

# Have You Lost Your Edge Lately

by Denis Lyle

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*This sermon encourages believers to examine their spiritual effectiveness and seek God's power to regain their edge and fulfill their purpose.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 33:15, 2 Kings 6:6, Matthew 28:20, Acts 1:8, 2 Corinthians 10:16, Galatians 3:13, Colossians 2:6, Hebrews 6:1, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "Spiritual Effectiveness", "Faith Renewal"

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## Description

Denis Lyle preaches on the story of the floating axe-head from 2 Kings 6:1-7, emphasizing the importance of not losing our spiritual effectiveness in serving the Lord. He challenges believers to reflect on whether they have lost their 'cutting edge' in their faith journey and encourages them that God can restore their effectiveness. Lyle highlights the need for purposeful activity in God's work, emphasizing the importance of extending, comprehending, and depending on God in all endeavors. He also addresses the tragedy of losing spiritual power and the possibility of recovery through humility, honesty, and faith in God's miraculous intervention.

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## Transcript

2 Kings 6:1-7 HAVE YOU LOST YOUR EDGE LATELY A father collected his son from Junior Church and asked what Bible story they had heard. "It was about Moses and the Israelites, Dad", replied the boy. "They were trapped with the Red Sea in front of them and the Egyptian army behind them". "So what happened" asked the father. "Well,... Moses sent some tanks back to face the Egyptians, and he radioed for support to some warships anchored in the Gulf. While the navy bombers attacked Pharaoh's troops and chariots, helicopters airlifted the Hebrews to safety on the other shore".

Dad laughed. " Sounds a bit far-fetched to me. I don't remember that story from Sunday school". " I know, Dad, "replied his son. "But if I told you what really happened, you'd never believe it". There are some stories like that scattered throughout the Bible. In telling us what really happened the human author never seems to be troubled about whether or not people will believe it. The story of the floating axe-head is one of those stories. Modernists and rationalists round on this story and tell us this miracle is childish.

They cannot explain it away and they do not like to accept it. But one thing is absolutely certain, "the iron did swim." (6:6) The iron... Contrary to natural law... Floated to the surface. My... this is the simple statement of Scripture, and we dare not deny it, or modify it to suit modern "scientific", views. Here God was active, and a higher law... the law of miracle was operative! Now this miracle of the raising of the lost

axe head confronts us believers with one crucial question: Have you lost your edge lately Are you still going through the motions of activity and busyness for the Lord, but you are not felling any trees In fact you are no longer making even a dent for the Lord!

Somewhere along the way you have lost your cutting edge! That's the bad news. The good news is, God can restore your spiritual effectiveness. I want to talk to you then this... on this question: Have you lost your edge lately In seeking an answer to that question look with me at (2 Kings 6) And notice: (1) AN ACTIVITY THAT IS PURPOSEFUL These opening verses present to us a scene of activity! Now we are not told which particular school of the prophets this one was, but from its proximity to the Jordan there can be little doubt that it was the one situated either at Jericho or Gilgal. (2:5 4:38) The problem presented to the Principal...

Elisha was a pleasant one... "the place is too small for us". (6:1) The prophets college was overfull: there was no room for the growing number of students. College work had thrived tremendously and the premises had proved themselves inadequate, too small! The students therefore formally approached their "principal", for permission to undertake the construction of a larger building that would provide better and bigger accommodation! Do you see how approachable Elisha was Do you see how teachable Elisha was A proud man would quickly resent any suggestion coming from those under his charge, but not Elisha.

My, it is the mark of a little mind and not of a great mind, which considers it has a monopoly of intelligence and wisdom! Elisha said, "Go ye". (6:2) (1) Well, what kind of activity is it that is purposeful in the work of God It's an activity that seeks: (a) TO EXTEND: " The place... is too small". That's a good problem to have! Its great when we are developing Materially: Its a good problem for a church as its premises bulge at capacity with numbers of people God draws in, and its also a good problem for a Bible College to have, indicating the high intake of believers who sense the call of God upon their lives!

My, sin, heresy, and unbelief shut down churches and Bible Colleges: obedience, truth and living faith maintain and open them. Its great when we are developing Spiritually: When the inner life of the soul is ever expanding, so that the place that was sufficient for its earlier years becomes "too strait", too small for its growing acquirements! My, the NT is full of this idea of progress: expansion: and development! Do you recall how the writer to the Hebrews puts it "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection". (Heb 6:1) Do you recall how Paul puts it "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him". (Col 2:6) The old refrain goes: " More and more: more and more Still there's more to follow, Have you on the Lord believed, Still there's more to follow."

My, are you developing Spiritually Its great when we are developing Evangelistically: When we are seeking to extend and expand the work of the Gospel, of building the Church of God composed of living stones .... in our community, in our country, in our world! Was it not along this path of gradual extension that the Risen Lord intended his servants to travel Did He not say, beginning at "Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth". (Acts 1:8) Extension!

My, are we standing still or going forward Are we beating a retreat or sounding an alarm Like Paul have we a desire "to preach the gospel in the regions beyond" (2 Cor 10:16) What kind of activity is purposeful in the work of God An activity that seeks (a) (b) TO COMPREHEND: That is an activity that seeks to utilise all! Did you notice what the sons of the prophets said in (6:2) " Let us go,... unto Jordan and take thence every man a beam". These students were not afraid of hard manual work, unlike some of the young people in our generation, who have been encouraged to expect that someone else will do everything for

them, and that they should be waited on hand and foot.

Notice also that these students did not have a false concept of their sacred calling, they didn't think that felling trees was beneath their dignity! Everybody "mucked in", together, and each gave of their time, money, effort and resources! "Every man a beam", (6:2) My, is this not a basic principle in God's work Far too often the attitude in church work is, "Oh, let someone else do it. I'm too busy". Its usually the few who do the work while the rest stand back and criticise them!

Can you imagine the difference it would make in this church if we all took our coats off and did what we could Can I ask you personally: are you doing what you can Are you doing your bit Are you really playing your part (a) (b) (c) TO DEPEND: Look at (6:3) These students desired the presence of their Master as they undertook the task. No doubt they had learned from experience that if left to their own resources they were likely to fail, but the prophets presence with them was the pledge of success!

Do you remember what Moses prayed "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" (Exod 33:15) My, we need not only to work for the Lord, we need to have the Lord with us in our work! And has He not promised to be with us Did He Himself not say, "Lo I am with you alway... age". (Matt 28:20) The danger may be great but His grace is sufficient: the difficulties may be many but His might is enough: the days may be dark but His presence is near. My, will you depend on Him For without Him you can do nothing. (1) (2) A TRAGEDY THAT IS PREVALENT Can you picture this scene One of the students was hacking away at a rather stubborn tree on the banks of the Jordan, when suddenly the head of his ax flew off, arched through the air, and landed with a "bloop", mid-stream in the Jordan.

My, the thing which had made this man's contribution effective had gone... the keen sharp cutting blade of the ax... and he was left with the useless shaft of the ax in his hand. Now is this old story not strangely up to date Have you not seen this happen time and again A Christian suddenly ceasing to count as far as all effective service is concerned Something seems to have gone out of his spiritual experience. He has lost his ax-head. (2) A lost ax-head! Will you notice that this student was: (a) CONTROLLED BY THIS LOSS: The lost ax-head meant that he had to stop working!

Look at (6:5) The man stopped working. Of course, you say, for how could he cut down trees when the ax-head was gone And yet My, is this not exactly what many of us do when we lose our sharp cutting edge: our effectiveness: our power Instead of crying to our heavenly Elisha we go on dealing ineffective blows with the ax-handle. Do you know the experience You pray but you get no answers to your prayers: we preach but we see no converts: we teach but noone gets blessed: you counsel but no problems are resolved.

We use the shaft of human wisdom but the cutting driving power of God has been lost! (a) But this student was: (b) CONSCIOUS OF THIS LOSS: He knew it and I'm sure that others noticed it. "As one was felling a beam... borrowed". (6:5) Doesn't it all always happen with stuff you've borrowed. All spiritual power is likewise borrowed: borrowed from the God who bestowed it and who can withhold it. My, spiritual power can be lost and when it is lost we know it and others notice it!

I wonder if others have noticed that things are not well with you as once they were Has something gone out of your prayer life Out of your testimony Out of your Christian service I'm certain that if it has, then one thing is true: you know it and others have seen it! Here was one of Elisha's students who was fully aware that something vital had gone out of his life! What about you Is this your condition today Have you lost the ax-head Have you lost your sharpness your effectiveness for Christ Is your cry this, "Where is the

blessedness I knew..."

Ills: Robert Robinson author of the hymn, "Come Thou fount of every blessing", lost the happy fellowship with the Saviour he had once enjoyed. As a result he became deeply troubled in spirit. Hoping to relieve his mind he decided to travel. In the course of his journeys he became acquainted with a young woman on spiritual matters. She asked him what he thought of a hymn she had just been reading. To his astonishment it was his own hymn. With tears streaming down his cheeks he said, "I'm the man who wrote that hymn many years ago.

I'd give anything to experience the joy I knew then. She reassured him that the "streams of mercy", mentioned in his song still flowed, there and then he turned his wandering heart to the Lord and discovered: (3) A RECOVERY THAT IS POSSIBLE Ills: Hudson Taylor said that whenever God does anything, we find that it is in the first place impossible: in the second place difficult, in the third place done! My, if God can make a piece of iron to swim, then He can recover: restore and reinstate one of His servants!

How does God do it How can lost power: lost effectiveness be regained Well, notice there was an: (a) ADMISSION TO ELISHA: Look at (6:6) Two things were called for from this man. The first was humility, and the second honesty! He was humble enough to admit that he had lost the ax-head: he was honest enough to admit where he had lost it. " And he showed him the place". (6:6) My, have you lost your spiritual sharpness, your effectiveness, your cutting edge Let me ask you, "Where did it fall" Where did you lose it Exactly where was it that you lost the conscious realisation of His presence and power Was it when you gave up your personal devotions When you neglected the Word of God Was it when you grew slack in your attendance at the place of worship When you had that misunderstanding with that Christian friend Was it when you allowed that doubtful thing to come into your life My, "Where fell it" (6:6) Where did it fall Where did you lose it Was it when you made that unholy alliance When you entered into that dishonest business transaction "Where fell it" Was it when you allowed bitterness to seep into your soul Was it when you got angry with God because of what He allowed or didn't allow Answer honestly the question: " Where did it fall" Is there an unresolved row still continuing between you and your wife Are you critical and complaining about the leaders God has set you over you My, where did you lose your spiritual power "Where fell it" "And he showed him the place". (6:6) Will you do that The student did and notice there was an: (b) APPLICATION BY ELISHA: " And he cut down a stick and cast it in thither: and the iron did swim". (6:6) The word "stick", in the Hebrew can mean a "sapling", or even a "tree".

You see what had seemed gone for ever was now not only within sight it was within reach, and all because a power greater than any human power was at work. My, when God wants to bring what we have lost within sight, He too uses the wood of a tree, wet not with water, but with the blood of His dear Son! (Gal 3:13) For there is forgiveness for the saint as well as for the sinner in the Cross of Christ! John says: "If we confess our sins..." (1 Jn 1:9) My, have you lost your edge lately Will you avail yourself of the means of recovery The cross.

Notice finally, there was an: (c) ADMONITION FROM ELISHA: Look at (6:7) This young student was not asked to analyse the miracle, but to appropriate it. It was not the time for the explanation of reason, but for the exercise of faith. My, in just the same way we must not stand at the rivers edge seeking to understand all of the inner workings of God's power. What we've got to do is to appropriate that power and take back what we thought we had lost for good! Will you do that even now Will you put out the hand of faith and take up again the life of effective service which is God's purpose for you Have you lost your edge recently

That effectiveness can be recovered: restored: reinstated!

The Bible says: " And the iron did swim". (6:6) My, there's a work to be done! There's a house to be built! There's a world to be reached! Will you lay hold of your ax-head, and get right to work Are you willing to do the work of God, in the power of God, for the glory of God

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