

Miracles of Elisha, Message 4

by Ed Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of total reliance on God's Holy Spirit in Bible study and highlights the four characteristics of the message of the man of God: pure grace, the power of God, revelation, and the absolute certainty of God's purposes.

Duration: 1:20:00

Scripture: Luke 9:61

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Faith Application"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses four stories from the Bible that reveal important truths about the message of God. Each story represents a characteristic or principle that God wants us to understand and apply in our lives. The speaker emphasizes the importance of seeking God's guidance in applying these truths and encourages the audience to meditate on the scriptures. The sermon also highlights the idea that by embracing the message of Jesus and staying focused on spiritual things, we can become more like Him and experience the abundant life and hope that He offers.

Transcript

Well, thank you, sister, for sharing. We see not only what God has done, but the method by which he did it is quite a miracle, and we rejoice with you. And thank you, Ben, for sharing.

Let me ask you, Ben, maybe I misunderstood. Did you say there's more interaction between the pupil and the professor? Professor? Did you use that word? What are you professing? Before we look at our indispensable principle, I see my friend Steve Ward is here tonight. He's going to discover I gave him the wrong text to study in advance.

So either he's going to have to come back tomorrow, or he's going to have to share with me before I speak tomorrow what light he got on that text. As we come to the study of God's word, there is a principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable, and that principle is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. I hope you don't get tired of hearing me say that, because whether you're with me or not, I say that every time I come to the Bible.

I need to remember that only God can reveal God. Only the Lord can unveil himself in this precious book. One of the studies we're working on in Newport, we're going through the wonderful book of Acts.

And in the book of Acts, we're up into the teens now in our preparation. We haven't talked that far, but I'm preparing and going on ahead. And one of the things that gripped my heart is in Acts chapter 16, where Paul received that prayer, the Macedonian prayer.

You remember that? The man from Macedonia. And one of the questions I asked was, who was that man from Macedonia? And I found out it was Lydia. She's the first one, but I think it was bigger than Lydia.

I'm sure it was you. I think that's where the gospel started to move west. And that's the man from Macedonia.

Anyway, in connection with Lydia's salvation, there's a wonderful verse in the Bible. You know, we've been talking about having our eyes open. But let's say God opens our eyes and we behold the Lord and wonderful truth.

What's next? Listen, please, as I read to you Acts 16, 14. And the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things that were spoken by Paul. He not only has to open my eyes to see, but then he must open my heart to respond to the things that he has shown me.

Will you bow with me as we call upon the Lord to open our eyes and to open our hearts to respond to what he speaks? Let's bow. Father, we thank you so much that you're the one that does the opening. We ask you again, Lord, to minister yourself, your life through this precious book.

Show us in a fresh and in a living and in a transforming way the Lord Jesus in his wonder and in his beauty. We pray as we hear the truth from your word that your Holy Spirit would illumine our hearts and then open our hearts to respond. We want to receive Christ as you propose him to us.

I pray for everyone in this room and I pray, Lord, that by your grace you would, even as we studied this morning, you would feed us and protect us from anything in the stew that is not from you. Put your word in the stew that we might receive a healthy portion. And we thank you, Lord, in advance that you're going to meet with us tonight because we ask it in the worthy name of our Savior, our Lord Jesus.

Amen. Well, welcome again. And let me just, by way of a quick review, tell you where we are and where we're heading.

We're looking at the wonderful servant of the Lord, Elisha, his life, his ministry. And the approach we've taken because of God's presentation of Elisha in the Bible, the one who went unto his own and his own received him not, the one who wept over Jerusalem, the one that healed the leper, the one that multiplied loaves, the one that raised the dead, the one that through his death brought life to others. He's the man that looks like Jesus.

And that's why we're studying the Old Testament, the seed form illustration of the new covenant Christian. What Paul is in the New Testament, Elisha is in the Old Testament. He's God's illustration of what it means to be a person, a man, a woman, a young person like the Lord Jesus.

And so we've been studying this wonderful life and ministry of Elisha. The message that Elisha had is the new covenant. All his miracles are miracles of life, miracles of resurrection.

And so Elisha is the man like Jesus, and the message he has is the gospel. And we have this in picture form. Now, in our discussion, we've divided up these five sessions this way.

The first two sessions, we looked at the man, the man that looks like Jesus. And then in the next two sessions, we were looking at the message of the man that looks like Jesus. And Lord willing, tomorrow we'll summarize it.

God brings the whole thing to a marvelous clincher, and we'll look at that in the morning using Steve Ward's text that I announced. In our first two lessons, when we looked at the man, I'm just going to run over these principles just so you have it in your mind's eye again. God put his mantle on Elisha when he called him.

But it was almost ten years later that the mantle that was on his shoulder was in his hand. And before the mantle could get from his shoulder to his hand, where he could become a man like Jesus, God had to accomplish certain things in his life. And we looked at those three principles.

Number one, he had to respond to the grace of God. And he had to respond in a total, a free will, a joyful submission to that call of God. And we saw in 1 Kings 19 that he did that.

And then God had to plant in him a hunger, a desire. And in those ten years, God so worked in him through his servant Elijah, that when at the end Elijah laid before him a blank check and said, you can fill it in. Before I leave, what do you want? Without hesitation, he said, a double portion.

And you remember the double portion had to do with the firstborn. And it was that desire to have everything God wants to give so that I might be God's instrument of manifestation, so the whole world can look at me and know how God wants to meet them, treat them, bless them, deal with that, that hunger, that desire. And finally, the last thing God worked in his heart was focus.

There are many distractions, but if you can see me, if you can look beyond the physical into the spiritual realm and stay focused on that realm and see me when I'm taken up, it shall be so. And God did allow the distraction. The tornado came, and you know how that would cause you to turn your head.

And then the fiery chariot came, and the horses in front of him, in between him, but he stayed focused. And when he was caught away, he saw him. Because God had worked in him the ability to respond to grace and planted in his heart a desire to want God's everything and a focus to keep his mind, his heart on the Lord, on spiritual things.

When that mantle came down, he reached down, and now he becomes a man like Jesus. And so that was the preparation. And then in our second message, it was sort of an overview, the way God has laid out those next four stories.

If I actually pick up that mantle, what will my life look like? What will my ministry look like? Illustrated by the opening of the Jordan River, the first miracle after he had the mantle in his hand. If I'm like Jesus, God, the Lord will be opening the path before me in all the days of my life. He's going to be opening the way, removing the obstacles, removing the hindrances.

That's what the man's life who looks like Jesus will be. And what will my message be like? Illustrated by the healing of the water of Jericho, God will use me to bless those who say yes. He'll allow me to go to the spring and put in the salt and watch barrenness become fruit.

But for those who say no, illustrated by the men of Bethel, the same one that brings a blessing will bring a curse. And then God will allow me to be available to all those that need to be restored. And praise God for

that ministry.

Then this morning we began to look at the message, the message of the man of God. I attempted this morning through the four stories to show you the chief characteristic of the message of the man that looks like Jesus. And the chief characteristic is this, and by the way, we're going to look at more characteristics tonight.

You can forget the ones I do tonight if you remember the one we did this morning. Because that's the main one, that's the chief one. And that is our message is a person.

It's Christ Himself. It's not a philosophy. It's not a doctrine.

And even though I love to use the word principle, it's not even a principle. It's Him. It's Christ.

He is the oil that we have in our house. What do you have in your house? Life. And life more abundant.

He is the one who not only gives life like He gave that little boy to the woman, but He is the one then that sustains that life by the power of the resurrection. God gave a supernatural birth and then a resurrection. He's the one who feeds the hungry with a living word from heaven and purifies the whole stew and provides for those that are hungry in secret places.

That's what we looked at this morning. And so the chief characteristic, what's the message like? It's a person. It's Him.

It's the Lord. It's Christ. It's the second person of the Godhead.

It's our Lord Jesus Himself. Now, this evening, it's going to be my assignment to present other characteristics. And by looking at other characteristics, the problem will be, of course, not to present them in a way that they're not related to the characteristic.

Nothing is gained if you leave this place and say, I can name five characteristics of the new covenant. I can name six characteristics. Who cares? You can name four or five or six characteristics.

But if seeing those characteristics, God burns in your heart the reality of those and how they relate to Him who is the sum and substance of it all to Christ, then that message becomes a precious message indeed. So this is the man that looks like Jesus. And this is the message he's embraced, that he proclaims, that he holds forth to bring life and hope to others.

Let me lay before your hearts in advance the four characteristics that we're going to look at in terms of these next four stories. Once again, I sort of have to apologize every time we get up here because there's just not enough time. We've got to leave so much behind.

But if you'll be patient with that, I know you've studied and you're anxious to hear what God has given you and someone else has seen it, say yes. And many precious, precious truths. Don't put this section of scripture away after Joshua.

May the Lord help you to get into it and meditate on it. There's so much here. But as I understand it, each of these next four stories gives a truth, which I'm just calling for the sake of analysis, a characteristic of the message, a precious truth, a fact.

And then God, as if he, I don't mean to say that he would be afraid we would mess it up, but so that the fact would be driven home to our hearts. Sometimes he just gives you a principle and then he lets you apply it. He said, there's the truth.

Now, when you share it, apply it. And so you have to pray and say, Lord, how would I apply this? But what God has done in these four stories, he gives a truth and then he applies that truth. He gives an application of that truth.

Now, he only gives one application to each story, but there are others. There are unlimited applications. That's why when you study the Bible, ask the Lord not to help you apply what you read.

Because if you apply what you read, you'll have one or two applications. Don't ask the Lord to help you apply what you read. Ask the Lord to show you the principle involved and then apply the principle.

And you'll have unlimited applications to that principle. Because a principle is true in every age and generation in every part of the world. It'll never change.

So ask the Lord to give you the principle and then get into application. Because if you just try to apply the scripture, you're stuck with only one or two applications. So in case you are planning to fall asleep during this message, let me just tell you up front, here's story one, here's the fact, here's the application.

Here's story two, here's the fact, here's the application. I'll give it to you right up front and then you can check out. I'll keep talking and let you know when you can leave.

The first truth is this, what does our message look like? What's the message of the man of God look like? Here's the first truth, our message is the message of pure grace. That's the first story. Now there are many ways to illustrate that, but he chooses one.

Forgiveness of sin, illustrated by the cleansing of Naaman the leper. There are many ways to illustrate the pure grace of God, but he chose this illustration, cleansing, forgiveness of sin. The second story, the second characteristic is this, what does our message look like? It's not only pure grace, but it's a message that God himself must do it.

It's the power of God. The Lord is the one that does his work. The Lord's work is the Lord's work.

The Lord must do his work. We can't do it. Now there's many illustrations in life of, he's got to do it, I can't do it.

But the one that he chooses is Christian service, illustrated by the miracle of the floating ax head. And so we'll look at that as an application. You could illustrate it other ways, but he chooses that illustration.

What does our message look like? It's not only a message of pure grace, it's not only a message of the power of the Lord, the spirit of the Lord doing everything, but our message is a message of revelation. God has to open it to us. God has to open our heart, open our eyes, God has to show up.

There are many ways to illustrate that. He chooses victory over the enemy as his illustration. Victory over the Syrian, that's the story Brother Bill was referring to this morning.

That's his illustration. And finally, the last story, the fourth characteristic of our message, it's not only pure grace, it's not only that God must do it all, the mighty power of God, it's not only revelation that God must

open our eyes, but the last story illustrates the absolute certainty of God's purposes. The absolute certainty of God's purposes.

Now there are many illustrations of that. He decides to use restoration as his illustration, the chapter 8, 1 to 6, the full restoration of the inheritance of the widow and her son. And so that's our message.

You say, what's our message? Well, it's Christ. That's our message. That's the message of the man who looks like Jesus.

His message is a person. It's the Lord. What's the message look like? Oh, you listen, it's pure grace.

You listen, the Lord does it all. Listen to the message of the man that looks like Jesus. It's revelation.

It's from him. He's the one that opens it up. It's the faithfulness of God.

All his purposes are certain. All his purposes are sure. That which he designs will come to pass.

God will bring it to its end. As I said, there's other things to illustrate these things. But perhaps even in this place, maybe somebody needs to know that they can be forgiven tonight.

So we'll stick with his illustration. Maybe somebody got so burdened down in Christian service that they need to know God must do it. Maybe someone is so overwhelmed by the enemy in their life that they need to have their eyes open to a few things.

Maybe someone is getting discouraged because their path has gone and they're wondering, where's the Lord? Is he still on his throne? Does he still care? And so we'll see restoration. So may God help us as we look. Now you know what we're going to look at.

Pure grace. Since God has chosen forgiveness to illustrate it, I want to describe his pure grace then in terms of the story of Naaman. If you'll turn to 2 Kings chapter 5, please.

It's not an accident that this is the only story of Elisha that's mentioned in the New Testament. It's in Luke chapter 4 and verse 29. Otherwise, you won't see Elisha in the New Testament.

And why does Jesus mention this story about Elisha? Because this miracle is a missionary miracle. Not every miracle was a missionary miracle, but this one was. And here the Lord in his mighty power goes outside the boundaries of Israel and reaches into the heart and into the land of the Gentiles.

So now let me tell you the story, and I'll just pick isolated verses and you follow along. The principle is the grace of God. The pure, unadulterated grace of God.

That's what we believe. That's what we hold. That's what we preach.

That's what we proclaim. That's the message that God has given. It's Christ, and because it's Christ, it's the free grace of God.

Let me break it down. One illustration of the grace of God in this story on forgiveness is this. The grace of God always seeks out the sinner, the leper.

The Bible presents Naaman as a Gentile seeker, and if he's a Gentile seeker, as Luke said he is, then how's God going to reach him? Skeptics love to ask that question. Now what about the heathen? And

what about those who don't live in a gospel country where they can hear it on the radio, or someone can tell it, or there's a church on every corner? What about those who live in South America, or in Africa, or some savage or aborigine in Australia, or what about those tribes in New Guinea that have never heard? What about those? You see, God doesn't clear His throat when He answers a question like that. He says, anybody who seeks Me is going to find Me.

Anywhere on the earth, there's no excuse. Anybody who seeks Me is going to find Me. Now, I'm not going to get into Romans 1 and all the lights of creation and conscience and the Word of God and all of that, but just know this, that every place on the earth there's a seeker.

God will provide a human instrumentality in some way so that that person can come to the Lord. Now, how did He do it for Naaman? Look at chapter 5, verse 1. Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, or Syria, was a great man with his master and highly respected, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man was also a valiant warrior, but he was a leper.

Did you notice that expression in verse 1? By him the Lord had given victory. Now, that's an amazing verse. When you read a passage like that, God gave victory to this man, he didn't know it, he didn't think it was God, over God's people, over Israel.

I'm sure Naaman, he got famous for this, he became a hero in the land because of the victory he had. And when he came back, they gave him great honors after that war. And he didn't say, you know, the only reason I got these honors, God gave me the victory.

He didn't have a clue about that. And what did Naaman do when God gave him the victory? Verse 2, now the Arameans had gone out in bands and had taken captive a little girl from the land of Israel, and she waited on Naaman's wife. That's what happens in war.

They take prisoners of war. And so in this war, God gave him victory, he went up against God's people, against Israel, they invaded the land, and they took POWs. They took prisoners of war.

And one of the prisoners of war was this little Israeli girl, maybe eight or nine or ten years old, and they took this little child back. You say, what happened to her family? The Bible doesn't tell us what happened to her family, but if I were writing the Bible, I could guess what happened. They were probably killed trying to protect that little girl.

If it was my little girl, I'd be dead before they took her. If it was your little girl, you'd probably be dead before they took that little girl. He calls attention to this little maiden being taken away as a prisoner of war.

Say, that's the most natural thing in all the world at time of war. Yes, but from God's viewpoint, it's also the most supernaturally natural thing in all the world. The Lord is behind this because God looked down from heaven and saw a seeker in Syria.

And He said, according to Luke, that's why He did it. There were other lepers, but they weren't seeking. This one was a seeker, and God knew that, and so He had to send somebody.

And on the level of earth, and from the standpoint of man, it's a terrible tragedy. Our baby has been kidnapped. A foreign nation has come in and taken our little girl, and we may never see her again.

Can you imagine the family? And this was not only one. It's the only one that we read about, but others were taken as prisoners of war as well. But if it was a tragedy, it's a missionary tragedy because the Lord was behind it.

And so we read in verse 3, she said to her mistress, I wish my master were with the prophet who's in Samaria. He would cure him of his leprosy. Boy, God had really worked in this girl.

I don't have time to discuss the girl, but what a heart. If that was me, I'd say, you leper, I'm glad you're a leper. I hope you die a leper.

You took me out of my mother's home. But this little girl's different. Boy, there's something God did in her heart.

This little girl's testifying. She said to her mistress, she said, I wish your husband could only go to Israel because there's a man there just like Jesus, and He could cure him of his leprosy. That's a step of faith because don't forget, the only leper up to this time that had been cured was Miriam.

She was on brand new ground. That was cold-blooded faith, and what if it didn't work? You come back after going on a long trip, come back, how are you going to treat your servant girl who told you that lie? This is an amazing, this little girl was tremendous, and that's the grace of God. Usually, thirst goes after water unless it's in the Lord.

That's what John chapter 4 is all about, how water goes after thirst. He's the living water, and He's the one that seeks out thirst. And He saw this one, this man, hungry, and because of the testimony of this little girl, Naaman was saved, and Israel was called to repentance, and the king was made aware of God's power in Israel, and probably thousands will be in heaven because of this story, and the testimony of that little girl.

That's the grace of God. The grace of God not only initiates and goes first and seeks out the sinner, but the grace of God levels pride to the dust, brings man down to nothing. Naaman, look at verse 1. He was a proud man, as the world would look at him, captain of a military force, in favor with the king, highly respected as a national hero, brave, a valiant warrior, probably very wealthy because of the spoils of war and so on.

But in spite of all of that power, and all that authority, and all that honor, and all that wealth, we read, but, but he was a leper. And a great shadow falls over his life, all of the accomplishments, everything he has, all of the honor. Grace humbles the proud.

I don't know if it was humbling for him to hear the word of that little maiden girl that was his slave. Maybe it was. But anyway, he acted on it.

At this point, he doesn't have a clue about the grace of God. All he knows is, I've got a big need. I am a leper.

And she says there's hope. And I haven't heard anybody else say there's hope. And this little girl is giving me hope.

And so we see him show up, but he shows up like a proud man, and he's got a great price in his hand. Verse 5, the king of Aram said, go now, I'll send a letter to the king of Israel. And he departed, and he took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, ten changes of clothes.

This is a king's ransom. And now this leper goes, because he doesn't know about the grace of God yet. God begins to bring him down because the grace of God always humbles.

And when he arrives at the king's palace, he learns that the king can't do anything for him, and he's told to go to the prophet's house. That's sort of humbling. And so with his royal entourage, and according to this, it says his horses and chariots, plural.

He didn't just come by himself. He didn't just come with an attendant. There are chariots involved.

And so all these chariots, one after the other, pull up to the prophet's house. And did you notice how verse 10 begins? Elisha sent a messenger to him. The prophet didn't even come out himself.

He sends a messenger to him. This important man, this great general, this captain of the army, the one who has all this money in his hand to give, that's humbling to this leper. And then to cure his leprosy, the messenger says, go down to the river Jordan.

You know the story. And dips seven times into the river. Well, listen to the response of the proud man.

Verse 11, Naaman was furious and went away and said, Behold, I thought he'd surely come out to me, stand and call on the name of the Lord, his God, wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Are not Abana and Farpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean? And he turned and he went away in a rage. Proud man, proud man.

The grace of God humbles us. He uses humble means to reach us. He refuses everything we bring in our hand to pay him.

He doesn't recognize our importance. Seems like he calls on us to do unreasonable things. The grace of God doesn't come with bells and whistles and signs in the sky and all that kind of thing.

The grace of God waits to meet with a leper. God has a great salvation for lepers, but he has no salvation for captains. He has a great salvation for lepers, but he has no salvation for generals.

And the grace of God brings them low and brings them down. The man came as an important person, but he won't be helped until he's a leper. Not only does the grace of God seek out the seeker, not only does the grace of God bring down the proud, but this is the point, the wonderful point, the grace of God pours out his blessings for free on those who will receive it.

Who can read these verses without being moved? 13 and 14. Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more when he says wash and be clean? And so he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. What a word he'd been given in verse 10.

Elisha sent a messenger saying, Go wash in the Jordan seven times, your flesh will be restored to you. How simple is that? I love, this is our message. It's the grace of God.

God will seek you out, God will bring you down, and then God will bless you when you're down. That's our message. I think it went something like this.

Servant says to him, if he gave you some tough thing to do, if you had to crawl on broken glass and Bermuda shorts so many miles, you'd do it. He just said go down and dip seven times, why don't you do it? Just try it, what have you got to lose? All right, all right. I got to get in that muddy, that silty, that rushing river.

We got better rivers in my land, what am I doing here? The man of God said seven times. Okay, okay. I can picture him going down, now we don't know what stage his leprosy was.

I got a vivid imagination. I don't think he had a nose and he didn't have toes. I'm kidding, I don't know how advanced it was.

Probably not that advanced because he was still in contact with people, and later when Gehazi got leprosy, it said the leprosy of Naaman clinged to you, and he was just white as snow. So probably that was the stage of his leprosy, I don't know. But I picture him going down, dipping underwater, all the way down, okay, okay, and all the way back up again, like when you were baptized.

Oh, right, oh. If I were Naaman and that skeptical, I would have gone, yeah, right. I don't see any change.

The man of God said seven times. All right, all right. Down he goes again.

He comes up. The man of God said, all right. Down he goes again, and up he comes the third time.

So this is stupid. This is silly. Why did I let myself be talked into that? The man of God said seven times, and so he goes down again, and he goes down a fifth time, and he goes down a sixth time.

He goes, this is not going to work. The man of God said seven times, and he goes down the last time, and he comes up. You think there was any shouting at Jordan that day? Can you imagine? And he comes up, and the Bible says that he was clean.

He was clean, and his flesh, verse 14, was restored like the flesh of a little child. This was no gradual healing. He wasn't 80% cured or 90% cured, and then he had to go get some seeds implanted to take care of the rest.

It wasn't like that. You get a chance. Now, any baby will do, but you'll probably want a whole Sarah, my granddaughter.

I was holding her the other day when I was studying this. I was just rubbing her leg. Flesh of a little child.

This guy got so cleansed, he was better off than before he got leprosy. He went down and came back with the flesh of a little child. What a cleansing.

That's the we have. That's the message we preach, and it's all free. Verse 15, when he returned to the man of God with all his company and came and stood before him, he said, Behold, now I know there's a God.

There is no God in all the earth but in Israel. Now, please, take a present from your servant. And he said, As the Lord lives before whom I stand, I will take nothing.

And he urged him to take it, and he refused. It's free. That's the grace of God.

It's free. I don't have the time now to tell you the story of Elisha's servant. Gehazi, you can read it.

He tried to put a price tag on the grace of God. And when he tried to put a price tag on the grace of God, you know what happened to him. And it's all written in that chapter, the last two verses.

When Naaman left Israel, look at verse 17. And I have found new ground to stand on. And he wanted to take that ground with him.

And he took that ground with him. That's our message. That's our message.

It's the message of the grace of God. The message that God will seek you out. The message that God will bring you down to nothing.

The message that God, no matter how ugly, no matter how repulsive, no matter how deep the dye, no matter how indelible the stain, He'll wash you as white as snow. Nothing in my hand I break, simply to the cross I cling. Naked, come to Him for dress.

Helpless, come to Him for grace. Foul, I to the fountain fly. Wash me, Savior, or I die.

Don't answer. Anybody need cleansing tonight? See, there's other ways he could have illustrated the grace of God, but he wanted to use this illustration. Come as a leper and leave as a loose child.

That's what he's inviting you to do. Well, let's move on. Chapter six.

Now the sons of the prophet said to Elisha, behold, the place before you where we are living is too limited for us. Please let us go to the Jordan, each of us, and take a beam and let us make a place there for ourselves where we may live. And he said, go.

Then one said, please be willing to go with your servants. And he answered, I shall go. And so he went with them.

And when they came down to the Jordan, they cut down trees. And as one was felling a beam, an axe head fell into the water. He cried out and said, alas, my master, for it was borrowed.

The man of God said, where did it fall? He showed him the place. He cut off a branch and threw it in there and made the iron float. He said, take it up for yourself.

And so he put out his hand and took it. The second fact of our message is this. It's a message on the power of God.

Not by might, not by power. You're good. But by my spirit, says the Lord.

That's the message that we preach. It's not in us. It's in the Lord.

And as I said, that message can be illustrated a thousand ways, but he illustrates it with this Christian service. The sons of the prophets are experiencing growing pains. Picture a seminary, a Bible school.

They're in Bible school. And evidently, a lot of people have signed up for the next course. Someone's teaching apologetics, right? Right, Steve? Steve's going to be teaching apologetics.

He's been discussing with me. Is that a scriptural course I'm teaching? They're signing up. They want to enlarge the school.

And it's a legitimate thing to do. It's a Christian service. And so they're given permission to go and enlarge the facility.

Picture this service in the middle of this service. The instrument that was used to perform the service was all of a sudden irretrievably lost. You see, the goal was to fell a beam, not lose an axe head.

And somebody was chopping, and when he was chopping, the axe head fell off and went into the Jordan River and sunk. In the middle of the work, in the middle of the labor, somebody flew off the handle. Something happened and the instrument that was doing the service was lost.

Don't read that la-la-la, because I'll tell you, thousands and thousands of Christians go out to serve the Lord. And in the middle of the work, those who are serving the Lord find themselves in the bottom of the Jordan River and wonder what in the world happened. I know a little about that.

That happened to me in 1965. I got so involved in ministry and so involved in the work of the Lord, when that axe handle fell off, I was so stupid, I started chopping with the handle. I kept serving.

Tell God, let me know that it was all in vain. Anyway, it's a beautiful picture. They bring the man of God into the picture in verse 6, and he says, cut off a branch, a living branch, not a dead stick, a living branch, and throw it in.

And when the branch was thrown in, almost like a magnet, the iron did swim and that axe head came right up to the branch that was floating in the top. This is all Old Testament, this is all seed form, but it's the secret of our message. Say, who's the branch? Oh man.

Read Zechariah 6, verse 12, 13, 14. The man whose name is the branch, he will build the temple. That's Zechariah 6 and 12.

The man whose name is the branch. And that's the secret of Christian service, that I can't do it. There's got to be something more than nature.

And when I identify with the living branch, a resurrection takes place. The axe head is brought up again, and now the same axe head that sunk can get involved in the service, and they continue the Christian service. That's our message.

You can't do it. He's got to do it. But how will he do it? He'll do it by identification with the living branch, and he'll raise you up, and you won't do it in your own strength and in your own power.

That's the message that we preach. The third characteristic, illustrated by chapter 6, verse 8, all the way to chapter 7. His illustration is victory, the fact is revelation. God has to open it to us.

All the way through the record, it seems that Elisha was living by revelation. He just seemed to have an in with God. He knew what was going on at all times.

He always knew God's heart. He knew what to do. A situation would come up.

He said, bring me some salt. Dig a trench. Cut a limb off.

Gather vessels, not a few. Bring me some meal. Put some meal in there.

Shoot an arrow. Strike the ground. He always knew what to do.

In the whole record, there's only one place. And he was shocked when this happened, because he had such a communication going with God. He knew everything that was going on.

But remember when the widow came after her son died? Chapter 4, verse 27. He said, let her alone. Her soul is troubled, and the Lord has hidden it from me.

Why is that verse so important? Because he was shocked. That's not like God. I don't know what's going on, because he always knew what was going on.

It's a revelation. In the story before us, Elisha continues to hear from God, verse 12 of 6. One of the servants said, no, my lord, O king. Elisha, the prophet who's in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words you speak in your bedroom.

The enemy was making plans in the oval office. And while they were in the oval office, Elisha was hearing from God and said, here's the plan. And he would tell the king of Israel.

And they would make plans to thwart the other plan. And finally, the enemy said, we got a spy here somewhere. One of you is spying.

Who's leaking the information? And one of them said, no, nobody's leaking it. That guy in Israel that looks like Jesus, he knows what you say in your bedroom. And he's the one that's getting that information out.

Anyway, that's the point of this story, revelation. He's hearing from God. The first illustration of that in this story, I'm going to give you several.

God opens his servant's eyes so that he would know he's on the winning side. You need a revelation to understand that you're on the winning side. I need a revelation to understand that I'm on the winning side.

When the enemy surrounded the prophet to kill him, Elisha's attendant was filled with fear. His heart was so afraid. In verse 16, he answered, do not fear.

Those who are with us are more than those who are with them. And Elisha prayed and said, O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw.

Behold, the mountains were full of horses, chariots of fire all around. It seems like Elisha was always alive to two worlds. Some people think ever since Elijah was caught up and he first saw the horses and chariots that he never stopped seeing them, that he continually was aware of that spiritual world.

Elisha had two options. The man said, oh, what are we going to do? We're surrounded. He could have thought, God has shown me something and you ought to see what I'm seeing.

Let me explain what I'm seeing. Over there on the top of those trees, I see about 10,000 chariots of fire. And on those chariots of fire are the angels of God.

And then over there I see, you know what his servant would have said? I see nothing. I see the enemy and they're surrounding us and we're indulging and there's no protection whatsoever. And then over here I see some more chariots.

He could have done that and tried to explain what he was seeing. Or he could have gone the easy route and said, Lord, open his eyes. That's a lot easier than trying to explain the whole thing.

Because in a moment of time, if God gives a revelation, you don't have to do a lot of explaining. I used to do it the same way until I learned that trick. Until I understood God's heart on that, I used to think, oh, I've seen a lot from the Lord.

He's shown me some wonderful things. How am I going to let them know what I'm seeing? I'll have to give them a clear outline. And I'll have to use vivid illustrations.

And I'll have to quote believable sources. I hope I still do that. But that's not how you're going to see.

I found a shortcut. Lord, open their eyes that they can see. That's the way to do it.

It's a lot easier to pray than it is to preach. It's a lot easier to ask the Lord to open your eyes. And if he begins to answer that prayer, then your heart sees.

And that's what happened to this servant. He began to see, verse 17, open his eyes. Did you notice? I almost had to.

In fact, I did laugh out loud as I was meditating on this. My wife came to see what was so funny. God has a sense of humor.

And I did laugh out loud. Did you notice that this angelic army didn't do anything? Greater are those that are with you than those that are with the world. And I suppose the servant said, good, let's see them fight now.

They didn't lift one finger to do one thing. They didn't shoot one single arrow. They were just there.

They just showed up. His eyes were open and he saw them. What did they do? They're just there.

And he looks up and he sees this tremendous army. But they're not doing anything. You say, well, didn't they do something later? Yeah.

They just made noise. It sounded like another army. They were just flapping their wings.

They did nothing. They said, boo, and the enemy scattered. But they didn't fight.

They did nothing. The way the victory was won, you didn't need angels to do it. When he prayed that they'd be blind and he brought them in and sent them back with a banquet and all, you didn't need angels for that.

What's that all about? Open his eyes that he might see. That he might see what? A bunch of angels that do nothing except stand there. Oh, I'll tell you, it's very, very instructive.

And may God help us. These angels that they saw the host of the Lord and the Lord whose host it is. The point is this.

He had fear in his heart. He was surrounded by a human army and he needed to see that he was on the winning side. Not that they would fight, but that they could fight.

And when he saw that they could fight, he knew he was on the winning side. There's no way that army can handle that army. And he knew that.

It didn't matter that they didn't fight. If it was God's will that they fought, they would. And he found peace in just knowing that it's possible that he's in control.

He didn't need deliverance. He needed to know that God could deliver if it was his will, if it was his pleasure, if it was his purpose. Very much like Stephen when he was stoned.

Recently, I studied Stephen and the stoning of Stephen. And I love the way the Bible words it. He looked up to heaven and he saw him standing.

You know how you say, what are you just standing around for? Do something. He's getting stoned and he's standing there. Why did that bring peace to him? When he saw the Lord standing, he knew who was in control.

And if he wanted to, he could have stopped it. And he found rest in knowing that he's standing there, that he's there, that the armies of the Lord, the host of the Lord, the angels are all around. And if God wanted them to, it would be over in a minute.

And now it becomes incidental whether he does it or not. I know he can deliver. Whether he does, it's up to him.

But I need to know he can. I need to know he can. Will he provide? I need to know he can provide.

Will he heal me? I need to know he can heal me. Once I know he can, I'm at rest. Because then, if he wants to, he will.

Will he rescue me? I need to know he can. And that's, God had to open his eyes to that. And that's the first picture of the opening of the eyes.

If you're going to enjoy victory, if I'm going to enjoy victory, I need to know that I'm on the winning side. And there's a second illustration of eye-opening here in chapters 6 and 7. If you read the record, I'll just sort of tell it to you. The war got pretty bad.

They made a siege around the capital, you know. And Samaria was besieged with this enemy army. How long it lasted, we don't know.

But it was long enough that there was a tremendous famine. They couldn't get in or out. It was a long time.

Verse 25 of chapter 6 tells how bad it was. It cost 80 shekels of silver to buy the meat from a donkey's head. That's not much meat, and that's a lot of money.

And that's how bad it got. And then you read later that it cost five shekels of silver to buy two quarts of dove's dung. That's what they were eating.

And you say, that's terrible to eat that. Well, you read down in the chapter, verse 28 and 29, they started eating their children. See, we just sort of read this la-la-la.

This was a terrible situation. And then chapter 7 describes the four lepers. And you remember their story.

They were dying outside the wall. And they made this choice in chapter 7, verse 3. They were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate, and they said to one another, why do we sit here till we die? If we say we'll enter the city, the famine's in the city. We'll die there.

If we sit here, we'll die also. Now therefore, come, let's go over to the camp of the Arameans. If they spare us, we'll live.

If they kill us, we'll but die. And I say, God had to open their eyes too. They didn't have to see that they were on the winning team.

They had to see something else. They had to see that the battle was already finished. That's what God showed them, that the battle was already done.

And the way He did it is so glorious. Look at chapter 7, verse 8. When the lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they entered one tent and ate and drank, carried from there silver and gold and clothes, and went and hid them. They returned, entered another tent, carried from there also, and went and hid them.

What's that all about? It's a picture of those who are on the verge of a great discovery, and God is opening their eyes to the fact that the enemy has already been dealt with, and the enemy's already finished, and the war is done, and it's all over, but they don't know it. And they think the enemy's hiding behind a tree, hiding in a cave. And so they see all the spoils, but they're afraid to go near it.

And so they sneak into a tent. They're looking around. They hear a noise, and they jump back.

And they go back in, but there's nobody around. God scared them away. The enemy went, boo! And they were gone.

And they grab a piece of bread, and they run out and hide behind the tree, and they eat it, and then they take some gold and they hide it, and they sneak around again. And after a while, they're saying, you know, I don't think there's anybody around here. And they got a little bolder.

And so they went into the next tent, and next thing you know, hey, come over here, you can't believe what I just found! And they come over, and they look into this tent, and they got all of this stuff. I'm not going to get into how God began to work in their heart from that discovery, how they had to share it with the brothers and the sisters at home. But God began to open their eyes to the fact that the war was done, and everything was theirs for the taking.

That is a revelation of the Lord. That's our message. That's our message.

You're on the winning team. May God open your eyes to see it. That's our message.

That's our message. The battle's done. The spoil is yours.

Take it. You need boldness to get that, but God has to open our eyes in order to see that. And so God is the one who gives revelation.

There's one other eye-opening illustration, and then we'll wrap that up. When the prophet announced the blessing of God, he said, God is able to change this situation. Don't forget, they're eating their kids.

They're eating the dove dung. They're spending a fortune to get a little piece of meat off a donkey's head. There's famine.

There's poverty. And God gives a word. Chapter 7, verse 2, The royal officer on whose hand the king was leaning answered the man of God and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, could this

thing be? He said, Tomorrow morning there's going to be so much bounty that there's going to be a great sale at the gate.

And what you used to spend fortune on, now you can get a whole steak for 30 cents. And just this tremendous sale at the gate. And the man had unbelief.

And he said, If God were to open the windows of heaven right now and drop everything out of heaven, that can't happen overnight. God said, I've got to open your eyes so that you can see that your situation, no matter how bad it is, can be changed overnight, can be changed now. You need God's eyes to see that.

And he said, Now, because of unbelief, you'll see others eat it, but you yourself won't eat it. And you remember how it was when the sale opened, everybody got so excited about the sale, they came in and they trampled this man and he died. He saw it, but he couldn't eat it.

What's my message? What's your message? What's the message of Elisha, the man that looks like Jesus? It's Christ. That's our message. Yeah, but break it down.

What is it? All right. It's the pure grace of God. It's free.

God will give it all for free. Especially forgiveness. It's all for free.

What's the message? What's our message? Our message is we can't do it. He does it. Especially in Christian service.

He'll raise us and then we'll be able to minister unto him. What's the message? The message is God opens your eyes so you can see these things. That's our message.

God has to show you. Especially in victory. You need to know in victory that you're on the winning team.

You need to know in victory that the battle is done. It's over. It's yours for the taking.

You need God to open your eyes that your situation can be changed overnight. And if you don't believe it, you'll see it in others, but you won't experience it. Oh may God help us with these things.

That's the message of the man of God. Let me just very briefly in closing make a comment on this fourth story. I know I've kept you awhile.

You've been very patient. I appreciate that. I told you the principle of the last story was the certainty of God's purposes.

The faithfulness of God. God's never taken by surprise, you know. There are no emergencies with Him.

He doesn't fret over anything going on in your life or mine. He's not anxious about anything. He's always moving toward His high purpose.

The illustration of this is the restoration, chapter 8, 1-6, of the widow and her son. Now when we talk, and some of you are probably not going to understand what I'm saying. I trust you all will.

May God help us on this. When we're talking about this guy, Elisha, and we're talking about those that respond to his message, we're talking about the remnant, we're talking about those who are really sold out and are seeing the Lord and wanting Him. They are a weird bunch.

They're not like the average church-gone kind of people. They're different. They're different.

And if you're in that group, you're part of that weird bunch. And this woman, because God had given her a supernatural son and had supernaturally raised that son from the dead, and now she had him twice, once by birth and once by resurrection, she became one of those crazy people. She had tasted the goodness of the Lord.

The story begins with a warning from the man of God about a seven-year famine that was going to take place in Israel. She was given direction by the Lord that probably wouldn't be accepted in any church. It was a weird direction.

To all onlookers, they would say, that's not from God. That is weird. I can't believe you believe that's from the Lord.

That's not from Him. Chapter 8-1, here's the direction she received. Arise with your household.

Sojourn wherever you can sojourn. Leave your inheritance and don't come back for seven years. Do you realize what that sounded like? Picture it in your own ears, then picture it in the ears of others.

Get up, leave everything, go anywhere. They didn't even tell them where to go. Get up, leave everything, go anywhere.

And then where does she go in verse 3? She goes to the land of the Philistines. The land of the Philistines? That's not God's will. How in the world can you do that? It's crazy.

Get up, leave everything, go anywhere. And don't come back for years. She had no other direction.

And so she goes to the land of the Philistines. Watch the Lord in this. This woman and her son, they had experienced the grace of the Lord.

They had seen God take care of them before. And now she's sensitive to obey that weird word. And off she goes.

There was a terrible famine among the people of God. Is God going to feed her? Sure He is. She's one of His.

Even in the land of the Philistines? Oh yeah. He's going to take care of her and watch over her. And at the end of the famine, at the end of the seven years, she comes back to her inheritance and she finds out somebody moved into her house and took over her farm and took over the land and they won't get out.

They usurped the whole property. But the Lord's her keeper. The Lord is the one that's watching over her.

This is such an amazing thing. Just think of the logistics of this. Verse 3, At the end of seven years, the woman returned from the land of the Philistines and she went out to appeal to the king for her house and for her field.

Now the king was talking with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God saying, Please relate to me the great things Elisha has done. And as he was relating to the king how he had restored the life, the one who was dead. Behold, the woman whose son he had restored to life appealed to the king for her house and for her field.

And Gehazi said, My Lord, O King, this is the woman and her son whom Elisha restored to life. She walked in right at that moment. They're talking about her after seven years.

And they're sitting down and they're discussing it. And he said, Oh, I was there. You should have seen it.

There was this kid, this little baby, and he was dead. I laid him, I did it myself. I put him on the bed.

He's dead. And I went up and I talked to him. It didn't work.

And God did a wonderful thing. And all of a sudden, knock at the door. And there they are.

And Gehazi asked them, asked them. And so the king asked her, You tell me the story. And she begins to pour out her heart and tell the same story.

And the Bible says, And the king restored everything. And not only gave it all back, everything that land produced since the day she left. Was also returned to her.

And she became a wealthy woman. You know why? Because God watches over His children. And He takes care of them.

And He doesn't leave an unfinished symphony. And He always completes His purpose. And He knows what He's doing.

And that's our message. The Lord is with you. And He's going to follow you.

And He's going with you. And He's taking care of it. And He's engineering things.

And He's controlling things. And He's protecting. And He's taking.

That's our message. What's our message? It's Jesus. What's our message? It's the grace of God.

That's our message. The pure grace of God. What's our message? It's the power of God.

What's our message? It's the light of God. He's the one that illumines us. What's our message? It's the keeping power of God.

It's Him. It's Him. It's Him.

It's Him. And now we get ready to close. Have you heard our message? Is there some leper here? I'm serious.

You say, nobody knows how dirty my heart is. I promise you. This is our message.

I promise you. You can be clean tonight. Don't come to Joshua and go out with a dirty heart.

This is where the Lord will meet you. He'll wash you whiter than snow. Doesn't matter what you've been in.

Doesn't matter how messed up you are. Come as a leper and He will cleanse you. You've been tired of serving the Lord in your own strength? You need something more than nature can give? Let me introduce you to the branch.

And let Him raise you up and in union with Him, go back out and serve the Lord. It's what He wants to do. The enemy got you? May God open your eyes.

May God open your eyes. May you see that you are on the winning team. We win.

We win. Hallelujah. We win.

I read the back of the book and we win. You're on the winning team. The battle is over.

It's finished. And He can change your situation overnight. Believe it.

Believe it. You say, yeah, but I've been on some crazy path and I'm not sure and I had such vague words and I left this and I don't know what's going to happen back here. He's in charge of that.

He's taking care of that. He's the God who keeps. He's the God who keeps.

That's our message. I'm going to ask you to bow with me. Let's just pray together and ask the Lord to work these things in our heart.

And for the message that you'll never leave us or forsake us, but you'll be with us and faithfully perform all of your will conforming us to the Lord Jesus. Thank you for these truths. And Lord, if there's someone in need, we ask you that they might be enabled as we prayed when we began.

Open their heart to respond. We ask in Jesus name. Amen.

I do need to say this because I don't want you to leave with a general blessing and unquenched truth in your heart. If there's somebody that has a need and needs to get together with a brother or a sister, an elder and pray about this forgiveness or this whatever it is. You can do it right there in your heart and in your seat.

There's no question about that. But if it would help you to meet with somebody, there are men here that are more than willing to sit down with you and to settle these issues. Don't come to Joshua and leave with these things not settled.

The Lord has come here to meet you. I trust you've come here to meet the Lord. Thank you.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11424.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ed-miller/miracles-of-elisha-message-4/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net