

# Preparation for the Prophetic, Part 1

by David Ravenhill

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*The prophetic office requires spiritual preparation, maturity, and commitment, and comes with a multitude of challenges and pressures.*

**Duration:** 58:36

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 19:15

**Topics:** "Prophetic", "Preparation for Ministry", "The Prophetic Office"

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## Description

David Ravenhill emphasizes the necessity of preparation for those called to the prophetic ministry, highlighting that God does not use anyone without first preparing them through trials and challenges. He draws parallels from the life of Elijah, who faced immense pressure and loneliness, to illustrate that the prophetic office is not glamorous but requires deep commitment and maturity. Ravenhill asserts that the church must embrace the five-fold ministry, including the prophetic, to fulfill God's purpose in this generation, and he encourages prayer for those in prophetic roles as they face significant opposition. He stresses the importance of counting the cost of discipleship and being willing to forsake everything for the call of God, as exemplified by Elisha's response to Elijah's mantle.

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## Transcript

I'd like you to turn with me to 1 Kings chapter 19. I want to speak to you this morning on the preparation for the prophetic. One of the things I have emphasized over the years is the fact that I think one of the things we have failed to emphasize is the fact that God does not use anybody.

Don't misunderstand me, He takes the nobodies but He always prepares them before He uses them. I think many times we think that we can jump into sort of instant stardom, if you like, instant ministry without any sense of preparation. And that is not true, at least it's not my understanding of the Word of God.

I find invariably that the men that God uses, He puts through extreme pressures. He causes them to walk a lonely path. He places them in the paths of difficulty and obscurity and so on in order to bring about the purpose of God eventually in their life.

I stand with those that have already ministered in total agreement that we are entering into the time when God is going to have a prophetic church. I believe that for many, many years. I still believe that despite what others would say and despite all the pressure that we've gone through to the sort of the contrary of that.

But I don't believe that it will simply be just a prophetic church. I believe it will be a church, again, that will exemplify the five-fold ministry and one aspect of that church will be its prophetic nature, if you like. Now the Bible says that He gave to the church there in Ephesians 4 and He gave apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

And very sort of succinctly, the role of the apostle is to govern. The role of the prophet is to guide. The role of the evangelist is to gather.

The role of the teacher is to ground. And the role of the pastor is to guard. Those are the, that's the five-fold ministry sort of reduced down to its basic essence.

And I believe that when God restores the church, as He longs to restore it, it is going to have that sort of five-fold aspect to it. I believe not only will it have a prophetic voice to the nations and to the world, I believe it will have the compassion of the Good Shepherd. I believe it will have the care and compassion of going out into the highways and hedges and compelling men and women to come to Christ.

I believe it will also have the mantle of the teacher, where it says in the last days, He'll pour into the house of the Lord and say, come and teach us of His ways. And it won't be God Himself teaching in that sense, it will be the people of God teaching the ways and the principles of God's work. I believe it's going to have again the apostolic authority that is able to govern and establish, as Paul says, a wise master builder setting in order exactly that which God intended.

The reason we're emphasizing the prophetic at this particular stage is the fact that this is a time of restoration. This is a time, I believe, when God has already to a measure given us an understanding of the teacher. He's given us an understanding of the evangelist.

He's given us an understanding of the pastor. But the prophetic has been that which is, if you like, being laying dormant for many, many years. God is beginning now to bring it back and bring that particular office back into the church of Jesus Christ.

I think we also need to distinguish between the fact that there is a prophetic call that is a general call to the wider body of Christ, but then there is also the office of a prophet. Not everybody will aspire or not everybody will be called to that particular function. It's an office that you don't want to aspire to, let me assure you.

It's an office that is not popular. But I believe that this is a time again that God is restoring. I don't believe that we are going to have a glorious church unless we have the full restoration of that which God intended.

I think maybe the easiest way I can describe that to you is like building a house. If I were to set out to build a house, I'm going to need some basic ingredients. I'm going to need somebody that is good at, you know, laying the foundation, good with concrete.

I need another man that is able to do the framing, a carpenter of some sort. Then I need a man that's able to function in doing the cabinets. Somebody that knows about plumbing.

Somebody that is an electrician and so on. I need those various aspects, if you like, in order for that house to function properly. Now I can put a house together and drive you up to that house and from the outward appearance that house appears to have everything going for it.

Again, it's beautifully painted. The lawn's in place. The flowers are all in place and so on and so forth.

You think, boy, that would be my dream home. I would love to live in that sort of a house. And yet you go in and you plug in your refrigerator and there's no power.

You turn on the faucet and there's no water. Why? Because the electrician and the plumber have been missing. And I think in some ways we've been trying to establish the house of God minus two very important, if you like, instruments that God is seeking to raise up in this generation.

That role of the prophetic and that role of the apostle. And I believe that God right now is speaking and we are speaking. The Bible says that there is going to come a certain sound that we might rally, if you like, to battle.

I believe the certain sound right now, at least one of those sounds, is that God is wanting us to focus on the prophetic. That's what He's raising up at this particular time. And we need to be a part of that.

We need to be praying, whether you have a call to the prophetic office or not. I think your responsibility as the body of Christ is to begin to pray for these men that have ministered this week, for others around the nation that have already got a prophetic voice, that God would protect them, that God would mature them, that God would accomplish His purpose through them. You can be assured that they're men that are under attack.

Again, as David Parker was saying the other day, they've got a target painted on their back and on their front. They're marked men. The enemy is out to destroy them.

And I believe it's our responsibility, just as Paul says, pray also for me that utterance may be given. Here he was, a great statesman of God, and yet open to the fact that, listen, I need your prayers. I desperately need your prayers.

And we need your prayers. And I trust that you will pray for us. All right, now I guess by now you've found 1 Kings chapter 19.

I hope so anyway. Let me just paint you a little bit of a picture here, the latter part of this particular chapter. From verse 15 on, Elijah, the great prophet of God, is coming to the end of his ministry.

His task has not been an easy task. Again, the whole nation has stood against him. I think it was David Parker that said that, like the Apostle Paul, he had tremendous prophetic sort of revelation.

But the Bible also says he had to suffer more than any other man almost. And I believe that Elijah is that sort of an individual. Here he is, again, coming to the end of his ministry.

How long that ministry lasted, we don't know. It appears to be a relatively short time, maybe four or five, six years at the most. And here he is, he's coming to the end.

Everybody has been against him. Again, he represents basically a sort of a deposed deity. God has gone out of business, at least as far as the nation of Israel is concerned.

Baal is now the order of the day. Ahab, the wicked king, along with his wife Jezebel, have established Baal worship. It's rampant right throughout the nation.

Again, the tabernacle and so on, those things are being sort of basically closed down. The high places are once again being reinstated. There's sensuality and rebellion and open sin amongst the people.

The whole nation is in a place of basically spiritual bankruptcy. And here is a man that stands, again, representing the voice of God. And the people have rejected him.

The people have stoned him. Again, just about every other prophet was running for cover. Obadiah, you recall, had safely got something like a hundred of the prophets and found some caves and cellars around the nation and placed them there, feeding them.

Again, at fear, maybe for his own life. Jezebel had found some of them. She'd already destroyed them by the sword.

And here he is, he's a man that represents God, but he stands alone. Again, the pressures of the nation have been against him. He's been the one that they've ridiculed and blamed for all the problems in the nation.

Again, if there were newspapers in those days, he was the one that was the center of all the tabloids, if you want. This is the man that's caused us so much trouble. This is the man that has brought us into a place of economic ruin.

Again, you recall that God had judged the nation, not simply for annihilation, but for restoration. And most of God's judgments, again, are not simply to annihilate his people, but to get the attention of the nation. And we find that God has placed a famine on the land, again, prophesied by this prophet of God, Elijah.

He stands before Ahab, the king, a man that represented intense evil, a man that, again, the Bible says, did more evil than all the previous kings that were before him. And then he marries into this wicked line of Jezebel, a woman, again, of intense rebellion against the plans and the purposes of God, a woman, again, that erected towers to bail. The Bible tells us that out of possibly three to five million people in the nation of Israel, there are only 7,000 that have not bowed the knee to bail or kissed his feet.

And so he's not a very popular individual. Again, he's the troublemaker. He's a man, again, that knew intense pressure and depression.

He's a man that asked God to take his life, a man that faced suicide. He said, listen, God, I'd rather be out of this situation. Take my life.

He was so discouraged. The whole nation had turned against him. Every time that he spoke, again, they booed.

They wanted to have that loose living carnality. Again, it was rampant throughout the nation. Basically, the life can be summarized in the words of the Old Testament there.

Every man was doing that which was right in his own eyes. And here is a man that basically walks along. You see, I think we need to see that the office of a prophet is not a very glamorous position.

Now, I know some of us think, well, that was the Old Testament. You know, the New Testament, I see these men around the nation, see their picture in magazines and so on and so forth. I'd sure like to be like that.

The Bible says that just as they persecuted them in the Old Testament, they're going to persecute us in the New Testament as well. In fact, the last two prophets that we have there in Revelation were killed by the people. So excited were they at the fact that they had stoned the messengers of God, that they send gifts around the nation, from nation to nation, rejoicing in the fact that finally we have stamped out once and for all the voice of God.

Of course, God surprised them and raised them from the dead. You see, the office of a prophet, again, is not a very glamorous position. And I believe that we are going to face intense persecution.

I believe that. I believe that that will not only happen in the other nations. It's so easy to think, well, I can believe that in, you know, Poland or somewhere behind the bamboo curtain, the iron curtain and so on.

But, you know, it'll never happen here in America. Don't be too surprised. Possibly this nation will face it like no other nation.

We're already beginning to see with things like abortion and so on and so forth that we are the ones now that are wrong. We don't understand whether despise rejected ones. But let voices be raised up with a prophetic utterance and the mind of the Spirit of God and you'll have everybody against you.

And so God says to Elijah, Elijah, it's time for you to pass the baton. It's time for you to give your mantle to another. It's time for you to confer again your ministry, your office under somebody else.

And so he's told by God to go and to anoint a successor. And what I want to do now is look at the, if you like, the preparation. Here is a man that knows what his successor is getting into.

Here is a man that realizes that his replacement, if you like, is going to walk in the same steps that he had to walk in. He's going to be rejected by the people. He's going to be accused and ridiculed and blamed and possibly even killed again for the fact that he represents God and the ways of God and the purpose of God.

You see, the prophetic office basically is that of calling back. It's a voice of recovery. It's directing the people back into the ways of God.

It's saying, listen, you've forsaken the ways of God. Come back into line with God's purpose. And most people don't want to do that.

They want to do their own thing. They want to go their own way. They want to have a measure of spirituality but a measure of carnality.

They don't want to separate themselves totally. And they say this message is too hard. We don't want it.

We don't want to hear that. I want to sort of have my cake and eat it too. I want to be assured of eternity but I want to have all the pleasures of sin for this season that I'm living in.

And the prophetic voice basically calls the nation back, back to purity, back to holiness, back to integrity, back to the purpose of God and the plan of God. It's a man that's inflamed, again, with a passion for God. He understands God's ultimate goal and intention.

And he's saying, listen, this is what God has for you. It's like David. One of my favorite verses there in Acts chapter 13 and verse 36.

David served the purpose of God in his generation. The prophetic mind or the prophetic voice is an understanding of what God's purpose is for every single generation. And it says to the church of Jesus Christ, this is the way walking in it.

And Elijah says, I know what this young man's going to be in for. I know the pressures that I've faced. I know all the things that have come against me.

He's going to have to contend with Jezebel. He's going to have to contend with Ahab. He's going to have to contend with all the prophets of Baal.

There's going to be extreme pressure. He's going to be rejected and despised. And as a result, he realizes that this man that is going to follow me has to be a man of spirituality.

He has to be a man of maturity. He has to be a man of commitment. He has to be a man that knows and understands the mind and the purpose of God.

This is not the role for a novice. This is not the role for some young man that wants to make it into sort of instant stardom. You see, this was not an invitation to stardom.

It was an invitation to martyrdom. This was not an invitation to get your picture on Charisma magazine. This was an invitation to get your picture on a wanted poster, dead or alive, preferably dead.

It was not a popular role that he was being called to. Elijah understands that. And I'm sure for a period of time, he thinks through.

Maybe he begins to pray. Maybe he begins to intercede and says, God, listen, prepare this man. He's going to stand alone representing your cause.

He had to be a man that had the fear of God under him. They had to be a man again that had the fear of man released from him. I think so often the fear of man grips us.

You see, in the Old Testament, there were not only false prophets, but there were dozens and dozens of prophets that were not necessarily false. They just played to what the people wanted to hear. Peace, peace when there is no peace.

You know, we'll prophesy good things. You've got itching ears, we'll tickle them for you. Oh, they weren't prophesying worship bail.

They weren't prophesying going after this God or that God. They were just simply catering to the wishes and the fancies of the people. And Elijah says, listen, I don't want a replacement like that.

I want a man that represents the voice and the mind of the purpose of God. I want a man that is consumed with the fear of God, that is released absolutely totally from the fear of man. But no matter what sort of circumstance he gets into, he's not going to compromise his message.

He's going to declare with certainty, thus saith the Lord. And so he goes in verse 19. It says he departed from there and he found Elisha.

And here is Elisha. He's out in the field. He's plowing.

The Bible says that he was plowing with 12 pairs of oxen. I think the King James says that 12 oxen. But anyway, 12 pair of oxen.

And Elijah goes along and he throws his mantle upon him. You know, I've tried to envision, I've mused and meditated on this. I've tried to see myself in that particular position or observing that particular incident and wondered what it must be like.

You know, that mantle suddenly came upon him. Maybe he crept up behind him. I don't know.

Maybe he was busy fixing one of the plows. And all of a sudden, this mantle comes upon him. And maybe suddenly there was a tremendous sense of the power of God that flowed and coursed through every fiber of his being.

Maybe suddenly the eyes of his understanding were open for the first time. And he saw angels ascending and descending. He saw the whole supernatural realm.

You see, this mantle represented the office of the prophet. Again, it was comparable to Moses with his rod. It represented his office.

And suddenly that office for a moment is conferred upon this young man. Maybe there was an instant sense of divine authority. I don't know what he felt like, but I'm sure it was different than any other thing that he'd ever felt in his life.

Suddenly the Spirit of God consumed him. Suddenly he became alive. Again, maybe his ears were open to the voice of God.

His eyes were open to the things of the Spirit. He saw the eternal instead of the natural. And immediately he runs after this man.

Let me say this. He had tasted, but he had not yet been tested. He had tasted, but he had not yet been tested.

You see, some of you have tasted, but you've not yet been tested. I believe it's Paul Cain that has said so many times, I don't know about this conference, but he said it so many times before, that God will give us a taste of God in order to give us a taste for God. And there are times, and thank God for it, there are seasons when God will allow us to have, if you like, the mantle briefly for a moment, maybe in a meeting like this.

Maybe tonight when Paul is ministering and a cripple gets up out of a wheelchair, somebody's eyes are open to whatever it is, and suddenly in a sense you see the potential. You taste something of the mantle of authority, and yet it's only a taste. And then there is a testing process.

And most of us, I think, maybe some of us aren't aware, of all that Paul Cain and others have gone through in order to really hold that mantle. The years of privation and separation, the years of misunderstanding, the years of loneliness, the hours and hours and hours and hours in the presence of God, waiting on God, the sacrificial life that he lives, and so on and so forth. And most of us say, listen, I want to taste it and I want to go on, as though somehow the prophetic office is something of a spiritual bliss, some sort of spiritual immunity against problems.

Let me assure you that the prophetic office, like any other role in ministry, comes with a multitude of problems, a multitude of pressures. It's not a deliverance from pressure or from problems, it's the doorway into those problems. See, most of us don't understand that.

We don't understand what we're aspiring to. We don't understand what it's going to cost us. I believe, again, Elijah is looking at this young man and he says, if you only knew.

As he runs eagerly after him, as he begins to forsake everything and say, listen, I'm with you. You see, Elijah is determined to test this young man. Oh, he's tasted all right.

He's had that moment of revelation, that sense of authority, that sense of power, maybe words of knowledge or whatever it is. I can imagine all of those things just going through him as that mantle came to rest upon him. The very power of God consumes him.

I say, boy, I love this. This is what I want. I'll do anything to get that.

Elijah says, okay, I'm going to test you now. You see, I believe God tests every single man or woman that He uses. I believe there is a process that may vary, but nevertheless, there is a process that God takes us through.

I've said so many times before, there is a vast difference between the call of God and the commission of God. Between the call and the commission, there is always preparation. God called the disciples, that Jesus called the disciples at the beginning of His ministry, where there was a very definite call, a very clear call, forsake all that you have.

Come after me, I will make you fishers of men. But it was three and a half years later when the commission came, go now into all the world, preach the gospel. And between the commission and the call, there were three and a half years of preparation.

And God will never let us get by without the preparation. And it may vary depending on the anointing and the ministry that God has for you. My father has always said, you cannot shorten the process of maturity, but you can prolong it.

You see, there are no shortcuts in the spiritual life. You can prolong it. The children of Israel prolonged what God intended to be just a matter of maybe a couple of months at the most.

They prolonged it for 40 years because of their rebellion. We can so easily delay God's process in our life, but we cannot speed it up. There is no way to instant maturity.

There's no way to just go from tasting to instant ministry, so to speak. And Elijah looks at this young man and he says, okay, if you mean business, I'm going to test you. And notice what he begins with in verse 20.

And he left the oxen and the man ran after Elijah and said, please let me kiss my father, my mother, and then I'll follow you. And he said to him, go back again. Tremendous words of encouragement.

Here is his spiritual mentor. Here is a man that possibly has heard about for a number of years. Here is a man that secretly is admired.

He's been afraid to voice it lest he gets stoned or lest he get ridiculed. But deep down in his heart, he's heard of all the exploits of this great prophet. He's dreamed of the day in which maybe he would enter into that particular realm.

And here are the verse words that he hears out of the mouth of this man. Get lost, kid. Beat it.

Go back. Tremendous words of encouragement. A seasoned man of God wanting to minister to this young man.

And he says, get lost. Go back. In other words, he says, listen, don't be fooled by some sort of sudden rush of emotion, some sudden touch of power.

He says, sit down, son. Count the cost because it's going to cost you every single thing. Don't be hasty in your decision.

He's not really trying to discourage him. He's trying to test him to see again, if you like, the test of dedication. How much are you committed? How much are you dedicated? How easily do you get discouraged? Are you really determined? Then get back.

Go back. He's wanting to test, if you like, the spiritual tenacity of this young man. How determined really is he? But he's also wanting him to sit down and count the cost.

See, most of us have never counted the cost. What it's going to cost you to serve Jesus Christ. See, I'm convinced that God is going to take from this nation and other nations.

He's going to take seed and He's going to scatter it. Maybe some of you, it's going to mean the rest of your life in another nation, another culture. Have you counted the cost? You see, we've got such a strange mentality of ministry these days.

You open some glossy sort of spiritual magazine and you see all God's sort of superstars, so-called. You know, with their beautiful hair all in place, their gold chains, Rolex watches, silk shirts, alligator shoes and so on. And I see them speaking this conference and then two months later this conference and so on and so forth.

And somehow there's something within us that says, boy, I want that stardom. I want to be in that place of popularity, the adulation of men and so on. It's not like that.

Chances are that's a bad sign. Woe unto you when they speak well of you. See, I believe God is going to raise up a prophetic voice that is not going to have the same popularity because it's a calling back to the purpose of God.

It's a preaching again of the cross of Jesus Christ. It's bringing back again discipleship in the right sense of that word. And it's going to grate on us.

It's not going to fit very well. It's going to mean that we've got to sit down and really count the cost. Paul says, I am crucified the world.

The world is crucified unto me. We don't like that message. We want a message of popularity.

You know, Paul says to Timothy there in 2 Timothy is that he says, if any man aspire to the office of a bishop. I remember looking that word up one time and reading on it and pulled down William Barclay. I don't recommend him for some things.

Some of you are aware of him. He's the guy that just can't handle the miracles. He explains the story of the feeding of the 5,000.

But what really happened, and I thought you'd like to know this, is that really everybody brought their lunch. But the problem was they didn't know everybody else had had their own. They thought they were the only ones.

And then when Jesus asked how many had, you know, some lunch, they thought, well, if I say that I've got lunch, I'm going to have to share it with the guy on the left and the guy on the right and so on and so forth. But there was a little boy that was oblivious to all of this. And he says, I've got some.

And then everybody felt embarrassed and they pulled out theirs. That's basically what William Barclay says. He's dead now and knows better.

But anyway. But one of the things he, he does say concerning this particular verse, and I believe it was William Barclay. Give him credit where credit is due.

He says, Paul was saying here, if any man aspire to the office of a bishop, he aspires to a good work. And notice what he wasn't saying. He wasn't saying if any man aspires to a title, to a position, he's aspiring really to a work.

If any man aspires to the office of a bishop, what he's really aspiring to is a good work. And what William Barclay says is we need to interpret that in light of when Paul spoke it. It was a day again, like it was here in the Old Testament, where the church again was a despised minority.

Again, where the Jews and everybody else was against them, when it was not an unpopular thing. If you like, if we put it in the context of 10, 15 years ago in the Soviet Union, it was like saying if any man aspire to the, to the leader of a house group, an underground movement there in the Soviet Union, you aspire to a good work. They say, forget it.

I'm not going to have people coming to my house, knocking on the door in over a period of five or six hours in order to get there so nobody will find out. But what if somebody does? Guess who's going to be the first to be arrested? Me. You know, that's really what Paul is saying in the context.

Again, it's just a matter of years later when Polycarp, one of those bishops, was martyred for his faith. Why? Because he refused to bow the knee and acknowledge that Caesar was Lord. See, I think we've got a totally distorted view of what it's going to mean in the last days to be servants and followers of Jesus Christ.

Micah said so much over the time that I've been here, the wheat and the tares are going to mature together. And I rejoice and trust that I'll be part of the maturity of the wheat. But you think of the maturity of evil and hatred and so on that we're going to have to contend with.

It's only those that mature that will be able to contend with those that are maturing on the opposite side, if you like. Again, woe to the carnal Christian in the last days. The love of many, what, will wax cold.

Why? Because of the maturity of evil, because of the intense pressure that will be hurled against the church of Jesus Christ. So there's a test, first of all, of his dedication. Secondly, there's the test of his possessions.

You see, it says that he was willing to forsake everything. It appears, and I don't want to add to this, but I've tried to interpret this as I've mused on it, and I enjoy meditating on the Word of God, that this man had a tremendous amount to give up. Why do I say that? Because it appears that this incident happened at the end of three years of famine.

It happens right on the heels of that. And the Bible tells us during those three years of But again, the nation, the economic condition of the nation was in ruin. In fact, the Bible tells us that Ahab had sent Obadiah to crisscross the nation looking for some valley somewhere that had a spring remaining in it, in order that his cattle would not have to be destroyed.

Read about that in the previous chapter. That was the condition of the nation. There was hardly anything left, hardly a blade of grass in the place.

People had had to, in order to survive, they'd had to kill their livestock. First of all, there was nothing to feed them on. There'd be no rain, therefore there was no grass.

And those that had cattle had had to kill them in order to survive themselves. And yet here is an individual that he's out in the field with 12 pair of oxen after three years of famine. In other words, he's a pretty wealthy man.

At least he is in my book. Not just one or two oxen, but 12 pair, 24 oxen he still has. Not only that, but it appears again from the context here that he said, let me go back and kiss my father and my mother.

It doesn't mention anything about brother and sister. I would presume that he'd have said, listen, let me go back and say goodbye to my family. So it would appear again that possibly this man was an only child.

And if he was an only child, then obviously he was heir to the throne, so to speak. The full inheritance was his. Maybe he'd already got it.

Maybe the land that he was plowing was already his land. Maybe his mother and father were retired. But he's a man that again had tremendous possessions.

And the test is, am I willing to forsake everything? Am I willing to forsake father, mother, brother, sister? See, so easy to say that, isn't it? It's another thing when it comes to doing it. I look back over the years in my own life, 21 years of age, standing with my wife and a little baby three months old in New York City in the harbor, standing on a, not a trawler, but a freighter on my way to New Zealand, 30 days by sea, saying goodbye to my mother and father and honestly believing I would never see them again. But deep in my heart, counting the cost and say, I'm saying goodbye.

Why? Because the call of God on my life. Remember years in New Guinea of thinking maybe I'll never see them again. A cost involved.

You see, so often we put things first, don't we? The Bible says we've got to deny ourselves, give up every single thing. My wife and I came back to this country a little over two years ago. Three years ago almost I, a little over three years ago, three years ago January, I resigned from a, possibly the largest Pentecostal

church in New Zealand.

I was on the staff there for 15 years, had a beautiful home and very secure, everything going for me in the natural, good position, good people and yet there was a stirring, there was a restlessness, there was a sense of God's call, a sense of God's destiny and I battled with that. I'm embarrassed to say for about three years, not simply over a matter of weeks or months, but about three or four years until finally I said, okay, I'm willing to forsake everything that I have. I was convinced I'd be in that country for many more years and I remember telling them on the staff and the senior pastor that I worked with and others, you know that we were going and the first question, well what about the children? We have three girls.

Our oldest is 24 and then 21 and 14. Two of them were in college, one of them still in school and I remember within a period of one week, five ministers saying to me, I could never do that. You know, I'm well, well, well, you know, I know God's called me to here or God's called me to there, but you know, we're going to wait until the children graduate from school.

We're going to wait till the children graduate from college. We're going to wait till and it was always the children first and I remember thinking at the time and even saddened in my spirit as I thought, you know, who gave them the right as ministers of the gospel to sort of rewrite the terms of discipleship and see we've got all sorts of terms, don't we? Lord, I'll do this after I do that or after I do this. Yet the Bible says we've got to be willing to forsake father, mother, brother, sister.

You see, I believe that when God calls you, He takes care of all the other problems or all the other needs. I came to this country, settled in Dallas, not having a single open door and I see, I've seen my children grow spiritually. One daughter just graduate from Bible school, gets married a week today.

Another one just graduates at the end of the summer and longing to go to China, wants to study Mandarin and so on and I look back, I say, God, I'll serve you because you take care of all the details. I'm not going to put my children before you and here is a man again, he's willing. The test of his possessions, am I willing to give them up? You see, he says, let me go and kiss my father and my mother goodbye.

You see, I see in that again, not a young man that's rebellious, not a young man that's wanting to, you know, he can't get alone, he can't get along rather, he can't submit to authority. He's anxious to get away from under the restraints of his parents. He's glad to be able to sort of thumb the nose, walk out and say, I'm going to follow the Lord.

I don't see that sort of an attitude. I see a young man again, in total security, a young man that goes and says, listen, let me kiss my mother and my father, a term of affection, not rebellion. Again, this man's got everything going for him.

He's got his own land. He's got tremendous security. He's got wealth and so on and so forth.

And the test is, are you willing to forsake everything in order to attain to that which you want to attain to? You see, most of us really fail, I think, on that particular point. Can I honestly say goodbye to everything that I've got? I know one of the things that God has dealt with us on time after time is the fact that you're willing to sell all that you have. And I can say before God, I've done that numerous times, moved from place to place to place.

God has blessed, but I hold them very lightly. I say, God, anytime you want to move, I'm willing to go. See, one of the reasons that the nation of Israel failed to enter into the promised land, when it came down to

standing on the threshold of going in to possess the land, the one thing they put first were their children.

They said, if we go in, our children will be consumed. If we go in, the giants will devour them. And instead, God let that entire generation, maybe three million people, die in the wilderness and raised up their children to go in where they should have gone in.

See, the Bible says we've got to be willing to forsake all that we have, all that we have, in order to follow the Lord. The third thing, a testing of his position or his motivation, if you like. Here he was, a man in authority, seemingly in control of this estate, whatever he had.

Yet at the same time, I see a submissiveness in this man. I see the very fact that he comes to the prophet of God and he says to him, please allow me, permit me. There is something there of submissiveness in his spirit.

Can I have permission? I recognize your authority. I recognize your leadership. Can I have permission to go back? Can I have permission to kiss my mother and my father goodbye? I think also the kiss is not only a kiss of affection, it's a kiss of submission, a recognition of mother and father.

You see, we have no right telling other people how to live and so on and so forth, unless first of all our own house is in order, so to speak. Unless there is a recognition and respect for a mother and father. Unless we know what it is to submit.

Unless there is a submissiveness in our own spirit. And then he says, after I've done that, I'll come and I'll follow you. Mark those words, I will follow.

Let me say this, none of us in this room are called to leadership. Let me say that again, none of us in this room are called to leadership. The position has already been filled.

We're called to follow. We're called to follow. These are they, it says in Revelation, that what? That follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth.

Jesus said, take up your cross and follow. Paul says, be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ. I am a follower.

The leadership position has already been closed. Jesus Christ is the head of the church. He's not wanting another head.

It's not some sort of two-headed monster, but it's so hard, isn't it, to follow? You see, you can't follow unless there's submission. Unless there is a submissiveness in your spirit. I think too many have got their own bright ideas.

What I'll do, I'll do this, and I'll do that, and so on and so forth. And God is looking again for those that will follow. Jesus said, take my yoke upon you and learn of me.

You see, the yoke was the thing that controlled the oxen. The yoke was placed, again, many times when there was a breaking in of an ox. They would yoke it together with an older oxen, one that had already been trained, and he'd be yoked to him.

He could only go at the same speed. He had to turn when the other oxen turned, and so on and so forth. There was a breaking, so to speak, of the spirit of that ox.

And Jesus said, listen, I want you to be yoked together with me. I want you to turn when I turn. I want you to go here and go there.

I want you to be coupled together with me. I want you to be under my divine control. I don't want, as we heard, whoever it was, just the other day, talking about all these loose cannons running here and there and everywhere.

Again, somehow they've got themselves in a position of leadership, and they've got the answers. I'll do this, and I'll do that. God is not looking for that sort of individual.

He's looking for those, again, that fall on the face and say, God, what do you want me to do? Lord, what is your intention? What are your plans? What is your purpose? I want to know your mind. I love it in the life of Moses. Every time he comes up against a situation that he's unable to handle, he falls on his face before God.

He pictures the tent outside the camp, and he waits on God for an answer. David, his life is sort of summarized with one little statement. David, inquire to the Lord.

David, inquire to the Lord. David, inquire to the Lord. Should I do this? Should I do that? Should I go to battle right now? How should I do it? You see, there are followers.

These are they that follow the Lamb, a submissive spirit. You see, our ministry begins and ends in servanthood. You see, servanthood is not simply the beginning.

It's also the ending. It's a servant spirit. Let me share with you in a verse that came as somewhat of a surprise to me in Luke chapter 12.

You don't need to turn to it. I'll read it to you. Luke 12 and verse 35 down to verse 37.

Be dressed in readiness and keep your lamps alight and be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast. And notice he's talking about those individuals are waiting for the master. The master obviously being the Lord Jesus Christ.

So that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves when the master or whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will gird himself to serve and have them recline at table and will come up and wait on them.

Interesting verse because we see the Lord Jesus Christ continuing the ministry of a servanthood, if you like, throughout eternity. Here is the master when he comes again. Oh we know the master in the New Testament.

We know him laying aside his garments, bowing down and getting on his knees before his disciples, washing their feet. But then we think, yes but he humbled himself and then God highly exalted him. Gave him a name that is above every name.

Now he sits on a throne. He's no longer a servant. Yes he is.

It says that when he comes again and you open the door, the first thing he's going to do, he's going to gird himself and he's going to serve you. How humiliating. Can you imagine that one aspect of eternity is not simply us bowing in adoration before the throne of God, before the blazing majesty of God.

But it's God himself, if you like, stripping himself, bowing down at your feet, serving you. You see it's not something he put on just for a brief period of time and said, well now I'm over with that. That's not really a part of my nature and my character.

It was just something that I assumed for a brief moment of time. No it's the very spirit of God. You see there is a cost.

Most of us want people to serve us. Jesus said I didn't come to be ministered unto. I came to minister.

I came to serve. I didn't come to stand and receive the applause of men. I didn't come to again have my picture blazed around the nation and so on and so forth.

I'm not interested in any of that. I've come to do the master's will. And he says I do only do the things the father tells me to do.

I'd only do the things I see the father doing. And I see the father serving. And that's why I serve.

Because I've come to reveal the father to you. If you've seen me, you've seen the father. God is a servant.

So we find him again with a submissive spirit. A willingness again to lay everything down. Even the very angels of God before the throne of right now have one thing in common.

Ministering spirits. Ministering spirits. Thy will be done on earth as what? As it is in heaven.

All of heaven operates in servanthood. The only problem they ever had in heaven was when one angel decided listen I don't want to be a servant anymore. I don't want to be submissive anymore.

I don't want to minister anymore. I want to be ministered unto. I want a position.

I want the authority and the adulation. Everything else that goes with that. I want to take my throne.

Raise it above the throne of God. And God says that's not the attitude we have around here. Get out.

I think some of us tend to think well you know somehow I can you know I can get by. Maybe there are exceptions to the rule. There are no exceptions.

The fourth thing is the testing of his determination. The testing of his determination. You see it's one thing to begin.

It's another thing to end as you well know. It's one thing to start on your spiritual pilgrimage. It's another thing to finish it.

Paul says I'm determined to finish the course. I've run the race. I've finished the course.

I believe Paul was constantly gripped with a sense of knowing that he could sort of short circuit the purpose of God. He says I buffet my body. I make it my slave lest when I preach to others I myself should fail to enter in.

And so there's a testing of his determination. Elijah again testing Elisha now. How determined are you? How much do you really want this mantle? How much you really want this office? How much you really want this authority? How much you really want this ministry? Are you prepared to go all the way in order to

get it? And so he begins.

We go over into 2nd Kings. Pick up the story. 2nd Kings chapter 2. Verse 1 it says it came about when the Lord was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

And Elijah said to Elisha, verse 2, tarry here or stay here. Tarry here. You know this, this is not a very sort of encouraging message at least as I read it.

You know beat it kid. Go back. In fact remember when he said listen go back again there in 1 Kings chapter 19 because he says for what have I done to you? For what have I done to you? In other words Elijah is saying to Elisha, Elisha if you are simply following me because of something I've done, forget it.

You need to know the call of God upon your life. You need to know for a fact that God himself is calling you. I don't want somebody simply following me.

I want somebody who is a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm not going to be around forever. What have I done to you? Is it simply something that man has done to you? Or is this a call of God upon your life? You see I think so often we adulate man.

We look at man. We say boy I'd love to be like this. I'd love to follow Paul Cain.

I'd love to follow this individual. I'd love to follow that individual and so on. And God is saying listen is it something they've done to you or is it the call of God that I've placed on your life? But he says here again now more or less the same words.

Why don't you just stay here? Tarry here. You see most of us take that as a command rather than a test. Let me say that again.

Most of us take that as a command rather than a test. Here is the man of God. I want you to stay here.

Yes sir. Whatever you say. In other words it is a test.

Remember in the case of Ruth and Naomi says listen go back. Your sister's gone back. Why don't you go back? It's far better back there for you.

Again you're in your own culture, your own language and so on and so forth. Why don't you return? Return from following me. We see Ruth rising up and say whither thou goest I will go.

You know I'm going to follow you. Where you die I will die. Your people be my people.

My God. Your God will be my God. Oh I'm not going to settle.

I'm not going to miss out on what God has for me. It may be all right for Oprah but I'm not going to stay. I'm going to follow you.

If you are going to be one that is going to carry the holy vessels of God. And she says no go back. Go back.

Go back. Quit clinging to me. And I think we've got the same here.

Terry. He says oh no. You see it's so easy isn't it to settle down.

I think one of the major sins if you like of the church is that we are at ease in Zion. We found a place of comfort and we are prepared to settle there. And we somehow think that God is saying listen Terry here.

And we say yes sir. And really it's a test. It's a test to see Lord I'm not going to settle where I am.

I'm going to follow you. I don't care what it costs me. I'm going to take up my cross.

It may mean misunderstanding and so on and so forth. It may mean hardship. But Lord I'm going all the way with you.

And you say no Terry. Terry. Terry.

And some of us think again it's a command. One of the things that God finally got my attention through when I was in New Zealand was Jeremiah verse or chapter 48 verse 11. Simply says this Moab has been at ease from his youth.

He has settled on his lease. He's been he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel. Therefore his aroma remains.

And I did a little bit of research on that. And obviously it talks about the making of wine. And I may have shared this at one of the other conferences.

But in the making of wine you first of all crush the grapes. They were normally crushed by somebody standing on them as they are in some places in France today. And then they would take the juice and they would pour it into a vessel.

And they would allow for a period of time that vessel just to sit there. And all the leaves the leaves being the the flesh and the pith and the the seeds and everything else would gradually settle down to the bottom of that vessel. And then if it was good wine they would take it and very carefully pour it into another vessel.

Making sure as much as possible that none of the leaves that had settled to the bottom gotten passed into the other vessel. And then they would allow again a process whereby that would settle. And over a period of time all the smaller particles would filter down to the bottom.

And then they would empty it again. And the best wine was that which was filtered out. Because the leaves the flesh if you like if it was allowed to remain in there it would change the aroma of the wine.

It was considered poor wine cheap wine. It had not gone through the process of maturity. And I think many times as Christians we're guilty of that.

We're guilty of tarrying so long that somehow we've got a certain aroma to us. I'm meeting the Christians all over the world. And you know within a matter of time you can almost tell what sort of aroma they have.

This particular denomination, that particular denomination, so on and so forth. The way they speak, maybe the way they dress, the way they act or whatever. And so on.

And I believe God right now is in the process of emptying vessels from vessel to vessel. Now don't misunderstand that. Don't take that as some sort of command.

I've got to get out of where I am and so on and so forth. That can happen in your spirit. And God began to say to me, listen you've settled.

You've got a certain aroma. And I want to get rid of that aroma. I want to purify that and empty from vessel to vessel.

Okay he begins at Gilgal. Notice it says in verse one, he went with Elisha from Gilgal. I have in the side of my margin in my Bible a map that I've drawn of this particular journey.

Look it up sometime. It's an interesting journey. It seems to go up and then right back to where they started from almost.

They seem to go basically in a circle. And there doesn't seem to be any apparent reason why Elijah the prophet makes this particular journey. In other words, every time he stops somewhere he doesn't perform any particular function.

He doesn't say I've got to go to Gilgal because I've got a conference and you might as well come along. He doesn't say I've got to go to Jericho because you know there's a bunch of people there and they want me to offer some sacrifices and so on. You know he doesn't seem to have any sort of sense of God saying you've got to do something in each of these places.

And I've studied this and I've looked at it and I pondered on it and I thought well listen there's a reason behind this. As Paul Cain said last night, there's something about the Word of God, the sort of layers if you like, that you can pull off those layers and try and come to a greater understanding of what God is saying. And I believe that this is all part of the process of maturing that God wants Elisha to go through.

Here is this seasoned prophet of God that knows exactly the things that this man is going to have to contend with, the pressures he's going to have to face, the ridicule, the abuse from Ahab and Jezebel and all the other people in the nation. And he says listen I'm going to prepare you. First of all you've got to have determination.

Are you going to settle here? Are you going to listen to the voice of man? Or do you know that it's the Spirit of God saying go on? Do you have that sort of determination to go all the way? And they begin at Gilgal. Now some of you may know what Gilgal is. Gilgal was the very first place the nation of Israel stopped when they came out of the wilderness.

When they parted again the River Jordan and they came over and they camped and their first base of operation before they did anything else was at Gilgal. And it's very significant, very important. In other words if the nation of Israel had failed to camp at Gilgal, gone immediately to Jericho, Jericho would still be standing today.

Now we can prove that from the scriptures. Because all the covenants that God gave to the nation of Israel were based on the fact that every male had to be circumcised. That was the covenant agreement.

And here was a generation that had never gone, if you like, never had the knife applied to their life. They were an uncircumcised company of people. Therefore God legitimately could break the covenant.

And so they came to Gilgal and it was at Gilgal where they were circumcised. And the Bible says the reproach of Egypt was taken away from them. They were marked, if you like, branded in their flesh by God

as being distinct and separated, unique in the eyes of every other man.

And I believe that what God is saying to this young prophet is this, Elisha you have got to have your Gilgal experience. I don't know how long they stayed there. The Bible doesn't say whether it's a matter of half an hour, two hours, three hours, whether it's a matter of a week or a couple of days or whatever.

But I can see them sitting there and maybe this great prophet of God, this man of God, going over the history for the sake of this young man and saying, listen you realize what Gilgal represents? Gilgal represents the place of separation. Gilgal represents the place where God places the knife in your affections. He removes all the desires of Egypt out of your heart.

He calls you as his own. He brands you as his own. He puts his name upon you, so to speak.

And Elisha, if you are ever going to make it, you're going to have to receive that knife too. It says they were so pained there in the natural. Again, following the Lord is not simply something that immunizes us from pain.

When God begins to slice away, if you like, at the affections that are wrong, the areas in your life that are wrong, the reproach of Egypt that he wants to take away, the love of the world and the flesh and all those other things, it's a painful process. But he says, listen if you are going to make it, you've got to have the knife applied to you. You've got to have your own Gilgal experience.

See the Bible says, Paul writing to Timothy, let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity. Isaiah says, be clean you that bear the vessels of the Lord. In other words, if you are going to be one that is going to carry the holy vessels of God, he says one requirement is that you are clean.

Be clean you that bear the vessels of the Lord. I believe one of the things that God is doing right now, we're in a time of transition around the nation. It's a time when God is shaking everything that can be shaken.

It's a time when he's taking out the flint knife, so to speak, and he's circumcising once again the nation, if you like, the church of Jesus Christ. He's wanting to take away the reproach of Egypt from us. He's wanting us to be marked again with his stamp, so to speak, where we are unique, we're different than anybody else.

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