

Blessings From Bones

by Denis Lyle

The sermon 'Blessings From Bones' teaches us that even after a man of God dies, his influence can still be felt and his legacy can continue to inspire others, as seen in the miracle of Elisha's bones.

Scripture: Numbers 23:10, 2 Kings 13:21, Psalm 118:8, John 14:19, Ephesians 1:19, Philippians 3:21, 1 Thessalonians 4:17, Hebrews 11:4

Topics: "Godly Legacy", "Divine Sovereignty"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches on the blessings that can come from the bones of a man of God, using the story of Elisha's death and the miraculous revival of a dead man who touched Elisha's bones. The sermon emphasizes that even after a man of God dies, the sovereign God is still living, offering victory in the present and glory in the future. It also highlights how a man of God's influence can continue to abide and produce blessings long after their death, showcasing the power of God's work through His servants.

Transcript

2 Kings 13: 14-25 BLESSINGS FROM BONES Back in the eighteenth century the Methodist leader John Wesley said that one of the great testimonials to the truth of his message and the calibre of his work was the fact, as he put it "our people die well". Elisha lay dying from an unnamed terminal illness. He was about to go to home to God by a somewhat less royal route than that taken by Elijah. Elijah was "raptured", to heaven by special limousine... a fiery chariot. He thus stands as a type of all those who will be alive in Christ at the Rapture.

For they will "caught up... to meet the Lord in the air". (1 Thes 4:17) Elisha, however went home by the more ordinary route reserved for all generations of believers but the last one: the way of physical disintegration and death. Elijah's termination on earth was one of pomp and glory. The description of Elisha's funeral service suggests an economy of words. We read, "And Elisha died and they buried him". (13:20) Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us that they had a magnificent funeral for this man of God.

But the Word of God is silent regarding this. It simply says, "And Elisha died and they buried him". They didn't cremate him, something which is never favoured in Scripture. They buried him. My, the voice that had so often stirred the heart of the nation was silent: the hands that many a time had proved so strong in the hour of need were hanging down in great stillness: the form that for many a year had been so familiar in Israel waxed old and vanished out of sight. " And Elisha died and they buried him".

They carefully placed his corpse in a tomb with an open entrance. In time the body decomposed leaving just bones, perhaps with a few tattered remnants of leather and cloth to signify that it had once been the body of God's servant Elisha. Then a seemingly chance occurrence took place. Some Israelites were burying the body of an Israelite in the vicinity of Elisha's tomb. Suddenly as they drew near the burying ground, the alarm was raised that the Moabites were upon them. With trembling haste the men of Israel made for the nearest grave they could find, and ended up unceremoniously dumping the body of their friend in Elisha's tomb.

Sad development for them, but a terrific idea for their deceased friend! For at a time when you would think that nothing of Elisha's influence remained, they all found out that this was far from the case. A touch from the bones of Elisha was enough to revive the Israelite and he came back from the dead. He stepped out of the tomb and presumably evaded the Moabite raiders also, since he lived long enough to tell the story! Now while with John Calvin we can have no truck with superstition regarding the relics of dead saints, yet it does appear that there are some men and women God loves to own and to be identified with even long after their deaths.

This is what one commentator calls, "Post-mortem corroboration of his undying influence". This is what the Bible calls "He being dead yet speaketh". (Heb 11:4) For the results of Elisha's death were far reaching. My, as we focus on Elisha's death there are three assertions I want to make. (1) **A MAN OF GOD DIES BUT HIS SOVEREIGN IS STILL LIVING** Was this not the significance of this remarkable incident My, this miracle conveyed the assurance that although Elisha was dead, the God of Elisha still lived.

And that message was greatly needed in this dark hour in Israel's history. The poor Israelites were in terrible straits. The Syrians were oppressing them. (13:22) and the Moabites were worrying them (13:20) and no doubt over and over they had sighed, " Oh, for Elisha! Oh, that Elisha were only alive again But he is dead: we shall see him no more. There is no help, no hope". But My, Elisha's bones said to them, " I, Elisha, am dead, but God lives. He, your only refuge and strength, never dies: it is His power, not mine, that helps you.

Look to Him, trust in Him, and all will yet be well." What a message of encouragement this was, for a people plagued with discouragement. God is still living. He is still Present: still Powerful: still Faithful (13:19) My, the Servant may die, but the Sovereign still lives. God is Alive to give us: (a) **VICTORY IN THE PRESENT**: How Israel needed to learn this lesson well. You see when Elisha died hopes died with him. (13:14) The security of the nation had depended on his work.

The people had been trusting in a human leader and when he had been removed they suffered defeat at the hands of their enemies. (13:20) My, this miracle occurred to show that although the prophet of God was dead, the God of the prophet was very much alive. This miracle was God's doing and proclaimed the fact of His Unchanging might! My, Elisha's God still lives today! God is still **ALIVE**! His Presence is not Departed: His Power is not Diminished: His Promise is not Destroyed (13:19 25, Matt 16:16) God is Alive and Able to intervene in the affairs of His people, bringing victory where there is defeat, and liberty where there is bondage.

My, like Israel have you got your eyes on the prophet of God instead of the God of the prophet Have you been taken up with the Servant instead of the Sovereign And when the Servant has died have your hopes died with him Listen to the Word of God, "It is better to trust the Lord than to put confidence in man". (Ps 118:8) Trust the Lord, the Lord who is **ALIVE**: the Lord who is **ACTIVE**: the Lord who is **ABLE**: the Lord

who is ALMIGHTY. For there is no prayer too hard for him to answer: no need too great for Him to supply: no passion too strong for Him to subdue: no misery too deep for Him to relieve.

Yes, God is Alive to give us (a) and: (b) GLORY IN THE FUTURE: Was this not the prophetic significance of this incident Did it not prefigure that great victory that one day was to be secured over the grave Did it not foreshadow the resurrection of the believer (1 Cor 15:51) Do you recall the words of the Lord Jesus to His disciples " Because I live ye shall live also". (Jn 14:19) My, like Elisha we may die. Indeed every day we live brings us a day nearer to our death. But the Lord Jesus has taken the Gloom out of the Grave and the Dread out of Dying (2 Tim 1:9) He has promised to walk with us through the experience each step of the way.

My, you will not walk alone if you belong to Christ. We will know something of His Presence. But when the Lord comes we will know something of His Power. For these bodies of ours that have been subject to decay: weakness: pain: suffering will be "fashioned like unto His glorious body". (Phil 3:21) For God is Alive to give us (a) and (b) (1) (2) A MAN OF GOD DIES BUT HIS SWAY IS STILL ABIDING If you think of the legacy of the influence of men like Darwin or Marx, you will agree that these figures go on ministering death long after they are gone.

They have cursed the world with the twisted systems of falsehood spawned from their angry and God-denying minds. On the other hand like Elisha, you and I can go on being a blessing even when we're gone. Ill: Dr. Howard Sugden tells of an experience while walking in a cemetery at Huntsville, Michigan. He stood before a number of little white gravestones. Then he saw a large tomb, with this inscription on it: "To a lost cause". Then he saw another one and went over to look. It had the name of the deceased and this verse on it: " The love of Christ doth me constrain: to seek the wandering souls of men: with pleadings, cries and tears to save".

Dr. Sugden took off his hat and prayed, " O God, this man lived a hundred and some years ago, but he has spoken to me today. Over there is a lost cause, but here is a man who lives on". My, have you a desire so to live that after your death the influence of your life will still count for God You see Elisha went on being a blessing, his influence continued long after his death! Think of: (a) THE REALITY OF THIS INFLUENCE: Look at (13:21) Would this miracle not have been the means of reviving interest in the prophets work His name would not be forgotten: his deeds would not be dismissed, rather others would be inspired by the memory of his zeal, courage, purity and prayerfulness.

My, is it not the same with us We read the life stories of Brainerd: McChesney: Mueller: Spurgeon. We touch as it were their bones and find new life surging through us! For what a mighty influence a godly person may exert after their decease. Ill: Helen Ewan was born around 1910 into an ordinary working class Glasgow family. After her conversion at the age of 14, her whole personality was radiant with the glory of the Lord. During her brief life of 8 years she was a tremendous blessing both to saint and sinner.

At the age of 22 God called her home. Upon news of her death thousands in Scotland and Great Britain wept openly, and many sought to express something of the blessing Helens life had meant to them. James Stewart a personal friend and also her biographer tells how years later he visited the cemetery where Helen had been laid to rest. There he knelt and give God thanks for such a life and then he spoke to one of the grave-diggers who could not recall the person he was describing.

" You must remember that we are burying large numbers of people here, for this is a public cemetery", explained the grave-digger. As James Stewart continued to speak this strong: sturdy labourer became

deeply moved. "Yes, I remember now, when we were burying that body we felt the presence of God all over this place". Helen Ewan exerted a mighty influence for God even after she was dead. What about you How will folk remember you Will they be inspired by the memory of your graciousness: zealousness: prayerfulness My, Elisha's influence after his death was real.

But what was: (b) THE REASON FOR THIS INFLUENCE: Why did this man of God exert so great an influence even after his death Because he knew in his life the miracle power of God! By God's power Elisha divided the waters of Jordan (2:14) met the widows need for oil: (4:6) raised the Shunammite's son from death: (4:35) cleansed Naaman's leprosy: (5:14) restored the lost axehead: (9:6) and so on. But his power in public was simply the outcome of his prayers in private. (2:25 4:25) For here was a man who knew what it was to dwell in the secret place of the most high. (Ps 91:1) My, do you desire to exert a powerful and permanent influence for God Do you long that your influence will abide after you're gone Then you will need to spend time in the presence of the Lord. (Eph 1:19) (1) (2) (3) A MAN OF GOD DIES BUT HIS SERVICE IS STILL PRODUCING " And when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet." (13:21) Now dead mens bones have no magical powers.

This miracle must be traced to the wonder-working power of God. But again God used Elisha, long after his bodily frame had crumbled into dust. This miracle was the seal of Heaven placed upon his ministry. Men's thoughts would have been recalled to the message Elisha preached, and it may be that in this way his voice was more powerful in death than in life. My, is it not often the case that after God's servants have died, the fruit of their labour appears You see in the service of the Lord: (a) BARRENNESS IS OFTEN FOUND: The work is often difficult and discouraging: the soil is so unyielding and there is so little evidence of success that sometimes the labourer is ready to give up in despair.

Many a devoted preacher of the gospel has mourned over the apparent barrenness of the efforts of a lifetime. Ill: Think of Hans Egede preaching from the text, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and in vain", as he bids farewell to the inhospitable shores of Greenland, after 20 years of seemingly unavailing toil. What about James Gilmours 14 years of heroic labour in Mongolia The result Seemingly nothing! But My, the work that seemed so plainly stamped with failure had not really been in vain.

For before long Greenland and Mongolia yielded a plentiful harvest, when the hand that sowed the seed was still in death. Yes, (a) but: (b) BLESSING IS OFTEN FUTURE: It's often when God's servants die that the fruit of their labour becomes evident. Its often when a godly father or mother closes their eyes in death, and passes on to the other side, that their prayers get answered and their children get saved. My, even after death Elisha is not finished. Indeed as someone has said, "As a dead man he continues to matter more than many persons ostensibly alive".

Ill: Luke Short was an Englishman who had emigrated to the USA in the late eighteenth century. He was converted at the age of 103 years. Do you know how it happened One hot afternoon he was meditating under a tree in Virginia, and he was recalling a sermon he had heard preached by the great Puritan John Flavel, back in Plymouth England when he was a boy. This was 90 years before since Flavel died in 1791. As he meditated on this message he had heard 90 years previous he got saved.

Three years after his conversion Luke Short died. On his gravestone there is this epitaph: " Here lies the body of Luke Short, Aged according to nature 106 years, Aged according to grace 3 years." My, God continues to use us after we're gone Do you know who is the most popular Christian author in the world

today CH Spurgeon who died in 1892. People are still being saved through his printed sermons and other writings. No wonder Balaam cried, "Let me died the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his". (Num 23:10) For they "being dead yet speak".

My, as we leave Elisha's bones in their influential grave, as we think of the example of his life and death could we pause and ask: Will the world be any different because you and I were born Will things change because you lived and died doing the will of God Like Elisha in life and death, we can show the world that God saves. As C.T.Studd says: "Let us not rust out. Let us not glide through this world and then slip quietly out of it without having blown the trumpet loud and long for our Blessed Redeemer. At the very least, let us see to it that when the Devil gets news of our departure from the battlefield, he throws a thanksgiving party in hell."

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