

# The Farewell Gift

by Horatius Bonar

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual sympathy, holy imitateness, divine ambition, quiet expectation, and conscious possession in our walk with God.*

**Scripture:** 2 Kings 2:9

**Topics:** "Spiritual Empowerment", "Faith and Expectation"

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## Description

Horatius Bonar reflects on the poignant farewell between Elijah and Elisha, emphasizing the deep bond of love and spiritual connection they shared. Elisha's request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit signifies his desire for spiritual empowerment and a greater anointing to fulfill God's work. Bonar highlights the importance of spiritual sympathy, holy imitateness, divine ambition, quiet expectation, and conscious possession in the life of a believer. He encourages the congregation to seek a deeper relationship with God and to aspire for greater spiritual gifts, trusting in God's abundant generosity. The sermon calls for a faith that expects God's promises to be fulfilled in our lives.

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## Transcript

"And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."--2 Kings 2:9-11

THIS is the parting of two friends; of the master and the servant, Elijah and Elisha. They journey together, they cross Jordan together, they come up to the gate of heaven together. They must separate; the one to go up to heaven, the other to remain a little longer here. They part, not in anger like Paul and Barnabas, but like David and Jonathan,--in love. Elijah speaks first, and his love to his faithful companion shews itself in the words, "Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee." All that he possesses, all that is in his power, he will give.

But Elisha's request goes beyond what he had expected, or what he could grant. "Thou hast asked a hard thing," a thing beyond my power to give; a thing which only God can give. I must refer you to him; but I am permitted to give you this sign, "if you see me when taken;" that is to be the token that God grants your request; if not, then the request cannot be granted.

The sign was given. Elisha saw his master ascend; nay, was allowed to obtain the mantle of his master, in token of his receiving his spirit. And acknowledging this sign, he rends his own clothes into two parts, as if putting his former self aside and putting on Elijah.

But the request of Elisha is a striking one. It was not what Elijah expected or could grant; but it was in sympathy with his own feelings, and he therefore referred it to God. It was for the Spirit,--that Spirit that rested on and dwelt in Elijah,--nay, a double portion of that Spirit. He admired and loved his master; and his desire was to be like him; nay, to get beyond him; to rise higher; to do and say greater things than Elijah said or did.

In this narrative we find, in Elisha, the indication of such things as the following:--

I. Spiritual sympathy. He is of one mind and spirit with his master. He has been witness of his life and doings; he sees the spirit which has pervaded all his words and deeds; not merely the spirit of power and miracles, but of holiness, and zeal, and prayerfulness, and boldness. Sympathising with all these, he longs to have the same mind; to be filled with the same spirit. How well for us if our sympathies were thus with the men in whom the Spirit of God dwells or has dwelt in ages past! Not with this world, nor with the spirit of the world, but with the world to come, and with the spirit of it, should our sympathies be. Not with the men of the world's genius, or science, or learning; not with earth's poets or philosophers; but with prophets and apostles. Whatever there is of truth and beauty in Homer, or Plato, or Demosthenes, or Shakespeare, or Bacon, or Milton, or Wordsworth, or Tennyson, let us accept; but let our spiritual sympathies ascend far higher; let us realise our true oneness with Enoch, and Elijah, and Elisha, and Isaiah, and Ezekiel; our fellowship with that Holy Spirit which dwelt in them. The sympathies of this age are confessedly not with prophets and apostles. These are looked on as fragments of obsolete antiquity and old-fashioned narrow-mindedness. Let us, however, go back to these ancient times and men, not concerned to be "abreast of the age" if we be "abreast" of the Spirit.

II. Holy imitateness. His desire is to be like Elijah. He wishes not merely to have "the Spirit," but "thy spirit," the spirit that dwelt in Elijah. To be like him in the divine features of his character; like him in the possession of the Spirit and in that special form in which he possessed it; this was what he sought. There is certainly but one great model; but there are subordinate ones also. Paul said, "Be followers of me," and the eleventh of Hebrews is a collection of models, a book of patterns, in each of which we may find something to copy. While copying Christ, then, let us not overlook the inferior models, either among the inspired men of Bible-days, or the uninspired worthies of later times. May the spirit of

Elijah, and Paul, and John rest on us; the spirit also of Wycliffe and Huss, of Luther and Calvin, of Knox, and Welsh, and Rutherford, and Whitefield, and M'Cheyne, and Hewitson.

III. Divine ambition. Elijah was not only full of admiration for his master, not only wished to be like him, but desired to get far beyond him. He asked a "double portion" of his spirit. This is true ambition; this is coveting earnestly the best gifts of which Paul speaks, and in connection with which he points out the more excellent way of "charity," in which especially Elisha seems to have risen higher than his master, Elisha's ministry being more one of love than Elijah's. In such things as these let us be ambitious. There is no fear of aiming too high or seeking too much. Let us not give way to the false humility which says, "Oh that we had but the hundredth part of what Elijah had!" Let us rather at once, with Elisha, seek to have far more. Let us seek a double portion of his spirit. This is true humility. It is desiring to be what God wishes us to be. It is honouring his fullness and his generosity. It is acknowledging the extent of blessing in

reserve; reckoning on it as quite illimitable, and therefore not confining ourselves to what others have had before us, but going up into the divine fullness, for far more than has ever yet been obtained even by the fullest.

IV. Quiet expectation. He speaks and acts like one who fully expected to get what he asked. Elijah had referred him to God for "the hard thing" he had asked; it was in God's hand alone. "It is not mine to give" (as if anticipating the Lord's words). Elisha owns the divine sovereignty, and is calm; but he realises the divine love, and expects. He believes, and therefore does not make haste, but goes quietly on beside his master to see the end. He believes, and therefore he assures himself that God is not likely to be less gracious than his master, nor to deny him what Elijah would gladly give if he could. Let us believe! Have faith in God. Trust Him for much, for he is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.

V. Conscious possession. He accepts the sign: he sees the prophet caught up; he seizes his mantle, and returns by the way he came, conscious of having received the "double portion." He believes, and therefore he speaks and acts. The sign promised has been given; can he doubt that the thing promised is also given? He may have nothing new in feeling to corroborate it, but that matters not. He has it in simple faith in the bare word of the true God. The "double portion" is mine, he says to himself; and he goes back to exercise his prophetic calling, in the calm consciousness of possessing more than his master did. What is Jordan to him now? A stroke of the mantle divides it; and henceforth his life is to be one of mighty and gracious miracle. Let us speak and act as men who believe that God fulfils His word to us. Let us trust that word when we use it. There is more in it than in Elijah's mantle. It is living and divine. Let us not blunt or deaden it by our want of confidence in its power.

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