

Making of a Man of God

by Robert Arthur

The sermon explores the journey and lessons of Elisha in becoming a man of God, emphasizing spiritual growth and integrity over material pursuits.

Duration: 56:21

Scripture: Exodus 34:29, 2 Kings 2:2, John 1:29

Topics: "Man Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the story of Elisha and Gehazi from the Bible. He suggests that the judgment that befell Gehazi and the people was a result of their own actions and not a direct command from God. The preacher emphasizes the importance of having a tested faith, heart, and will, and how these tests can reveal the need for God's power in our lives. He then transitions to the Gospel of John, highlighting the spiritual glory found in Jesus Christ and the opportunity to catch glimpses of this glory through the Bible. The sermon concludes with a reference to Moses and the Old Covenant, emphasizing the passing nature of the Old Covenant and the need to see the departing glory.

Transcript

ministry of such a time as this. I should like, if we read together this afternoon, in a familiar enough passage, 2 Kings chapter 2. 2 Kings chapter 2. The other night, when given opportunity to minister in another place, in Castlemont, why, we spoke a little concerning this man Elisha and the marks of his ministry. Perhaps it's a retracing of steps, or perhaps it's better putting things in proper order that one would like to speak of not so much the ministry of a man of God, for such he is characteristically called, but rather some of the things that went into the making of a man of God.

And this together with a sense that the earlier moments of the conference have rather shown us a flow of things that one would like, by the help of God, to respond to in a little measure also. I'll read first, however, and come back to some comment. 2 Kings chapter 2, and it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel.

And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it. Hold ye your

peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho.

And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it.

Hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here, for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.

And they too went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off. And they too stood by Jordan.

And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smoked the waters. And they were divided hither and thither, so that they too went over on dry ground. 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. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

And he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes, and ramped them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah, that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan.

And he took the mantle of Elijah, that fell from him, and smoked the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? And he also had smitten the waters. They parted hither and thither, and Elisha went over. And when the sons of the prophets which were to view Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha.

And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him. I would like to read just the verses from twenty-three to the end. And he went up from Thames unto Bethel.

As he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head, go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

And he went from Thames to Mount Carmel, and from Thames he returned to Samaria. I'm sure that God will bless the scriptures that we've read at this time. If any heart amongst us has come up to the period of conference with anything of smugness or complacency, I'm very sure of this, that the ministry of last evening, coupled with the discussions of the morning, have served to banish complacency and to stir up our hearts in every way to a concern.

I think those who have the love of God's dear people deepest at heart, those who have a conscious desire that the assembly pattern and principle be furthered, have in these times together been struck by the sense of what our ears have heard already, that perhaps all is not as well as it ought to be, that perhaps

we have left some things on a high pinnacle and come back down a spiritual mountainside, down to where, at least in some measure, there has been the employment of things that are hardly on spiritual tone to make amends for the lost spiritual. Now, be it said, I'm not one of those who particularly wants to drop my head and cry out that all is lost or all is gone. At the same time, I want to be wise to the recognition of where we may be trying to employ other things than spiritual weapons in the discharge of our warfare.

And I wondered just a little this afternoon, and I prayed much about it, if it might be granted us to go along in some little measure the way we've been treading, not with rebuke in tone or not with anything of caustic criticism of things as they are, but I wondered if it might not be given us for just a little, and this may be the presumption of youthfulness, but to try to see the positive and to see something of what might be the answer of God to the carrying along of things in spiritual vein. So already, having said that much, there are those who, I am sure, will see what use one wants to make of the passage before us. It's a very old passage, as for that matter, what part of the Word of God is not old, but you well remember that here we have two men, two who have been here for God.

One is going offstage, the prophet Elijah. His had been a ministry of sternness, and he's now going away, and is going to be succeeded by one Elisha, and Elisha gains for himself repeatedly the characteristic descriptive, a man of God. Now, I'm not to speak of that facet of it for the moment.

Oh, but how my heart cries out that these men of God might be multiplied manifold amongst us still in our time. But it's rather refreshing to see that the man of God is going to be tutored a little, as it were, in what he is to hold fast ere the other one goes up a lot. We had before us this morning the passage in the second of Acts that spoke of the continuing to hold steadfastly certain things.

Oh, I believe that's a part of the reality that confronts us. Beloved, let us not ever mistake that certain predispositions, certain views of what we think holding fast means, are certainly scriptural just because we've gotten them handed down to us. I'm not one of those who's finding fault with method that has been handed down in much part.

But don't let's mistake method for principle. Hold fast what has been given us in truth, even though method may at one time or another change in the working of it out. But I see a little of that matter of the volume of truth as I see the two men go on a circuit round some four places.

Oh, you very well know this story. I've little enough mind to make that a major part of what's in front of me this afternoon. The two men go from Gilgal, and then they go to Bethel, and then they come around to Jericho, and finally they come back to Jordan and cross its waters.

And I think it wouldn't be amiss to suggest that there was a kind of a circuit with a corresponding deliverance of truth. I wonder if the two men, as they came past one place and another, would not talk on some wise like this, Here is Gilgal, Elisha. This is the place to which Israel first came, up through the deliverance place and into Gilgal.

This, you remember, is where the knife of circumcision was applied. This is where the new corn of the land was eaten. And I hardly know how much of truth would be gone over in the minds of these two men.

It's certain that something would be said that would remind of the great doctrinal things that circled about Gilgal. And then they'd come down to Bethel. And Bethel was the place where Jacob had that dream, you

remember it so well, that he pillowed wearied head upon a stone.

And then it opened up to that patriarchal one, the vision of an open heaven, and he heard a sweet thing. And after having its wild Bethel, by the time of the walk that these two engaged, while Bethel had become place of the golden calf, and therefore was in decline, it's nevertheless certain that they must have said much of Jacob, of the house of God. I wonder if they did not speak there a little bit about what we call church truth.

And then they pass on to another place. They come down to Jericho. And I take it that here again they must have recounted the passing of the soldiery on the nation of Israel round about Jericho's walls.

I wonder if they didn't say a good deal about that much malign word called separation. I wonder if they did not recount that the men, the rightful bearers of the ark, bore on their own shoulders. And when you get something on your own shoulder, it's a personal burden.

If they did not recount that the personal burden of a Christ represented in the ark walked around the outside of the Jericho world, suggesting that the only way you overcome the world is to be like Christ, walk around its outside, have a foot that never tread its fire and its muck. And so they must have spoken, I doubt not, about Jericho. And then they came to Jordan.

And you remember the waters parted. Sometime in the goodness of God I want to look a little bit about the parting of waters in the Scripture. I remember that early in the blessed record of the book there's a parting this way.

You remember that the waters were parted and there was a firmament beaten out, for such is the word indicated, and there were waters above and waters beneath. And I think that that firmament is suggestive of Calvary's work that separates spiritual folk from the folk that don't belong in spiritual life. It's Calvary separating.

And whenever you get the parting of the waters horizontally, it's Calvary, the death of our Lord Jesus, separating men and women. The Red Sea separated to let folk out. And Jordan separated to let Israel in.

And here is the place called Jordan. And I suppose they spoke there about not separation or sanctification or elevation as in Bethel, because you remember, Jacob was told, Go up to the house of God. Go up to Bethel.

It's a place of elevation. I think probably they talk here about identification. And some folk have never discovered that little sweetness of truth, that not only did Christ die for me, but I died in Him.

I was there, as it were, when He died. I died in Him. Identification.

So all of this just to remark that the prophet, Elisha, who is learning these things, is quite evidently not content to stop short of any one of the lessons. I don't know how much of significance I'm catching. Perhaps I'm straining at a nap and swallowing a spiritual candle in seeing that he didn't want to be left behind anywhere.

I suggest that I see a little in this much that he wanted to go all the way doctrinally. He didn't want to stop short of any lesson. He said, Elijah says, stay here.

No, as I live and as thy soul liveth, I'm not going to stop there. I want to go on into every lesson that there is in a doctrinal sense. Now, I think that's the mark of a tested will.

I believe it's fitting and right in God's dear people that we learn every lesson that there is for us in the things of God. I like one thing above many in my being amongst those dear people who call themselves by no name other than the name of believers and of Christian brethren. And what I like above much is this, that there is no barrier, no fence up to which I come.

And there I must say, well, of course you can't climb that fence, because our brethren territory is this side of that, and you can't go over there and go into any other territory. If it's in the Scripture, then it's something that we hold. And when I find out that there's something we hold that I cannot enter into, and I'm forborn to clamber that fence, then and then only am I going to disengage my arm from those I count my brethren.

For as long as it's scriptural, I want to find it out if it's in my province to find it out. But by the same token, beloved, if it is scriptural, let us see that we put it into practice. I think without question that one of the tested elements in Elisha here is not only will, but obedient will.

He wants to do it. What good is it if we find out certain things that are in the Word, and we say, there they are, and we'll fight for them, and then we don't practice them. We don't put them into actual deeds.

God help us to be like Elisha. And in learning truth, to say that we shall go the whole way with it, and practice it to its fullest extent. But on out comes the thing that perhaps one wanted to drive to more than anything else.

Elijah's going away. He's so very much the picture of our adorable Lord. Of course, it's late in the spiritual hour to bring that before us.

How well you know that Elijah does type, foreshadow, Adam break, call it what you will. Some of you know that I don't like one to use that word type too fully. Well, at least he foreshadows our Lord Jesus.

He comes on the scene. You don't know who Elijah was. Oh yes, you'll say, I know he was the Tishbite.

That's about as much as we do now. There's no lineage given. He's without beginning, without end of days, so to speak, in that regard.

He comes on the scene, and there he is. And that's like Christ. And then you remember this, that he was taken up.

He was translated. And while, of course, it's not the full truth here, for our blessed Lord went down in death, and he rose in resurrection triumph, and then was translated. Nevertheless, the end of Elijah is like the end of our blessed Lord, or like at least is going, for thank God he is nowhere.

And so Elijah in some picture is like Christ. He's gone up to the glory. And there he goes, he says to his man who is to follow him and be here on the earth after him.

He said, ask what you will before I go. Ah, Elijah, here's a good chance. That's a blank check.

That's like saying, here, I'll put this in front of you, and you just have to sign your name for it, and whatever you ask, that's what I do. I've never had a blank check put in front of me with the unhampered statement

that I should just fill it in for as much as I want. Well, I think the Lord knows me better.

I'm Scotch, you see, by birth, and every inclination of a natural heart would have been to say, oh, I've wanted so much, and I'll fill it in for so much. Say, what would you fill in? If you were presented with a blank check, and it was told you, ask what you will. Well, my dearly beloved, maybe there's been a little bit of the jocular creep in for the moment, but this is the very point at which I fear our modern trend has brought us into danger.

There have been all too many who may well have said in the face of this matter, ah, I'm going to ask what I want. Hmm. I want material plenty.

I want a little bit of spiritual power, yes, but I want affluence. I want plenty. I'm not to say that men have literally done that today, but isn't it noticeable that the philosophy of much has gotten us all in thrall? Well, I'm not saying that every last one in this company, nor in the company of God's people, is thriving and prospering as perhaps you wish you did.

You know, we always want a little more than we at present have. There used to be a petition, a petition sent up in prayer by Ulsters, and it was this Lord grant us a more competent portion of this world's good things. This generally agreed that a more competent portion meant a little more than I now am getting, always a little more.

But, say I, it may be possible that we haven't literally descended to writing that in, but you'll notice that today is one when alongside any spiritual values, all too many of us are putting a large-sized material value. In life. Say I want to look at something for a moment.

Do you remember the, it occurs in two or three chapters further on? The man Elisha had dealt with the sinner Naaman, and Naaman the leper is healed. When I say dealt with, I mean he had been an intermediary, he had been the instrument in the healing of the leper. And when the man is healed, he comes back to the man of God and he said, no, I know that there's no God in all of Israel except the God of Israel.

Won't you take something for your trouble? And the man of God said, no, no. And right well he did, because of course that would have adulterated free grace. God's healings are free and without money and without price.

And so he turned and went his way after having gotten the two mule burdens of earth. We spoke about that the other night in another connection. It's not for the moment apropos.

But when he's gone, the servant of Elisha thinks it over. And he thinks, my, my master was a little bit hasty there. He had a real chance and he didn't take it.

I'll go after Naaman and I'll concoct a little story. I'll work out a little story. I'll tell it.

You know, my master has been rethinking this business and indeed two young men have just come on a journey and they send me after you to tell you about his change of mind. He'll take a couple of garments, a couple of changes of raiment and some, oh a few paltry bars of gold and silver, things like that. Give me them and I'll take them back.

You remember how he did it? Somebody has remarked that actually he got three garments that day. He got two that you could put on and off and one that you couldn't put off. He got leprosy.

But he turned away back and he came back to his master, Elisha. Elisha said to him, where did you go, Gehazi? Where did you go? Oh, I didn't go anywhere. The trouble with lying of course is this, that lies always come as twins.

You tell one and it brings another one. You have to back it up with the second. One of the glad things about telling the truth is that it's singular.

You can always go back on your story. Even if you forget what you told them, it's the truth. It's still the same.

But he said, I certainly went nowhere. I didn't go anywhere. Do you recall the wording of it? The prophet said, did not my spirit go with thee? Then he said something like this.

He said unto him, went not mine heart with thee when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is this a time to receive money and to receive garments and olive yards and vineyards and sheep and oxen and men, servants and maidservants? Is this a time? Is this the time for just things? Is it a time to want that above anything else in life? Ah, you'll say I'm a scold with little enough right to do it. Oh no, my beloved. I'm not, I'm not scolding.

I'm asking us a question. Are we become so blinded in life that we imagine that something that all down the years has brought with it the kiss of doom, has made man unfitted for the things of God? Are we so blinded that we begin to think it's going to work now? What did the man Elisha say? Oh, how I thank God for this. He didn't say, give me that new this and that new that.

Give me things. He didn't say that. Listen, he said some of the better words that ever come into print.

He said, oh, I want a double portion of the spirit that was upon you while you were here below. I wonder if hearts could not rise again fresh to say this to our blessed Lord. Oh, these are times in which the tendencies and the propensities of hearts are to turn to things.

But if there's one thing I want, nay, I will not be without it. If there's one thing I want above all else, I want a double portion of the spirit that marked you when you were here upon this earth. Now don't think for one moment that I'm going to get into some heroics about spirit endowment and spirit infilling.

I don't think we know very much about these things today. I think, and of course I'm conscious that there has been many a misstatement about the ministry of the Spirit of God, but by the very token there has been misstatement, too many have shied away and felt that none of it is real. There is a ministry of the Spirit of God without which our lives be we ever so correct.

Don't forget that Ephesus had correctness about practical working as my brother read it to us last night. Be we ever so correct yet lacking the power of the Spirit of God. But it's all empty and vain.

You know, they tell the story of the dear colored preacher who was undergoing a test for his ordination, and someone asked him concerning the matter of endowment. He said, tell us what is endowment, meaning of course the endowment or endowment or the power of the Spirit of God. And the fellow gave a classic answer.

He said, I don't know much about what endowment is, but I know when it ain't. He knew when it wasn't upon his ministry. And you know, we're not altogether wise to that sometimes.

We may well go on with things and with the lesser and with the arrangement and with all things out. I admit to a necessity for the average of method and arrangement. Don't misunderstand that.

But as we go on and are without the power of the Spirit of God, it's all vain and all empty. And Elijah said, oh, for a double portion. I take it that may not necessarily mean twice as much as with upon Elijah, so much as probably the older son's portion.

If two sons were in the family, the older son would get two-thirds of the goods of his father to the younger son's one-third. So that the older son's portion would be twice as much as the younger. I suppose what he said was the older son's amount.

I want the large portion. And I want spiritual. Now, all of that would still be so much of straw in the wind if there were no words said now about how this was to be come by.

And I like this much. Here's a clue for something. The man growing up on high said this, if asked a hard thing.

I don't know what he means by that. I wonder if it means that it would be easier really for folk to get the material, not from him, but easier to come by material things than to come by spiritual things. But he said, if you see me when I go, then this will be realized to you.

And do you know what that did for the man, Elijah? It soft made him see to it that his eye would be turned upward. And sure enough, when Elijah's taken up, he sees him. My father, my father.

The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof. And his eye is on the man that went into the glory. Ah, that's simple enough, isn't it? One believes with a full heart that doubtless the answer to this matter of our leanness lies just in this very point.

Are we occupied with the man that went into the glory, our adorable Lord Jesus Christ? And of course, when I say that and look upward in actual posture, I'm always open to the mistake that some may think me to mean. Do I appear into the broad blue and do I imagine things and am I a stargazer? And that's far from reality. Because I believe this blessed matter of engaging with our Lord Jesus Christ, the risen glorified one, is a matter of down-to-earthness that is worked out through occupation with the blessed word of God.

Let me say a scripture here that I like much. It's 2 Corinthians 3.18. You well know it. When it says this, the closing verse of that particular chapter, we with unveiled faith.

Just earlier it's been speaking about Moses, the mediator of the Old Covenant. He put a veil over his face. That men could not see to the end of that which was to be abolished.

They couldn't see the departing glory. And since the glory came in with the giving of the Old Covenant, they couldn't see that the Old Covenant was a passing thing. And that's so true.

Speak to some of God's dear earthly people today and it just looks as though there's a judicial veil in front of their face. As far as they can get to God is just up to Moses and Moses had a veil over his face. But the passage goes on to say, we, God's people, Christians, with no veil between us and our mediator, we can get right into the presence of a risen Christ.

And then it says this, we with unveiled faith beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord. Our change metamorphosed, transfigured into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord. Now I'm rather inclined to believe that this blessed book called the Word of God is the mirror of the glory of Christ.

It's the mirror of Christ. It's as though God took a glass, a looking glass, he shines it on the glory, he gets the rays of the beauties of the Son of God and then he turns it on those who would look into this blessed book. When I was a lad, I remember some of the mischief we used to do.

There wasn't too much of it, at least it was uncomplicated mischief. We'd get a little broken bit of a looking glass and then I've seen me on a bright day, that's almost an overstatement. They did come once in a while in Scotland and I've seen we'd get the sun yonder and then we'd shine the glass on somebody's face as he walked along the street.

I can see my friend yet wondering, where is that coming from? And it was the glory from the sun that was being relayed by the glass. The spiritual glory in our Lord Jesus Christ that is taught by this blessed book. And as I deal with this book and deal with Christ in the book, there's a refraction of that glory out over my being, my personality.

You know, mirrors are in the main neutral thing. All the times you see some grotesque thing, something gotten up for humor. I can see convex mirrors that when you look into them you widen out and circle around and I can see concave ones where you slender out and they make fun of you, of course.

But mirrors generally are just plain things. Whatever is out here, why it shows up out in there. But you know the divine mirror is an interesting thing because whatever is in there shows up out here.

Whatever the heart of God's dear child is taken with Christ in the word of God. There's the reflection of it into his own personality. I don't mean now merely physical likeness.

I think there's some truth to that. I've had the joy of walking with lives older and mellowed by the years and I think I've seen Christ on their very faces because they've lived long with him. But certainly if it does not mean physical, it means all of the moral attributes and characteristics.

It means that the things that are Christ become the things of my life. You see, it's a spiritual law so familiar to many of us that we become like those with whom we live. Live with Christ, walk with him, drink into his personality.

There comes out a Christ-like man. There are young folk here today. Would I be suffered to say this much? Is one just a little farther on down the road than you? I suggest that this is true in an evil way.

It is true of our lives that if we live in close touch with Christ, we'll become absorbing his personality. We'll be like him and show it out. If we live in touch with evil, we'll drink into it and become evil in appearance.

Do you remember a king called Jehoshaphat? One day a wicked king, Ahab of Israel, said to Jehoshaphat, do you know that one of the cities of refuge, Jeboth Gilead, is in the hands of the heathen? We ought to go up together and do this and get this city free. And Jehoshaphat should have known better. He should have known that compromise is not desirable, it matters not for what.

He should have known that any little whispered thought concerning joint activity ought not to have been received by him. But he said, all right, let's go up. I am as thou art.

That's what he said. I don't know how long they sat in conclave. I don't know whether they had a feast.

I think they did. And as they sat across one from the other, the wicked man Ahab tells his plan. Jehoshaphat joins in and says, I am as thou art.

Now it's just one of those remarkable little things in scripture that when they go out to the battle, Ahab says to Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat, I'm not putting on my kingly robes. You go dressed up as a king if you want, but I'm going to disguise myself. You see, they'll be after me and I'm going to disguise myself.

And so up to the battle they go. And when the enemies see the one in royal robes, they say, that's Ahab, let's shoot at him. And hasn't he just said something that almost indicated that was right? He said, I am as thou art.

Sure, I'm with you all the way. I'm entirely alongside of you in this matter. And they would have shot at him because in actual fact they mistook him for the wicked king.

Oh, you'll say overdrawn. You'll say many a thing. But here's the man who's going to walk this earth when the man grows up aloft.

He knows full well he must walk in the same spirit that empowered him while he was here below. He's told the secret of it. And so he says, I want that power.

And you don't remember the end of the story in this much that the mantle of the man gone up on high comes fluttering down through the breeze. Elisha tears his own habits, his own garments, cloaks himself in the cloak of Elijah and begins to walk for God on the earth. I've just got one little thing more or perhaps two.

One of them is this. I should like so much to have been there in the hills and dales of that land when the man Elisha came along one day. I can very well imagine somebody said, there's Elijah coming.

I wouldn't know that cloak anywhere. I wouldn't know him. Oh, someone said, it can't be Elijah.

Have you forgotten Elijah went up on high? Ah, then it's Elisha, but he looks so much like Elijah because he's cloaked in the cloak of Elijah. The Spirit of God is here to make God's people look like the man that's up in the glory. Actually make them like him.

Beloved, I'm sure this is the secret of anything of the positiveness of living for God in the day in which, as it were, the passing of many things takes place. But the one thing remains constant. There's a man in the glory.

There's a divine Holy Spirit down here. And the Holy Spirit would like to keep his people occupied with Christ in order that Christ's likeness might be the mark of their life. I feel like closing.

I took the precaution of not asking how much time I would have so that I'll just go on until I'm closed. I'm just about through. I hardly know that I need to speak about the Jericho episode, or rather the, I didn't read the Jericho episode, but read about the Bethel episode where the little folk came out and called after the man of God.

I suggest this, that those who are here for God, those who, as it were, succeed that age in which the man has gone up into the glory, they're going to find that not only are their wills tested and their hearts are

tested to see what they should desire, but their faith will be tested. So let's forget we'll go back into a world that has no great love for the man gone up on high. And if they disparage the Lord, they'll disparage the servant of the Lord.

And that's why they cry out after Elisha, go on up, you baldhead, go on. Get off the earth the same as your predecessor did. You know, I just remarked this, that faith will be tested.

It'll be needful for us to keep in touch with the man gone on high because as the age goes on, it'll be harder to stand and stand firm for the Lord of glory. By the way, I might remark this, since I brought it up, that passage has been a difficult one for some folk. I listed an article some little time ago which said that a certain cleric in England, I believe it was, it matters not, but a certain man had found that that was the scripture that simply broke the camel's back.

The straw that was the last on the pile. He just simply couldn't take God's word after that as God's word to think that God would be a God that would come out and visit little toddlers with wrath because they had made some little comment of ridicule about his servant. Poor dear cleric.

Because if he'd read the story very closely, he'd have come to a delightful conclusion. And part of it is this, they weren't little toddlers that came out after the man of God and said, go on up, you baldhead. They must have been queer little toddlers for the very same word as the word used for the servant of Elisha.

They were toddlers of about 15 or 16 or 17. They were teenage delinquents. They were the first delinquents.

And you know how delinquents are made? By parental delinquency. Don't let me get on my other sermon now, but that to my mind is exactly the case for it here. You remember that Bethel had declined, there was declension, there was apostasy, there was a golden calf in Bethel.

You know what the parents were doing? They were worshipping at the shrine of gold. While they were going out after the gold, the sons and the daughters were growing up without God and they come to a place where the ridicule, the man of God. Oh yes, that's what I think about it.

Or you say, you've said so much now, why don't you tell us the rest about these she-bears. Surely you can't condone she-bears tearing men and our young folk and killing them. It doesn't say that she-bears killed them.

It says they tear 42 of them. What do you say, you surely don't think that the man of God was really right in turning and ordering she-bears out of the woods? I don't think he did. I think the crowd went along hollering and shouting and they woke the she-bears in the woods and their own shouting brought their own judgment.

That's what always happens to sin. I believe with all my heart that the judgment came down upon them because of what they themselves had done. But here is tested faith and tested heart and tested will.

And when those tests are laid alongside our lives, may it be that our hearts cry out for the same power, manifest in the same way as in this case of old. May God bless his word to our hearts, for Christ's name's sake. I'd like to take my text from the first chapter of the Gospel according to John.

John chapter 1. We'll begin to read from the 29th verse of John 1. And after me come of a man which is preferred before me, for he was before me. And I knew him not, but that he should be made manifest to Israel. Therefore am I come baptizing with water.

And John bare record saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not, but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same as he which baptizes with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.

And then the next day after it, John stood with two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God. And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and said unto them, What speakest thou? They said unto him, Rabbi, which is to say, being interpreted, Master, where dwellest thou? He said unto them, Come and see.

They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day, so it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah which is being interpreted for Christ.

And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jonah, and thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone. John the Baptist introduced the people to the Lord Jesus, and thereby lost his own following.

He said, That's the way it ought to be. He must be in peace, but I be peace. He was quite glad for the Lord Jesus to be number one.

And because he was of that turn, it was easy for those who listened to him to feel the same way. And it wasn't long until the very people to whom he spoke did exactly what he'd been doing. They turned to the Lord Jesus, too.

They wanted the Lord Jesus to be first, and nothing more. Now he introduced the people to the Savior, first of all, as the Lamb of God, the taker away, literally, of the sin of the world. This is the way he first got acquainted with the Lord Jesus.

If you know him at all, you got acquainted with him as the taker away of the sin of the world. This doesn't mean that he takes everybody's sin away. This means that this is his character.

This is his work. This is what he came to do. And those who will align to do so, he'll be glad to take away their sin.

That's what we have to be doing. In case you ever get conceited, just remember this. That's where God found you.

He found you as a criminal. He found you as a sinner. He found you in terrible need.

And the first thing the Lord had to do for you was to take your sin away. You can never be very conceited if you remember this. They have a legend about the peacock.

I don't know if it's true or not. I don't know how anybody ever known to learn and talk peacock language. But anyway, they have a legend that the peacock feels very proud and spreads his tail and struts until he

happens to look down into his ugly feet.

And then he just holds his tail and sprints away.

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