

Lessons From Elisha 01 Death in the Pot

by Joseph Balsan

The sermon explores the dangers of spiritual dearth and false teachings, emphasizing the need for God's Word as the true source of life and nourishment.

Duration: 42:37

Scripture: 2 Kings 4:42

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Jesus Teachings"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of a man from Baal Shalisha who brought twenty loaves of barley and fullers of corn to Elisha. This story represents the lowliness and humiliation of Jesus in his earthly life and his resurrection. The man's offering was initially seen as insignificant, but Elisha instructed him to give it to the people, and miraculously, everyone ate and there was even food left over. The preacher emphasizes the importance of cultivating our own personal fellowship with the Lord and having something to give to others, as it is through giving that blessings overflow. The sermon also highlights the spiritual emptiness that can only be filled by Jesus, who is the bread of life.

Transcript

Well, I want to say again it's a pleasure to be with you this morning, and for the sake of those who perhaps might feel a little confused about I saying that I'm from Des Moines and being mentioned in the circulars of the programs that I'm from Urbandale, Iowa, I just want to say that Urbandale is right next to Des Moines, it's part of the metropolitan area of Des Moines, Iowa. So there's no contradiction, there's perfect harmony. I would like to have you turn to 2 Kings chapter 4 and verse 38.

In being exercised about what to bring before you while I am here at this conference, while the Lord has laid upon my heart some of these things, in the book of Kings concerning this man who is the beautiful type of our Lord Jesus Christ, Elisha. Verse 38, And Elisha came again to Gilgal, and there was a dearth in the land, and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him. And he said unto his servants, Set on the great pot, and seed pottage for the sons of the prophets.

And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage, for they knew them not. So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot.

And they could not eat thereof. But he said, Then bring meal, and he cast it into the pot, and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot.

And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat. And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give unto the people, that they may eat.

For thus saith the Lord, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof. So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord. May the Lord bless to us the reading of his word.

Those of us who have read the Bible and know something about it, we remember that shortly after the days of Solomon, in the reign of his son Rehoboam, when the kingdom of Israel was divided into two parts, there were ten tribes that followed Jeroboam, and they were known as the tribes of Israel. And there were two tribes that followed Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, and they were known as the children of Judah. And we know that as time went on, both of these segments of the children of Israel departed from the Lord.

Now amongst the people of Judah there was from time to time a revival. A good king arose and brought them back to the Lord, but nothing such could be said concerning the children of Israel. As far as we know, there was not a single king amongst all who ever brought them back to the Lord, but concerning many of them it was said that he walked in the ways of the sins of Jeroboam, king of Israel.

But God raised up prophets amongst the people of Israel who stood as witnesses for God and tried to bring them back to God. Two of the greatest of these prophets were Elijah and Elisha. In fact, Elisha followed after Elijah, and both of their names are very significant.

Elijah means, My God is Jah, or Jehovah, and Elisha means, My God is salvation. Both of these prophets did many wonderful miracles. Elijah, it is said, brought forth eight miracles and was a prophet of judgment.

He brought fire down from heaven, he slew the prophets of Baal, and he had to flee for his life, we remember, from the wife of Ahab, king of Israel, Jezebel by name. Elisha, on the other hand, was more a prophet of grace. It is said that he performed twice as many miracles as Elijah did, and Elisha's name means, My God is salvation.

Elijah and Elisha were quite different. Elijah, as it were, lived alone. He dwelt in the wilderness.

He was a rugged, rough prophet. Elisha, on the other hand, was one who dwelt in the cities, one who moved amongst the people, one who sought to be a channel of blessing in a nation that had departed from God. As we follow his movements, we come this morning to this incident in 2 Kings 4, where it says, And Elisha came to Gilgal, and there was a dearth in the land, and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him.

There are just several things that I would like to bring before you this morning, and the first thing that I want you to notice is the dearth in the land. The dearth in the land. Now, that is rather a strange thing, because we know that Gilgal was a place of many great memories concerning God's dealings with the people of Israel in days of old.

We remember that when they crossed the River Jordan, the first place that they came to was the place called Gilgal, and we remember how they used the knives in circumcision, signifying the cutting off of the flesh. And whenever the children of Israel went out on their forages, or whenever they went out, they always came back to the place called Gilgal, because that was the place of self-judgment, the place where Israel looked at themselves and considered themselves the place where they were brought back to the Lord. But here we find that in Gilgal, there was a dearth.

Now, this was a dearth, my friends, because the people had gotten away from God. The people were following after the ways and the ideas of men. They were disobedient to the commandments of God, and because of it, there was a dearth.

I wonder this morning, as you sit in this meeting, can you look back to times in your experience when you were happier, when perhaps you had more joy in the Lord and you enjoyed the things of God than perhaps you do today? You know, friends, there's no doubt that today we are living in a spiritual dearth. The world feels that there is a spiritual dearth. Our sister last night read a little story of Ann Landers.

I remember several years ago reading in our Des Moines newspaper about a young man writing into one of these columnists, and he said to this columnist, what is wrong with my life? Why, I've got everything that one could desire. Why, I've got an automobile, I've got a very good home, I go to the university, I have many friends, I have all of these things, and yet there is a lack. What is it that I lack? And of course, the columnist says, well, you have to cultivate new friends, and so on and so forth.

But the thing that impressed me was this. That young man had everything as far as the world was concerned, and yet there was a dearth in his life. In the unsaved today, there is a dearth, there is an emptiness that the world and the things of the world can't fill.

Perhaps as you sit in this meeting this morning, this is true of you, that there is a dearth in your soul. The Lord Jesus said, I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger.

He that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I want you to notice, this dearth was in the land of Israel, in the place where there should be no dearth. And my friends, one of the promises of the Lord Jesus is, I am the bread of life.

He that cometh to me shall never hunger. He that believeth on me shall never thirst. What is wrong? Is there some fault in the Lord Jesus? I read an article not so long ago in a religious magazine that was entitled, No Disappointments in Jesus, and the writer was bringing out that she had experienced disappointments, things that she had expected from the Lord Jesus, but nevertheless that she had not received because she herself did not have the right expectations.

No, my friends, there are no disappointments in the Lord Jesus. We may have disappointments in our lives, but there is no fault in him. He is abundantly able to satisfy, and he wants to satisfy our hearts, but the question is, is there a dearth in our souls? Is there a dearth in our spiritual experience? It says in this fourth chapter, And Elisha came again to Gilgal, and there was a dearth in the land, and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him.

And he said unto his servants, Set on the great pot, and seed pottage for the sons of the prophets. And one went out into the field to gather herbs. My friends, into this place where there was a dearth, why Elisha came to that place? Because there was a need, and I trust that that will be our experience in the days that

are ahead of us, that if there may be a dearth in our souls, that the Lord Jesus Christ will come in, and the Lord Jesus Christ will come with blessing.

And so we find that as the sons of the prophets were sitting around, though I just wonder sometimes, is that what we do? We're just sitting around. We say, well, there's a dearth in our assembly. There's a dearth in our lives, and yet we're sitting around, and we're inactive about it.

We're not doing anything about it. I remember a number of years ago in Michigan, I was visiting in a farming area with my wife and two sons, and we were there just for a few days, and I wanted to do some fishing. And this brother on his farm happened to have a little pond in another field that I could see from the house.

And I said to him, brother, how is that pond over there? He says, well, I said, how is it for fishing? He said, well, it's not so good. I said, it looks like a good-sized pond from here. What's wrong? He said, well, he said, the trouble with that pond is it's all covered over with moss.

It's all covered over with green material. He says that little pond has an inlet, but that pond has no outlet. And because it has no outlet, the result is the water just comes in, but it doesn't go out, and so it becomes stagnant.

And I thought to myself, how many lives there are just like that. They're always taking in, and they wonder, why is there a dearth? Because there's no outlet. We're not reaching out.

These sons of the prophets, they were sitting there, and as they were sitting there, why, Elisha says, set on the great pot and see pottage for the sons of the prophets. And then, you know, it says, one went out into the field to gather herbs and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lapful, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage, for they knew them not. So they poured out for the men to eat, and it came to pass as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot, and they could not eat thereof.

When the prophet Elisha says, sit on the great pot and see pottage for the sons of the prophets, it says, one went out into the fields to gather herbs. And my friends, that's the danger that I wanted to speak about to you this morning. Because in the midst of the dearth, we have those who are like the sons of the prophets, who are going out into the fields, and they're seeking some way to allay and to alleviate the dearth.

They're going out into the field. This young man, as he went out into the field, why it says, he found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lapful. Now Bible commentators and students are not exactly sure about what this was, but most of them believe that it was a little plant called the collosynth.

And it resembles a cucumber in shape and appearance. It's a very cathartic plant, and very poisonous. But sometimes when it is used in very sensible proportions, it can be a very useful medicine.

And as I thought of those three things, something that resembles a cucumber in appearance and shape, something that has a purgative effect, but something that can be very useful if it is used intelligently and in just proportions, it reminded me of some of the gourds that men are introducing into the church today in order to do away with the so-called dearth. One of them, I would suggest to you, is the gourd of intellectualism. Intellectualism.

There are many today who are arising amongst the assemblies of God's people with a spirit of intellectualism and supposed superintelligence that puts them beyond the realm of criticism, the realm of learning, or the realm of instruction. Intellectualism is something that is beginning to pervade the assemblies of God's people. There are young men rising up today who are almost like the sons of the prophets.

Yes, they've got education. And my friends, I want to say that education is a very good thing if it is used in the right proportion and in the right way. Because Paul was a very educated man.

John Nelson Darby and William Kelly were very learned and educated men. But they were men who, with their education, came to the study of the Word of God, and as they studied the Word of God and searched the Word of God, their teaching and preaching unfolded the Word of God and made this book precious and living and illuminative and instructive to those who read it and to those who heard. But you know, we're getting a dose of intellectualism today which is almost a purgative.

A brother was telling me in the city of Chicago, I sat and listened to this man, and as I listened to him with his language and with his learning, it all sounded very well. But as I walked out of the door, I thought to myself, what am I carrying away for my soul? What is sticking to my spiritual ribs? What is helping me in my Christian life? Is the result of it that as we listen to it, we go out with the idea, well, what we have been taught for years is no longer true? It's no longer dependable. We can't accept these things today.

Those who taught us in days of old, they didn't know anything. Is that true? Did those men know anything? Did those men believe anything? Did those men stand for anything? We remember that in the book of Solomon, Proverbs, it says, remove not the ancient landmarks. And there are landmarks of truth that are truth forever.

Thy truth, O God, is settled forever in heaven. Intellectualism put into the pot. There is death in the pot.

Another wild gourd, and I might say another wild gourd that is used today, is the gourd of emotionalism. The modern tongues movement, I think, is an outstanding example of that, tongues. What we need today is a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Tongues, speaking in tongues, is the spiritual experience. Several years ago, while we were at a lunch in a restaurant, I saw a young man. And as I saw this young man, I recognized him as the son of an elder from one of the assemblies in Chicago.

And I said to him, aren't you so and so? He says, yes, I am. I said, what are you doing here in Des Moines? He says, I live here in Des Moines. I said, you do? Well, how come you don't come to the assembly? He says, well, he says, I'm associated with such and such a movement.

I says, why, that is a tongues movement, isn't it? He says, yes, it is. He says, I'm seeking after this experience. And he says, I've experienced a little of it.

I says, well, let me ask you a question. Why is it that you are seeking this experience? What is it in this experience that you want? He says, well, there's a release. He says, you know, it's an amazing release from all of your tensions, and you just forget, and you have a wonderful feeling.

Tongues. Is tongues the insignia of the Holy Spirit? Is the tongues movement a revival of the ancient Pentecostal experience that the early believers experienced? My friends, when we come to the word of

God, we find that there are certain guidelines. If you were to go through the book of Acts, you would notice that every time, and there were three instances of speaking in tongues in the book of Acts, in the second chapter of Acts, the tenth chapter of Acts, and the nineteenth chapter of Acts, those are the only three incidents of speaking in tongues in the entire book of Acts.

And you will find that in each of these incidents, there are Jews there, and you will find that these tongues were a distinct sign to the Jews to prove and to show to them the credibility of the testimony that was being brought before them. If you were to turn to the fourteenth chapter of First Corinthians, and the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, you would find that the ministry concerning tongues is adjusted, and one of the things that brought before us very distinctly is, tongues shall cease. Oh, you say, well, then knowledge has ceased too, and prophecy has ceased too.

It says tongues shall cease, knowledge shall be done away, and so on. Well, then these things are done away too. Yes, knowledge and prophecy are done away just as tongues are.

The gift of knowledge is no longer in existence, if I might say that. The gift of prophecy is no longer in existence, in the sense that it was in existence in the biblical times. In the biblical times, a man got knowledge without the study of the word of God.

It was a gift. My friends, we don't get that today. If I want the knowledge of God's will and the knowledge of God's mind, it doesn't come to me from midair.

I've got to come to the word of God, and I've got to search and study and meditate upon the word of God. And the only prophecy that I can utter is the prophecy that comes from the completed, revealed will of God in the Bible. Tongues shall cease.

But many today are seeking that experience, because they're seeking to fill the dirt in their own souls. And we could go on to speak of the gourd of legalism. Oh, how that today is being introduced into the pot in order to remove the dirt.

What we need is to tighten things up. What we need is to make things stricter and more rigid. For a number of years, I preached with our brother T.R. McCullough, known perhaps to some of you.

And I remember he was telling the story one time about how some asked him, Brother Tom, are you loose or are you tight? What you need to do is to go over to Ireland to tighten you up. He says, Well, he says, you know, I found that whenever the axe head is loose on the handle, all you've got to do is get it into the water and it will soon tighten it up. And it's the very same.

All we need to do is to get into the word of God and the word of God will straighten us out. The word of God will establish us. The word of God will show us.

The result is that the gourd of legalism, and you know it's very significant that this was something that the early apostles met. You'll notice that all three of these errors, when these words were introduced into the pot, we find that they said there is death in the pot. They all recognized that there was death in the pot.

They all recognized that there was something that was bringing death. The 41st verse, the 40th verse, it says, So they poured out for the men to eat, and it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot, and they could not eat thereof. My friends, when they realized that by their own effort and by their own self-will they were only bringing in

death, they came to the right person, didn't they? They came to Elisha.

They cried unto Elisha and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot, and they could not eat thereof. But he said, Then bring meal. You know, I was thinking as I was reading this over, how could Elisha say, Then bring meal? Why wasn't the meal there in the first place? Where was the meal? Where was the meal when they were going to sit on the pot? Was it perhaps that they said, Well, that's too old-fashioned.

That's too insignificant. That meal is not what we need. We need something more than that.

You know, that seems to be the tendency today. The tendency today seems to be, We need something more than the meal. We need something more than Christ.

We can't keep our young people with Christ. We can't keep the things going with Christ. We need something more.

And the result is, the meal is passed by. I brought before you three gourds. One was the gourd of intellectualism.

The second was the gourd of emotionalism. The third was the gourd of legalism. And, my friends, all three of these were met by the apostle, the gourd of intellectualism.

That was the era of the Colossians, wasn't it? Amongst the Colossians, it was being said, Well, it's all right to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, but that's not enough. You need more than that. And so they were bringing in and introducing the philosophy and the wisdom of the world.

And so what did the apostle do? We know that there are two epistles, Ephesians and Colossians, which are complementary toward one another. Ephesians is the epistle concerning the body. Colossians is the epistle concerning the head.

And in Colossians, Paul is bringing before the Colossians, No, it's not the wisdom of the world. It's not the philosophy of the world. It's Christ.

He is the wisdom of God. In Colossians 1, he brings him before us in all of his glory, in all of his deity, in all of his omnipotent power. In Colossians 2, he brings our association with him.

In Colossians 3, he brings Christ as the risen one before us, before whom you and I, upon whom you and I are to keep our eye. Christ, the wisdom of God. Ah, my friend, is your soul and mine being enriched with the knowledge of Christ? Christ, the wisdom of God, in the gourd of emotionalism, when Elisha took the meal and cast it into the pot.

How did Paul meet that? In the epistle to the Corinthians, he brings before them Christ. How? Christ as Lord. That's the theme of the epistle to the Corinthians.

There were many disorders in Corinth. There was immorality in Corinth. There was brother going to law against brother in Corinth.

There needed to be the adjustment concerning the marriage relationship in the church of Corinth. They needed to have consideration one toward another in regard to eating and abstaining. They needed correction as to how the Lord's Supper was to be carried out, how the assembly was to function.

They needed correction concerning the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, the resurrection. They needed correction also concerning the various gifts. And what was the remedy that Paul brought before them? As he cast in the meal, it is Christ is Lord.

Christ is Lord. My friends, we need to have that revived and introduced into our hearts and into our lives. Christ is Lord.

Is Christ Lord? Is Christ the Lord of your life? Is he the Lord of mine? Yes, I know him as Savior, but is he Lord? And when it comes to legalism, what does Paul bring before the church in Galatia? He brings Christ again, but this time Christ is the one who suffered, who died in order to deliver us from the world and to bring us into a unity that is the result of the truth of the gospel. Notice it says here, then he said, but he said, then bring meal. And he cast it into the pot, and he said, pour out for the people that they may eat, and there was no harm in the pot.

They cast it into the pot. You know, we're living in a day today when these evils are creeping amongst the people of God, and we could spend all our time fighting against these evils. But what we really need, my friends, is to have Christ presented to our hearts and Christ introduced into the circumstances, and this is the solution.

This is the divine remedy for the death in the pot. But you notice in the 42nd verse it says, And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof, and he said, Give unto the people that they may eat. I think it's very significant that this incident is brought in right after what we have been looking at, because we want to notice that it was still the time of dearth.

But here was a man, my friends, a man who had something to bring because he had been raising a crop in the time of dearth. You know, we're living in a time of great spiritual declension. We're living in a time of great spiritual departure.

And so many seem to be carried along with the tide. I remember an experience I had a number of years ago shortly after I became a Christian. While I was in the days of the Depression, my folks were on relief, and I wanted to see them get off relief.

It was the time that FDR introduced his civilian conservation program when he became president, and so he sent many of these young men whose folks were on relief to different parts of the country. You remember? Well, I was sent from Chicago all the way to Oregon in order to work in the woods and in the forest there to cut roads into the forest so that in time of fire they could get to the site of the fire without too much difficulty. And on Sundays we didn't have anything to do in our camp.

We were miles away from any city. We were out in the woods, but there was a beautiful river gliding by our camp, and so some of us would walk along this river for miles. And I remember one July afternoon sitting down by a falls on that beautiful river, that beautiful stream, and we sat there and watched the salmon trying to leap the falls to go out to the Pacific to spawn.

And as we watched them and saw how they'd try to get up those falls, those falls must have been 15 or so feet high, 12 to 15 feet high, and some would just nearly make it and come back and leap again and finally make it. I didn't think anything more of it, but just before we closed our camp in September, as we came back from a work detail, I noticed some boys by the river in the camp. And so I went over to, they were

looking at the river, and so I wanted to see what they were looking at, and I noticed beautiful big salmon about that long, and they were just drifting back down that river, drifting back to die.

And the boys were picking up stones and casting them at those salmon, trying to kill those salmon. And I thought to myself, my, what a difference. In July, those salmon were meeting every obstacle and overcoming every obstacle and going against the current because they had a mission, they had a purpose in view.

There was nothing that could deter them. But now they were just drifting along with the current, and drifting along with the current to die, they were being stoned. And I thought, what is my life like? Am I going against the current? Am I going against the tide? Or am I just drifting with the tide? Here was a man in Baal-Shelisha.

There was a time of dearth. The nation itself was away from God. Everything was against him, but this man was cultivating a little crop somewhere.

He reminds me of Gideon, when the people of Israel were under the Midianites, why there and everything was taken from them. Why he was called, he had a little work. He was threshing wheat to get food for his own soul.

Here was a man, he was cultivating a crop, and he brought of the firstfruits to the man of God twenty loaves of barley and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. Here was a man who had firstfruits to bring to Elisha. Do you and I have something to bring to our Lord Jesus Christ? Do you and I have something to give to him? Twenty loaves of barley, full ears of corn.

Ah, friends, here we have a double picture of our Lord Jesus, don't we? Twenty loaves of barley, speaking of the lowliness and the humiliation of our Lord Jesus. Full ears of corn, speaking of Christ in resurrection. And notice what it says, he said when he brought it to Elisha, give unto the people that they may eat.

And his servitor said, what? Should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, give the people that they may eat. For thus saith the Lord, they shall eat and shall leave thereof. So he set it before them, and they did eat.

Here was a man, my friends, who was producing something that he could bring to Elisha that would satisfy the hunger of others. Let me ask you this morning, what are you and I doing? Are we so busy running around, trying to introduce gourds into the pot that can only bring death? Or are you and I, like this man of Baal-Shelisha, cultivating a crop, cultivating our own personal experience of fellowship with the Lord, cultivating our own knowledge of him through his word, having something? It may seem insignificant, perhaps. Gehazi, the servant of Elisha said, when Elisha said, give unto the people that they may eat, he said, what should I set this? Why, it's only twenty loaves, it's not very much.

How could it ever feed so many? He says, nevertheless, give to them, they shall eat, and there will be something left over. You know, it's remarkable, there's always something left over when the Lord gives. When you and I give of what the Lord has given us, there's always something left over.

After all, it's only when you and I give that the blessing overflows. Someone has very well said, we must share if we would keep that good thing from above. Ceasing to give, we cease to have.

Such is the law of love. Our friends, we're living in time of dearth. Many today are trying to introduce those things which only bring death in the pot.

The divine remedy is Christ. And if you and I in our personal lives are exercised, you and I are cultivating fellowship and intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ, we'll have something to give to him that will bring blessing to others, and there will always be more than we can ever use. Who are you and I like? Are we like the son of the prophet, or are we like the man from Baal Shalisha? May you and I be worthy representatives of our Lord Jesus here.

Shall we pray? Our Father, we bow before thee this morning to thank thee for our Lord Jesus. We thank thee that he is the bread of life, that he is the answer to every problem, that he is the one who can satisfy our every need. We know, Father, if there's dearth in our lives, it's not because of things around, it's because of things within.

Because we have turned from him, we have become dissatisfied with him who is the bread of life. And so, Father, we just ask thee to bless thy word to each one and separate us with thy blessing in the Savior's worthy and precious name. Amen.

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