledge of the Word. But you do err, knowing the Scriptures or the power of God.

And as good as the Scriptures are, they're worthless without the power of God. And the power of God needs the Word of God. And so the last words to those students carry in Jerusalem until the Spirit of God comes upon you.

You can't function without the axe head. You can't do it in your own strength. And so here is a man that has lost the axe head.

But he's honest. He cries out, Master, I've lost it. He doesn't busy himself with other activities.

He doesn't pretend to do something else and cover up. This is the response I believe that God is looking for. He's looking for that cry.

You see, his cry was in proportion to the thing that he lost. If you lose something that has no value to it, you don't cry out. It's meaningless.

I can get another one. But if there's something of value, you're going to cry out according to the value of that thing you've lost. And this man really realizes this is the most precious thing.

I can't finish what I've been called to do without this thing. Unless I recover that cutting edge, the vision that I have, the calling of God, will not be accomplished. And you and I will never see what God is wanting to do without the power of the Spirit of God working in us.

I've seen the Spirit of God move many, many years ago. I was with a group of men. We were down in the island of Tonga.

You'll find it hard to find on the Pacific Ocean. Just a little dot. And we took a ship or a boat.

And we went to a little island. You could walk around that island in about two hours at the most. And there was a boarding school there run by the Methodists.

And one night there was a meeting that we had. A young Tongan man who was part of the team. He gave his testimony about being raised in the Methodist church.

And how he went to New Zealand as a student. And while he was in New Zealand he had an encounter with the Holy Spirit. And he was sharing his testimony.

And at the end of his testimony he said, I still don't know why I did it. But he raised his hand and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. And suddenly there was a wind that went through all those students.

And they collapsed on the floor. They began crying out in repentance over the course of the next few days. The students would testify.

And they would talk about how they stole and how they cheated in class. And they would beg forgiveness of the teachers. And their lives were transformed by the power of God.

And I can tell you many stories of the work of the Spirit of God. We cannot do the job without the anointing of the Spirit. We're powerless in our own strength.

And so he cries out, Master, I've lost it. And maybe some of you have never had it. I believe in a congregation of this size.

Some of you have had it and lost it. Some of you have never had it to lose it. But whatever the situation, I believe God wants to give it back.

God is a God of restoration. His Master says to the young man, Where did it fall? Where did you lose it? Tell me the place. You know, I believe when we get that honest with God.

God, I know where I lost it. I lost it the night I turned on the computer and went to that pornographic website. I lost it the night I went back into sin.

I lost it when I started neglecting the Word of God and prayer. I lost it when I got offended with a brother or sister and I left the church. The Bible is full of people that lost something.

Jonah lost it when he went in the other direction and disobeyed God. Who? Jonah. Solomon lost it when he married foreign women and began to build idols to foreign gods.

Balaam lost his gifting when he began to merchandise it. And Biliam lost it when he began to sell his prophetic gift for money. Naomi lost it when she left Bethlehem and went to Moab.

Not only did she lose her husband, but also her two sons. The result of disobedience. Peter denied the Lord.

Demas fell in love with the world. I don't know what it is in your life, but you know and God knows. He knows that thing in your life that has caused you to draw back.

Maybe an area of disappointment. Whatever it is, God is saying, listen, where did you lose it? Be honest. If you've never had it, then obviously you need to be honest and say, God, I've never had the salvation of the Spirit in my life.

I've never known the baptism of the filling of the Spirit. Maybe you were being warned against it. But every great man of God, if you read down through history, he's been warned that they all had some sort of encounter with the living God.

Wesley and Whitefield and Finney. R.A. Torrey. Andrew Murray, all of these men had a second experience.

And not that God is limited to a second experience. My Bible says, beyond being filled. God is wanting to empower us.

There is an anointing that he has for each and every one of us. And so, the question is, where did you lose it? And the Bible says, when he showed him the place, Elisha does something. He picks up an old piece of wood and he throws that piece of wood into the river.

What use is a piece of wood? We're talking about a piece of iron that has gone down to the bottom. What can a piece of wood do? Wood floats. Wood can't sink down to the bottom.

And yet, that wood represents obviously the old rugged cross. When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, one of the first places to stop were the waters of Mara. And you remember those waters were bitter.

The children of Israel could not drink. They were thirsty. And so, Moses takes a stick and he throws that stick into the waters of Mara.

And that piece of wood, if you like, changed that bitterness. Again, only the cross can change your life. Only the cross can take out that bitterness.

Only the cross can restore that which has been lost. And as Elisha throws in that piece, that axe head raises. It was important.

It was important to get it back for the young man. The reason he needed it back was twofold. He needed the axe head in order to accomplish the job that God had called him to do.

But he also needed it because it was borrowed. He said, Alas, master, my axe head, I borrowed it. It didn't belong to me.

I don't own it. It belongs to somebody else. I was entrusted with it.

I was a steward of that thing. You see, you and I never own the Holy Spirit. God entrusts us with His most precious gift.

It's borrowed. We don't own it. Or that adds to the responsibility.

It's one thing to lose something that is yours. And we feel bad when we lose something that belongs to us. But when somebody has entrusted us with something and we lose it, it's a terrible feeling.

About 8 or 10 years ago now, my wife and I were invited to minister out in Colorado. And I knew the gentleman that we were going to be staying with. And our daughter and son-in-law and our grandchild were living about an hour's drive away.

And so this gentleman said, when you come out to minister, if you'd like to stay a few extra days and visit your family, it won't cost any more. The ticket won't cost any more. And so it was over the 4th of July, which is our big Independence Day celebration.

And so we decided we would spend a few extra days with our family. And the gentleman we were staying with had a number of cars. He was a military man.

Everything was very neat and tidy. And he insisted that I use one of his cars. I said, I really don't need it.

I said, my daughter and son-in-law, they've got a couple of cars. We're fine. He said, no, you may need it.

I said, well, how am I going to get it back to you? It's going to be an hour north. He said, just bring it into the parking lot at the airport. He said, I'll find it.

Just put the key up on the top of the tire. And so we drove off in the car. When we got to my daughter's home, we pulled the car up in front of the garage.

And for the next two days, we never used it. And then the night before the 4th of July, they were getting together with some of their friends. And they wanted us to come along.

And they needed extra room. And so we said, we'll follow you in the car. That evening, we came back.

I pulled the car up back where it was before. And went to bed about 6 o'clock in the morning. There was a knock on our bedroom door.

And our granddaughter, who was about 14 at the time, she said, Papa, your car is smashed up down the driveway. I'm thinking, what car? I don't have a car. We're in Colorado.

And all of a sudden, I realized, oh no, not that car. And I jumped up and put on a robe. And I looked, and the car had gone down the driveway and then down a little bit of an embankment.

And it stopped in front of a big tree. But it looked perfect. And I thought, you know, it's fine.

So I went back to bed. I got up a little later. And now I'm dressed.

And so I go outside and I go down the drive and look. And the whole back of that car was bent in. The back window was smashed out.

We had to take a steel bar to unjam the wheels. And then I had that terrible feeling. I've got to tell somebody.

And I called up the lady whose husband owned the car. And I asked if he was available. And she said, No, he's already got up and he's left.

He's gone fishing. And I said, Well, Kim, I've got some bad news. I said, I've smashed up your car.

Oh, Brother Ravenhill, you're always trying to make a joke. I said, No, Kim, this is no joke. I felt absolutely terrible.

Our last master, it was borrowed. And they had to come up and I won't go into the rest of the story, but here is the situation. God entrusts you and I with the most precious gift in the world.

The gift of the Spirit of God. And some of you have maybe never received that gift. Couldn't you imagine the offense of God presenting you with a gift and you've never reached out and received it? Others of you have received that gift and yet you've neglected that gift.

Paul had to say to Timothy, stir up that gift. And Paul said to Timothy, stir up that gift. There's a gift that God has placed within you, You need to stir it up, get it active again.

There's a need out there in the world for the gift that God has placed in you. Listen, there is a world out there and God has given you a gift that can reach that world. You shall receive power when the Spirit of God comes upon you.

And you shall be witnesses unto me. And so, Elisha takes this piece of wood and he applies it to that situation. And all of a sudden that which was lost comes back up to the surface.

And then Elisha, the prophet says to this young student, he says, reach out and take it for yourself. You see, there's a requirement of faith. He doesn't reach down and say, here.

He says to the young man, you've got to reach out. God has done the work. The ax head is right there.

It's available to every one of you. Whether you've lost it or you've never had it. God has provided the Spirit of God.

And we need to reach out and say, Lord, I need that. That's your provision so we can reach a lost and a dying world. And God won't do it.

He's already given the Holy Spirit. And you and I have to receive it. And some of you have never reached out.

Oh, I don't know why. Whether you've been warned against it, whether there is fear, whether there's unbelief, whatever it is. But I believe the enemy hates the baptism of the Spirit of God.

Because if he can withhold that from the church, he renders the church powerless. A man without the ax head can do nothing. You can't cut down a tree with your bare hands.

And you can't do the work of the ministry without the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew what he was talking about. He said there in John 7, verse 37, if any man is thirsty, let him come unto me.

And let him drink of me. And out of his innermost being will flow life, rivers of living water. And the literal translation of this is, is out of your womb.

That's what it says in the Greek. And because that is gender specific, the translators made it more generic. But you see, it's the womb where conception takes place.

It's the womb where life comes out. And without the Spirit of God, you and I are spiritually barren. We can't conceive.

We can't give birth. But if we desire, if we hunger and thirst, God will open our spiritual womb and allow the life of God to flow out through us. And so here is a story of recovery.

This young man had back the thing that he lost. His effectiveness was restored. And you can become effective for God.

But you've got to be honest. Lord, I've either lost it or I've never had it. But whatever the situation, God says it's available.

Let's just stand to our feet. If you're hungry this morning, if you've got a desire this morning, maybe as the worship team comes, if we can have an appropriate song, we have many songs. I can think of an English song called The Holy Spirit of the Living God fall afresh on me.

If you want to come to this altar and join my brother, I know you're not used to altar calls. But sometimes you need to get out of your father's house. Sometimes you need to step out in faith.

Say, Lord, I need this morning a fresh touch of God on my life. I know there's a missing dimension. Lord, restore that thing.

God is a God of restoration. He restores the years, the locust and the canker worm of Eton. He restores those years of disobedience and disappointment.

Just let God have His way this morning. If there's not room here, you can stand. Don't wait for somebody to pray.

Just call out to God. That's God's promise. Call unto me and I will answer you.

I'll show you great and mighty things that you've never done. If there's a hunger there, find the satisfaction that only Jesus Christ can give you. It's real.

I could stand here and tell you story after story after story of the power of God that can work through individuals. All He's looking for is a vessel. We have the story in 2 Kings chapter 4, just a few chapters before this, of a woman who has run out of her resources.

Her husband has died. And she is in debt. And the prophet comes to visit her.

And she's in a place of absolute desperation. I'm about ready to lose my children, she said. I'm in debt and they want to take away my children.

I can't imagine anything worse. She's lost her husband now, she's about ready to lose her children. And she has no way of paying her debt.

And the prophet says, what do you have? And she said, all I've got is this little tiny bit of oil. And he says, go and borrow empty vessels. Do not get a few.

Get as many empty vessels as you can. And then go into your closet and shut the door. Go into your room and begin to pour out.

I heard a man of God say this many years ago. The more emptiness you can present to God, the more of his fullness you can receive. Get as much emptiness as possible.

Get as many vessels as you can. Bring all that emptiness into the closet. And cry out to God and he will fill all that emptiness.

That's what God wants to do with the church. If you're empty this morning, just raise your hands or raise your heart and say, God, I need you. I need a fresh touch.

I need the life of God to come. I'm tired of religion. I'm tired of ritual.

I want to experience the dynamic of God's presence. Just reach out as we sing. Ask God to touch you this morning.

Father, we just release your anointing. Holy Spirit, come into this place. Lord, fill every empty vessel.

Pour out your Spirit, Lord. Touch lives. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Make it a cry this morning as we sing. Don't just sing it out of your head.

Sing it out of your heart. Sing with your heart this lyric. You are above us, we stand before you.

You are our father and mother, take us in your love. You are our father and mother, take us in your love. Give us hope, restore us, make our life worth living.

Bless us with your glory, give us fire and strength more and more. In every stadium, power and glory, let us praise your name.

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