

Life of Elijah - Part 5

by Major Ian Thomas

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth and maturity, and the need to understand the true nature of salvation and the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Duration: 1:06:15

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:9

Topics: "Elijah"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding our spiritual condition. He starts by sharing a story about a man who believed he was dead, despite all evidence to the contrary. The speaker then draws a parallel between this man's delusion and the danger of believing we are spiritually alive when we are actually spiritually dead. He highlights the consequences of this misunderstanding and emphasizes that Jesus died not just to save us from hell, but to bring God's presence into our lives. The sermon encourages listeners to truly grasp the significance of Jesus' sacrifice and live in the power of his indwelling.

Transcript

Did you ever hear the man who thought he was dead? It was a little unusual. Nothing would persuade him otherwise. His family, of course, reasoned with him to no avail.

His friends argued the point, but without convincing him. He was examined by psychiatrists, counseled by his pastor, but nothing would persuade him other than that he was dead. Finally, a doctor was talking to him and said, do you believe that a dead man can bleed? So he thought about that for a bit, and then he said, no, no, he said a dead man couldn't bleed.

And so, grabbing his hand unawares, the doctor with a sharp instrument punctured the tip of one of his fingers. And on the tip of his finger there developed a tiny ruby red bead of blood. The man looked at it in utter amazement.

He just couldn't believe it. It was as though he were transfixed, mesmerized. He said, that is incredible.

He said, that is utterly astonishing. I never would have believed it. Dead men can bleed.

Well, you'd say that a man in that condition is in a sad way. But if it's sad when a man who's physically alive imagines that he's physically dead, it's worse when a person who is spiritually dead goes on

believing that they're spiritually alive. That's worse, because the consequences are far more serious.

But if it's sad when a man physically alive thinks he's physically dead, if it's worse when a man spiritually dead thinks he's spiritually alive, it's even more pathetic, maybe, when a man who is spiritually alive goes on living as though he was spiritually dead. And that's really what we were talking about last evening. Dumped at Bethel, knowing nothing more than that the Lord Jesus did his thing 2,000 years ago.

That my sins being forgiven, instead of going to hell, I'll go to heaven. Without grasping the fact that the Lord Jesus died for us supremely, not to get us out of hell and into heaven, but to get him, our creator redeemer, out of heaven into us. So that we may live moment by moment in the power of his divine indwelling.

Saved not by his death, reconciled to God by his death, saved by his life. This is what Paul had in mind in the first of his two epistles to the Thessalonians, and the fifth chapter, nine and ten. God hasn't appointed us to judgment.

He is unwilling that any should perish. He's willing only that all should come to repentance and be saved. The apostle makes it abundantly clear.

He tasted death for every man. He's the savior of all men, but effectually of them that believe. Experientially, he moves in his faithfulness only in response to faith, when somebody is prepared to let God do it.

So God hasn't appointed us to judgment. That's not his appointment. He's appointed us to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But we mustn't take a narrow, emaciated, anemic, inadequate view of salvation, which alas is all too often the case. People come to me sometimes before the message and say, will it be a salvation message? I don't know any other, because salvation isn't limited to the baby language of getting out of hell and into heaven. That's only the threshold.

That's only the door. That isn't salvation. To know my sins have been given, that isn't salvation.

That's only the premise, the prerequisite, the first requirement for salvation. Somebody will come to me and say, is it going to be a gospel meeting? Well, I tell them it won't be Buddhist or Mohammedan or anything else. The only good news I know is the good news that God's given us in his word.

You see, don't reduce gospel to something tragically less than God had in mind when he gave us the evangel, the good news. If only we would rediscover the evangel. I'm thoroughly convinced we don't need more evangelists.

We got too many already. We don't need, in a sense, more evangelism. That isn't our primary need.

We need to rediscover the evangel. What the gospel is really all about. And if we really rediscovered the evangel, that it's God let loose in the redeemed humanity of forgiven sinners who know what it means not only to be redeemed, but to be saved by his life.

You'd have evangelists galore. Every single member of the body of Christ would be on the job available for him to do that, which is essentially his business seeking and saving that which is lost. And we would have evangelism galore because wherever any redeemed sinner boy, girl, man, or woman embracing the

resurrection life of Jesus Christ, allowing him to be loose in their lives, the impact of Christ through them in the world in which they live would be evangelism.

That is evangelism. We need to rediscover the evangel. God hasn't appointed us to judgment.

He's appointed us to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. But then lest we have an anemic inadequate view of salvation, he goes on to define in the next, the 10th verse, who died for us. That's the redemptive act, but that isn't the end of the story.

Who died for us that, that whether we wake or sleep in the body or out of it on earth or in heaven, in time or eternity, physically alive or physically dead, he died for us that whether we wake or sleep, we might live together with Christ. That's salvation living together with Christ. In other words, not only coming alive, but acting as though you were alive.

And there are all too many, you see, who've come to Christ to come alive, but don't know that they are alive and don't enjoy the life that imparted to them as abolished death, Christ himself. For remember, eternal life isn't a place. It isn't a destination.

It isn't somewhere you're going when you're dead and somebody's buried you and put a roof, a wreath, a wreath on your, on your tomb. No, no. This is the record God has given to his eternal life.

And this life, which alone is eternal, is where? In his son. He that has the son has life. He that doesn't have the son of God doesn't have life.

That's why the only evidence that I've got eternal life is that others see Christ in me behaving. That's the only tangible evidence. I may have eternal life, but if the world can't see Christ behaving me, keep your mouth shut.

Because eternal life isn't something in the then and there. Eternal life is in the here and now. The only quality of life that you will ever enjoy when you get to heaven is that life that became yours in the moment that Christ came to take up residence within your humanity.

That's why you've got to get so accustomed to sharing his life on earth that when you get to heaven, you won't even know you've arrived. You'll simply look around and say, I don't think I've been here before. But the life that you will enjoy in heaven is that life that became yours in the moment that God gave you his son.

According to his divine power, he's given to us in Christ, all that pertains to being alive and that which pertains to being alive in Christ pertains to God likeness. Because righteousness is that which derives from his life active in our available humanity. Because by these exceeding great and precious promises, I'm quoting from the second of Peter's two epistles, verses three and four, by these exceeding great and precious promises, you and I are made partakers of the divine nature.

Isn't that incredible? When you dare to tell anybody that you're a Christian, you're saying I have become a partaker of the divine nature and God himself has taken up residence within my humanity and my body now on earth is the temple of the living God. And if you want to tell the world that the God who created the universe is the source of all righteousness lives in you and you've given him control to run the show, then by and large, your mom, your dad, your children, your neighbors, your fellow workers and associates ought to notice it. And that is evangelism.

When somebody comes knocking on your door, not when you go knocking on their door, that may on occasions be necessary, but primarily what is necessary is that somebody comes knocking on your door saying, excuse me, what makes you tick? That's evangelism. Dad, if you're the kind of father that you are because you have received Christ into your life, I've never quite understood that, but I'll tell you something. If that's what has made you what you are as my dad, could you tell me how to receive Christ? That's evangelism.

Mom, if you're the kind of mom you are because you're converted, would you tell me how to get converted? I can't wait. That's evangelism. When somebody in the department of which you are the boss knocks on your door and says, I haven't been too long in the employment of this particular company or yours.

I've heard say you're a bit religious or something. I've never been, but I'll tell you something, I've never had a job like this, nor a boss like you. And if it's something to do with your relationship to Jesus Christ, would you please tell me how I can have that relationship so that I can become the kind of person that you are? That's evangelism.

Simple, isn't it? But it's only possible for those who being alive, having exercised that first option, live as though they are alive. And that demands another option. It doesn't give you any more than you've had.

It simply means that you're prepared to draw upon the resources that you have received. Nobody can ever have more than that moment in time, as we shall be discussing when Christ in the fullness of deity comes to occupy their humanity, he in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in whom right now, present tense, we are complete. So don't get dumped at Bethel because you'll live in self-imposed poverty and you'll be a beggar all your days.

Until one day you'll get to heaven and realize how much you wasted of the resources that were made available to you by the glorious fact that Christ alive in you made available to you all there is of God. For all there is of God, remember, is available to the man who is available to all there is of God. I was in the First Presbyterian Church in Nashville about two and a half years ago, and at the conclusion of one of the services, a man came to me and gave me his visiting card, Tom Allison.

He was in a good way of business, lovely home, delightful family, and long since a faithful member of that particular church family. On the back of his visiting card he wrote this, at an early age I accepted Christ. And he meant by that exactly what you and I would mean by that.

I might say to you, perhaps after this meeting, when did you accept Christ, and you tell me, and the circumstance. Most can remember the time and circumstance, some can't. Doesn't matter as long as you know you have.

But he says, at an early age I accepted Christ. Now, he continued, today, after 30 years of begging, I realized he took me up on my offer and came into my life. Can you imagine that? It took him 30 years to discover that when he received Christ, he received Christ.

You see, we get befogged by evangelical terminology, a jargon, so that we get accustomed to the language, but seldom take the lid off and discover its substance, what it's all about. And you see, when you talk about receiving Christ, immediately in your mind the connotation is, I'm going to heaven, the sins are forgiven, Christ died for me, I'm, you know, I'm redeemed. But that isn't what it means to receive

Christ.

What it means is to receive Christ. And receiving Christ in him, because of his atoning death, you have forgiveness. In Christ, because of his resurrection life, you're endued with all power, that the Father vested in him, that now becomes available to you.

All the other things, forgiveness, going to heaven, this is all incidental to the glorious fact that somebody has come to inhabit your humanity, that he is your very life, except in Christ. So never be satisfied to be house-trained in evangelical terminology, to learn the language and get by so that everybody thinks you're a spiritual giant, when you don't even know what you're talking about. That's pathetic.

See, here's a young fellow, he rushes into the home after business and says, Darling, which is the normal formula, especially if you've got some bad news, Darling, I'm sorry, do you mind keeping dinner warm? Because I've got to go out in a hurry. It's a bit of an emergency. And very dutifully, of course, and with some concern, she says, Oh, I am sorry.

Hope it isn't too serious. And I'll keep the dinner warm. Or he says, No, it isn't too serious.

There's something wrong with my carburetor. I think I've got a punctured float. Oh, she says, I'm sorry.

I hope it'll work out all right. Well, he said, Oh, yes, I think it will, if you just don't mind keeping, but I really think I ought to handle it right now, because it's a real emergency in the circumstance. And so he goes out and a few minutes later, Tom calls and says, Bill, how? And she says, No, I'm afraid he isn't.

He did come in, mind you, and very confidentially, he had to go out. You know, it's a bit of an emergency. Oh, says Tom, I'm sorry.

I hope it didn't. Oh, no, she says, It didn't too bad. You know, he thinks he might have a punctured float.

It's, you know, something to do with his carburetor. Has she got the words right? Well, of course she has. Does she know what she's talking about? Not a clue.

Not a clue. But she's communicated because Tom, the other end, knows what she doesn't know what she's talking about. You see? Oh, he said, That's what I'll call later.

And you and I can learn evangelical jargon just like that and put it in the right place. Sing it by guitar, put it to music, train a choir, and then you've got it made. So we need to understand the nature of that which God has made available to us in the person of his son, salvation, who died for us that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

This is constantly being reiterated in the whole of God's word. Galatians 3.13. Here's the redemptive act. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.

Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree. Well, there's the redemptive act. But is that salvation? No.

That simply reconciles us to God for the guilty sinners that we are, we the offending and he the offended party. We the guilty and he the innocent. But on the basis of that redemptive transaction, God is prepared to accept us, acquitted, accepted in the beloved.

But that isn't salvation. Salvation is that which God had in mind, the regenerative purpose that springs from the redemptive act. For in the next verse, the 14th of Galatians 3. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.

Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree, that the blessing of Abraham, everything that comprehended the blessing that God confirmed in Abraham. When he said in thy seed, shall all the fans of the earth be blessed might now be fulfilled in us Gentiles through Jesus Christ. So before you understand what God had in mind in the redemptive act, you've got to understand the blessing that God comprehended when he confirmed the covenant in Abraham that he had made when he first gave utterance to his purpose in Genesis 3.15. Rebuking Satan side by side with the fall of man into sin, he said, I'm going to put enmity between you and the woman, her seed and your seed.

It, the seed of that woman, Jesus to be born of Mary is going to bruise your head. He'll strike you a mortal blow in the process. You will bruise his heel.

He'll hang on a cross. And when Christ came to redeem us, it was to make it possible for God to implement what he had in mind when he made that covenant, which he then confirmed in Abraham. That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.

That now hold your breath that what was the purpose of the redemptive act that you might receive the Holy Spirit of promise. In other words, that your redeemed humanity might be reinvaded by deity, that the one through whom the Lord Jesus enjoyed the life of the father in his humanity might come now and allow us to enjoy the life of the son in us. So the Holy Spirit can be to you and to me at this moment, crediting us with the resurrection life of Jesus Christ, that the Holy Spirit did for him in crediting him with the life of his father.

In other words, the redemptive act was to introduce us to a dynamic spiritual reunion with our maker so that he might take up residence within our humanity and be our very life, the source of righteousness. Because remember the law can only describe the righteousness that derives from the life of God, but the law cannot restore the life of God from which righteousness derives. That's why Jesus said, I'm come to do what the law never could to give you life, to raise the dead, because that's the only cure for death.

So don't get dumped at Bethel. And you remember in their conversation, and we're back in the second book of Kings and the second chapter, they must have had a quite, you know, a quite interesting conversation before they arrived. And sure enough, there was offered to Elisha the comparative safety of colorless conformity, to sign up with them and to be squeezed into their mold, to learn their language and bear their stamp and stay at Bethel.

But Elisha wasn't settling for Bethel. Mind you, Elijah didn't twist his arm because Elijah had learned what? From the folly of feeling indispensable, he had learned the discipline of being spiritually disinterested. So said Elijah to Elisha in verse four, tarry here, I pray thee for the Lord has sent me to Jericho.

I know he sent me and that's where I'm going because it can be alone, the illegitimate place where I am to be found, Jericho. But he hasn't told me that that's where he sent you. That's not my business because your relationship to God doesn't depend upon your relationship to me.

You're under his orders and please feel totally at liberty to stay precisely here if you so desire. But Elisha said, as the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. I think secretly, deep down his heart,

Elijah was delighted.

But he wasn't ever going to allow Elisha to imagine that he was in Jericho because Elijah persuaded him. More in my absence than in my presence. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

And I imagine that on the way to Jericho, they must have had a very, very animated and interesting conversation. I imagine that on the way, Elijah will have covered many of the historical events that led to Jericho. He'll say, you remember how God called a man, Abraham, and finally chose him because he found his heart faithful.

He made a promise and kept his word. If you want to know where you can find that all tied up so neatly, you'll find it in the ninth chapter of the prophecy of Nehemiah. You needn't turn to it.

Just two words, two verses. God chose a man, found his heart, kept it, made a promise and kept his word. Isn't it beautiful? But before ever God can choose a man, even though he's called him, he's got to find his heart.

Faithful. We called it the perfect heart. Because the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, looking for the man whose heart is perfect toward him, which is simply that disposition that lets God do it.

And as we shall discuss in a moment, it took quite a long time having called Abraham to find his heart. When finally he consolidated his assignment. But of Abraham, by promise, there was born Isaac, who had twins, as we have reminded ourselves.

And Jacob, who first got dumped at Bethel, but finally got released, emancipated. All those years later, when his wages have been changed so many times, to Peniel, when he saw God face to face and limped, because God had touched his thigh. And in that beautiful record, it says that when he limped past Peniel, the sun rose.

It's a beautiful verse there. I think it's found, don't turn to it, in the 32nd chapter of Genesis. That encounter of Jacob with God, when he graduated, if you like, out of his Bethel into his Jericho and crossed Jordan, you'll find in the story that's written in that chapter.

And although he limped and every step reminded him of his own weakness, it says the sun rose and he was bathed in the golden sunlight of God's pleasure, whose strength is made perfect in our weakness. These magnificent pictures that God gives us in the Old Testament of that unique, vital, dynamic, spiritual identity that is to be yours and mine, so long as we recognize that apart from who he is, living where he does, in our hearts, we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing. But because of who he is and living where he does, all that he is, we have, we can't have more and need never have less.

And Jacob's name was changed, Memetu Israel. And imagine Elijah reminded Elisha that uh, there was a boy called Joseph who was the means of bringing final succor to the balance of his race when he was used of God at a time of famine to make provision for the needs of that country. And he was greatly exalted by Pharaoh.

Beautiful, beautiful picture in his ministry. If you will remember of the ministry of our Lord Jesus for his people, his own brothers had sold him as though he were dead into slavery. And when they finally arrived, he now being the prime minister to meet them in their need, he said, whom ye sold, whom ye sold, God

did send to save your lives.

What a beautiful picture of the ministry of our Lord Jesus, whom they sold 30 miserable pieces of silver, the price of a slave, but whom they sold, God did send that we might be saved from death. But after many, many years in which they had found favor under the pharaohs of Egypt, finally wicked pharaohs arose and they were a rose and they were a bond slave people sold into slavery. But you know, Elisha, God had fantastic plans for this people.

And he finally raised up Moses as the one who by the hand of God would be used to deliver these people out of bondage, sold into slavery into a new life. And he brought them out. Elisha, only that he might bring them in, but you know, Elisha, they got stuck there too in the wilderness for 40 miserable years.

It should have taken them Elisha just 11 days from, uh, Egypt to get into the land of promise took them 40 years, some delay, uh, people who had been redeemed, but never entered into the good of that for which they had been redeemed, lived in self-imposed poverty because they wouldn't take what God had already given. In other words, alive, but not living as though they were during that time. You know, Elisha, they grumbled and criticize and complained constantly being reduced.

Of course, to repentance, going again and again to the penitent form and rededicating themselves only to go back to the old, old way until finally filled with cynicism. God had to bury them in the place where they chose to live. And the sad thing you see is this, that if you and I as redeemed Christians go on living in self-imposed poverty, we'll never be lost because the father would always be faithful to his son.

Other foundation can no man lay than that laid by God in Christ. And you can add neither to it before you're redeemed nor add to it after you've been redeemed. But if you insist on living, a carnal baby Christian still on the bottle, never growing up to chew meat and take what is yours in Christ, God finally will bury you where you chose to live, in the wilderness.

And numbered amongst those whom God buried in the wilderness, Moses, who got them out but never got them in. He gave them the law, but he never gave them the land. It's one of the saddest stories in the Bible.

Moses was a giant. Fantastic. So was Elijah.

But remember, the greater the responsibility God rests upon your shoulder, the more strict God has to be in the interpretation of his divine principles. Why didn't Moses ever get into the land? Because he smoked the rock. How many times? Twice.

How many times was the Lord Jesus to be crucified? Once. One sacrifice for sins forever. And it was perfectly legitimate when at the outset of the journey in the wilderness, God told Moses to strike the rock in Horeb, and he did.

And water flowed. As in that moment of time that you and I plead the precious blood of our crucified Redeemer, we receive the water of life. The Holy Spirit comes to indwell our human spirits as the Lord Jesus declared that out from within your innermost being might flow rivers of living water.

Never sit languidly around with glazed eyes waiting for something to come down because the Lord Jesus said nothing would come down. He said the moment you're redeemed, the water will flow from within. Because that's where he lives.

And when the Lord Jesus comes to indwell your humanity in the person of the Holy Spirit, God has given you everything that heaven affords. So don't look gazing into heaven as once the disciples did after the Lord Jesus was taken there, as though he had gone. Because he's neither dead nor gone.

He's alive. And if you're redeemed, he's alive in you. So to smite the rock once was legitimate.

But 38 years later, and they'd spilling going around in circles in the wilderness. And the faster you go around, the more enthusiastic you get. Of course, the sooner you get back to where you started.

And that's what they found out. And that's an exercise in futility and leads only ultimately to frustration and utter cynicism, as I indicated yesterday evening. And somebody's going to say, if there isn't more to the Christian life in this rat race, I'm quitting.

You see, by 38 years later, they'd known by name every cactus bush they'd ever sat on. And remember, all they ever had to eat was manna. Manna for lunch, manna for breakfast, manna for supper.

And when, as a real treat on their birthday, they took the kids out, you know, for a picnic, they knew perfectly well what was going to be in the sandwiches. And they got sick and tired of the whole thing, bored to the nth degree. 38 years later.

And finally, Moses addresses his congregation and says, you rebels as they complain and said, this is all you brought us out of Egypt for this stuff. And the pastor of the first Baptist church in the wilderness, because Paul tells us that they were baptized into Moses. Tenth chapter, first Corinthians, verse one.

The pastor said, you rebels, must I get you water, fetch you water out of that rock. Lovely way for the pastor to talk to his congregation. Just a bunch of rebels.

But then he had talked about a land to which he had never introduced them. People get a bit bored. You know, if you talk about a quality of life that they've not enjoyed themselves, nor enabled you to enjoy, I guess a bit tedious after a bit, you get accustomed to the language and write it off and switch them off.

Must I fetch you water out of it? Is that what God said? No, God said, go speak to the rock, go speak to the rock and the rock will give you water. No question of you fetching anything. Speak as to the living risen, glorified son of God.

But Moses smacked the rock a second time. And God said, because you have failed to believe me because you have failed to honor me in this people, you will never, ever enter the land. You'll see it from a distance.

And he pleaded several times. And God said, not a word again, stop talking to me about that. You will not enter that land.

And God buried him because you see, he broke a divine principle. He only preached half a gospel, a dead Jesus, the smitten rod, but they didn't introduce these people to the risen Lord. And if you do that, all you can do is try to legislate righteousness.

Think what Jesus would do. Remember from last night, but you can't introduce them to the source of righteousness, Christ himself, living in your heart, your only hope of being restored to that image in which God first made man. Glory.

Well, interesting, wouldn't you say Elisha? But you see, finally the time came when God could get the remnant in. None of those who came out save two, because they were of another half, Caleb and Joshua. All the others who came out were buried where they chose to live.

But you know, Elisha, God had to wait till Moses was dead. Before, by the hand of Joshua, he'd take them on and in. I don't know whether you ever noticed that, but in the first chapter of the book of Joshua, now after the death of Moses, first verse, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Joshua, the son of none, Moses' minister, saying, Moses, my servant is dead.

Now, therefore, therefore, when you see in the Bible, therefore, you've been told this a dozen times or more, always say, wherefore the therefore, what's the therefore, therefore? Because it's always the conclusion to an argument. Moses, my servant is dead, therefore. Isn't that sad? In other words, God is telling Joshua in so many words, the last obstacle to my people in getting out and getting in is Moses himself.

That's not a favorable reputation to earn as one who has been placed in spiritual leadership. And it's possible that you and I might be the last obstacle between God's people and that place where he wants them. Because of our own pig-headedness.

Moses, my servant is dead. Now, therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all these people, and take the land which I do give them. And every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, I've given you.

One step at a time. I want you to put that back in your mind and note it. One step at a time.

If you're taking one step at a time, what are you doing? Walking. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life. So it was one step at a time and one day at a time.

As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee, I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Have not I commanded thee? That's why. The Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest.

And that's how. Isn't that simple? God says one step at a time, one day at a time. And if you want to know why I commanded you, and if you want to know how, I'll be with you.

Anything else you need to know? That's the Christian life. Interesting, Elisha, because finally the day came when Joshua rallied the people from the death of Moses, and it was the third morning. Tell you anything? On the third morning, Joshua took them into a land that for 40 years had failed to possess, that had already been given.

What happened on the third morning? Christ rose again from the dead. You'll find the power of the third morning constantly reiterated in the word of God. On what morning did God bring Jonah, swallowed by the whale, back into circulation? Third morning.

On what day did Esther go into the presence of the king, unsummoned, already sentenced to death, who three days' night in her heart was already dead, that she might be true to her mission? It was the third morning. And the king held out the golden scepter. The only condition upon which anybody entering unsummoned into his presence could be preserved from death.

She was raised from the dead. It's the power of the third morning. It was on the third morning that Abraham arrived with his Isaac on Mount Moriah, and the knife flashed in the sun.

And it was then that God said, thanks, Abraham, that's all I need to know. Throw the knife away. It's the third morning.

For you and I were redeemed by his death, that we might walk in the power of his resurrection. For he suffered a death like ours, so that we might enjoy a resurrection like his. That life restored to us that he laid down, first restored to him, that he, by his presence, might restore that life to you and to me.

Interesting, wouldn't you say, Elisha? But you know, though God magnificently brought them out of Egypt, as he had brought them out of the wilderness, as he had brought them out of Egypt, you've got to avoid one danger, Elisha, and that is, get stuck there at Jericho. It was a fantastic experience, mind you, after 40 years in the wilderness, feeding on manna, and then suddenly to be released from that miserable connotation into the newness of life for which they'd been redeemed, it was a fantastic experience. But you want to, you want to be careful, Elisha, that you don't get stuck there with that experience, because Jericho wasn't to be the end of the story.

It was, Elisha, to be one step at a time, walking, one day at a time, in the process of time. Interesting, wouldn't you say, Elisha? You see, the Christian life is a flowing river, and it's always changing shape. It's essentially unique.

It cuts its own channel. If you like the river as you see it, and you want to keep it that way, there's only one way you can do it, freeze it. Then you haven't got a river, what have you got? A block of ice.

And a lot of Christians get on to ice when they like some experience, some special blessing, or some special assignment, they freeze it, and they're on ice for the rest of their days, unless in the goodness of God, somehow he can thaw them out and get them back into circulation. Jericho, you see, is the place where you become enamored of some special experience, which may be revolutionary in character, as it was, for instance, in my life at the age of 19, when I, as I explained the other day, got down on my knees in sheer despair and said, God, as I look back over seven years, I see absolutely nothing tangible to show for all my wild enthusiasm and unchallengeable sincerity. Within 24 hours, as I realized that he not only gave himself for me, he gave himself to me and precipitated me into this ministry, in which I've been engaged now for 50 years, which gets more exciting every single day.

That was life transforming. But if I were living now in what happened then, I'd have been on ice for 50 years. I didn't receive one single thing more at that moment than I'd already received seven years before when Christ came into my life, because God can't give me more than his son, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, and in whom we have been blessed with every single spiritual blessing, all in Christ.

So how could God give me more than the one in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily? I simply discovered the resources that were mine that I'd neglected for seven years. In other words, I suddenly realized that at the moment of redemption, God gave me a full tank, and I've been pushing the beastly thing for seven years and was tired and exhausted. Did you recognize that danger point in the life of Abraham when he could have settled for the blessing and his Isaac would have turned into an Ishmael? So it took quite a long time, you see, for God having called Abraham to find his heart, because he was still bent, being house trained in the connotation of his day, in trying to do for God what only God could do through him.

And Ishmael, as we have been reminded on several occasions, was born after the flesh, not insincere. It was the best that Abraham could do for God. But finally, God gave him Isaac, according to promise.

But that was the danger point, because now he had traded, you see, Isaac for Ishmael. And can you imagine how that little kid with his bright eyes and shrill voice would come into the home and he'd just love that kid to death. And then God one day said, take thine only son, because from God's point of view, remember, he only had one.

Ishmael said, God is not my baby. Take your only son. Can you imagine what was going on in the heart of Abraham as he went up Mount Moriah with the knife in one hand and the fire in the other, especially when Isaac said, where's the sacrifice? And I imagine Abraham said, please don't ask awkward questions.

There was a little battle going on, saying, Abraham, you've got the blessing. Hang on to it. Don't be so stupid.

Took you all this time to get him. Now don't lose him. It's yours.

And another little voice was saying, keep moving. Abraham, one step at a time, one day at a time, keep moving. You can have some peak experience in your life and try to rigidify it.

Put it on a pedestal, put a glass case around it. And then that blessing taking the place in place of the object of your idolatry. You have some experience.

Maybe perfectly valid, completely legitimate and sends you high, but God help you when that experience taken the place of Christ becomes the object of your idolatry. So easily we can put the blessing in the place of the blessing and the gift in the place of the gift. And in that moment of time, God walks out of it.

And Abraham at that point was in real danger, but in obedience, he went to the top and Hebrews 11 tells us, believing that God could even raise him from the dead if needs be. In his heart, he was saying, God, all those years ago, I made a fool of myself. Didn't think you could produce Isaac.

And I produced my Ishmael. Now you give me Isaac in whom you say all the families of the earth will be blessed. Whose seed will be as the stars of heaven and the sand by the seashore enumerable.

And now you tell me to slay him. How can that be if I kill him? But you told me to do it. That's not my problem.

And if slay him, I must then slay him. I will, even if you have to raise him from the dead. And that was when the knife flashed in the sun.

And that was when God said, throw your knife away. Because you have done this thing, putting into death, the very blessing that I gave you, that you might be alive only to the blesser. In blessing, I will bless you.

Go on blessing you one day at a time, one step at a time. And your seed shall be as the stars of heaven enumerable and the sand by the seashore without number. And that was the day Abraham became the friend of God.

Three times he's called the friend of God. And when he threw the knife away, God said, look over your shoulder. There was an old goat, a ram, caught by his horns in a thicket.

See the picture? While Abraham was going up one side in obedience, an old ram was going up the other side. But Abraham would have never met the ram if he hadn't got to the top. That's Jericho.

As it begins, but Jericho as it must continue. For Jericho only introduces you to a new principle of life, not an experience. Turn to the book of Joshua and the fourth chapter.

Those last one or two verses. For the Lord, verse 23, your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you. For he had commanded the men who passed over with him to take 12 stones and set them up as a memorial.

You shall let your children know, he says in the 22nd verse, saying Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. And it was no more difficult for us to get out into the land of Canaan than it was to get into the wilderness out of the land of Egypt. If only we would do as we were told.

How'd they get out? They put their foot in the Red Sea and God opened it. How did they get in? They put their foot in Jordan, God opened it. So how much more difficult was to get in than get out? Only be told what to do and do as you're told and God will take the consequences.

It took them 40 years to find that out. The Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you until you were passed over as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea which he dried up from before us until we were gone over. That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord that it is mighty.

That you might fear the Lord your God forever. And when they arrived, verse 9 of the fifth chapter, the Lord said to Joshua, this day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Because as a redeemed people in your hearts you were still living in the land from which I redeemed you.

Because you wouldn't go on, you always wanted to go back. Remember dreaming of the cucumbers, 12 inches of indigestion, the fish and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, all the things that speak for themselves. That's how they lived in the wilderness.

This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal which means rolling and to this day and the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal and they kept the Passover on the 14th day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho for the first time in 38 years celebrated God's deliverance out of Egypt which he had told them they should celebrate every year. But it was a day to be remembered only in a land to be possessed and they'd never had anything to celebrate for 38 years.

And they did eat to the old corn of the land on the morrow after the Passover, unleavened cakes, parched corn in the selfsame day and the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land. For manna is the stamp of the wilderness. It only sustains but never satisfies.

Because God refuses to satisfy in the wilderness a people for whom he's laid the table in Canaan. They did eat of the fruit to the land of Canaan that year and it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho that he looked at his eyes and he wanted you see to make an appreciation of the situation how he would muster the forces that were at his command to overcome what was to be the largest obstacle on their pathway to possess the land one day at a time and one step at a time. He wanted to assess the strength of the enemy.

He wanted to know how to dispose his own forces and as he looked around there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand. And Joshua went unto him and he said thou forest or for our adversaries said he to him are you on our side or are you on their side? And the man with a sword in his hand said I'm neither on your side nor their side because I didn't come to take side. I came to take over.

As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. This Joshua is where you bow yourself out for Jericho introduces you to a new principle and Joshua recognizing in whose presence he was fell on his face to the earth and did worship him and said what saith my Lord unto his servant? The captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua loose thy shoe from off thy foot the place whereon thou standest is holy. You are in the presence of God.

And Jericho Joshua is the introduction to your life and that of your people of a new principle. No longer doing what you did in the wilderness every man what was right in his own eyes. Deuteronomy chapter 12.

Now from now on Joshua there are no more decisions for you to make only instructions to obey. It's called in the New Testament being filled with the Holy Spirit. Dumped at Jericho no the beginning of an onward march for they were to possess and enjoy only as much as was covered by the soles of their feet.

As one step at a time and one day at a time. They kept on being filled with the Holy Spirit. So said Elijah to Elisha you know you gotta be careful when you get to Jericho they want you to stay there.

They want you to perpetuate the experience. But God really you know Elisha's got something better for you even than that. And the sons of the prophets verse five of two kings in chapter two.

That were at Jericho came to Elisha and said knowest thou that the Lord will take away their master from thy head today and he answered yes I know. Oh gee of peace. I'm not under your instructions.

I'm not even under Elijah's instructions. I'm beginning to learn that I'm under God's instructions. And Elijah said unto him tarry I pray thee here for the Lord has sent me to Jordan.

I know where I'm going but that doesn't mean you have to go where I'm going. But said Elisha to Elijah as the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth I will not leave thee and they too went in which direction? On. It's a marvelous thing when those who accompany you go on.

I thank God over my life for those who have been to me and Elijah. Didn't often see them but somehow when I met them they were always just the same. And they took me on.

Cherish the privilege of being to some other little boy girl man or woman and Elijah who's spiritually disinterested by the impact of their lives simply take you on. Who never become indispensable to you but always deepen your relationship to a living God. And 50 men of the sons of the prophets, non-persons, colorless conformists, stood to view off while they too.

Elijah and Elisha stood by Jordan. There wasn't one of those men, 50 of them, who couldn't have stood where Elijah and Elisha stood. But they were spectating.

And I tell you quite frankly as a born again Christian you can be a spectator for the rest of your days. You see they were saying this is going to be fun. It isn't long before God's going to take Elijah from Elisha and then that little upstart who's basking in his limelight trying to play the Elijah he's going to be left stranded there on the banks of Jordan.

It's going to be really funny. He's going to make a fool of himself. And you know if you're not prepared to go on and into all the fullness of God's life nothing will delight you more when somebody who wants to commits a boon.

You'll just long for the day when they make fools of themselves. Because you remember as Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing that he despised and Jacob wanted. If you're a carnal Christian you'll always envy those who are enjoying the fullness of that life for which Christ not only died for you but rose again to live in you.

You know it's very interesting Elisha how they got across Jordan. It's very simple they got across Jordan into the land the way they got across Egypt across the Red Sea out of Egypt. It's very simple.

Say Elisha would you like to see how it happened? Oh Elisha's ear that would be fantastic. Well it was like this and he took his mantle wrapped it together verse 8 and smote the waters. And they were divided hither and thither so they too went over on dry ground.

And you can imagine how big Elisha's eyes. He said this is fantastic. He saw the wall of water on one side and the wall of water on the other.

He said this is incredible. He said I never believed it could happen simply as that. You mean we're just going through on dry land with the water? He said Elijah it's fantastic isn't it? Yeah it's terrific.

Well they got to the other side and the water all fell back into place. And then said Elijah I'm going. See God's going to take me into his presence today.

So I'd just like to wish you God's blessing and say goodbye. Can you imagine the look on Elisha's face? He said you say you're going? Why yes. But you can't go now.

I mean you can't leave me here. I'm on the wrong side of Jordan. How do you think I'm going to get back? And Elijah in so many words said to Elisha I've brought you as far as any one man can bring enough.

The wrong side of Jordan. And you see Elisha if ever a man is to know God for himself he's got to cross his own Jordan. Now it's perfectly true I can get you back.

So what? If I got you back whose God would you know? Mine not yours. You'd be a second rate second-hand Christian for the rest of your day. If you want to hang on to my apron strings then you'll be a baby for the rest of your day.

But I'll tell you something Elisha if you want to know my God for yourself you've got to cross your own Jordan. Get the point? I can teach you till the cows come home but it won't make Christ experiential to you as in some measure at least he's become experiential to me because I can't vicariously enter into that relationship which must derive alone from your disposition that lets him do it for you. You've got to cross your own Jordan.

That's why all the things that I've been talking about present you with a moral issue. An option that you've got to exercise. You can get some Elijah to count you around and do all the things on your behalf and you'll be a little satellite in orbit.

And one of the curses of our evangelical constituencies today is the personality cult countless mindless Christians in orbit around their hero fans who never know God for themselves. That's why we're in the

entertainment era of the evangelical church. Everybody's got to be a star an artiste have a big name and big money but you won't know God for yourself.

We see countless millions of people who are nothing more than television Christians watching some religious vaudeville show. Millions of dollars pouring down the drain that should be all over the world in desperate places of need. Armchair Christians who've turned the evangel into entertainment.

If you're to know God for yourself Elijah you've got to cross your own Jordan and said he to him and we're nearly done. Ask what I shall do for you before I be taken from you. And Elisha said I pray you let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

Now I wasn't asking to be twice the man that Elijah was. The double portion was the birthright. That birthright that God had pledged in Abraham that should have been that of Esau but was taken by Jacob that became Isaac's and then every boy girl man or woman who would enter into the good of all that Christ did when he died.

The birthright a new life by the spirit of the living God to whom we share the life of our creator whose presence within the creature is indispensable to our humanity. For remember in normality man must be distinguished from the animal kingdom our quality of life for which there's no possible explanation but God himself living in the man and Elijah said you've asked a hard thing but I'll tell you something. If you see me when I go then it shall be so but if not it shall not be so because I don't know your heart.

I love you. I respect you. I have every possible ambition for you and I cherish the best that God can give but I cannot predetermine what alone God can do by virtue of what he knows about your heart.

For all I know you're still related to me and not related to him but he'll give you the answer. And they too it came to pass verse 11 still went on and talked. And there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire and parted them asunder and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven and Elisha saw it and he cried my father my father the charity of Israel and the horsemen thereof and he saw him no more and he took hold of his own clothes wrapped them in pieces and took up the mantle of Elisha that fell from him and he went back and he stood by the bank of Jordan.

Imagine how excited those 50 spectators got when they saw this little upstate standing all by himself by the banks of Jordan. He said this is the this is the moment this is where he's going to smite the waters you know like an intercontinental something or other that just doesn't get into orbit it just fizzles at the launching site they said this is going to be funny. He took the mantle of Elijah verse 14 that fell from him and smote the waters and he said where is the Lord God of Elijah?

And when he also had smitten the waters they parted hither and thither and Elisha went over on dry land for God said just waiting for an Elisha to let me be to him what I was to Elijah for all I'm looking for is a perfect heart that will allow me to be strong on that man's behalf and Elisha crossed his own Jordan and Elisha no longer had Elijah's God he knew God for himself and when the sons of the prophets which would have you at Jericho 15 saw him they said the spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elijah and they were wrong again for it was not the spirit of Elijah who was it the spirit of God and he doesn't take sides he's not on your side he's not on my side he's not on anybody's side he's the man with the sword in his hand he doesn't come to take side he comes only to take over and is

waiting as captain of the Lord's host to show himself strong on the behalf of any boy girl man or woman out of any nation kindred tribe tongue race creed class or color Elijah or Elisha who'll stand on the bank of Jordan and let God be God can you settle for less than that let's pray very clumsily maybe but as God has enabled I brought you as far as any one man can bring another the wrong side of Jordan if you're ever to know God for yourself you've got to cross that Jordan yourself alone alone but the consequences beyond your wildest dreams from the day that you step out by that disposition called faith that lets God be God you'll discover he's been on tiptoe to demonstrate the fact and every new day that dawns will be as big as the God whose life you share every horizon will beckon you

heavy with blessing and golden with prospect you'll reign in life more than conquering through him that loved you a man a woman who knows God for themselves then nothing will frighten you but you're the only one that can exercise that option it's a total sellout that's the moment when you take your shoes off your feet and recognize in whose presence you stand look into his face and say what saith my lord to his servant it's the moment when you trade your independence for total and utter and unquestioning dependence when you recognize that as from now your destiny is no longer in your own hands there are no more decisions for you to make only instructions to obey thank you lord Jesus for the incredible privilege that you've given to each one of us as members of your body to come under your

sovereignty king back at last as king in your kingdom grant your rich hand a blessing upon all those whose heads are now bowed in your presence and you alone recognize the transactions the issues that are being faced the implications involved of home career money property children help us to recognize that where our treasure is there will our heart be also help us to make the right decision at the right time in this moment of destiny in which you've been pleased to place us in a world that's rushing headlong at an ever accelerating pace to its own self-destruct we want to be unashamed on the job that you're appearing in your own dear and precious name amen

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