

The Spirit of Power

2 Kings 13:14-16

1

14 When Elisha became sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash the king of Israel came down to him and wept over him and said, “My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” **15** Elisha said to him, “Take a bow and arrows.” So he took a bow and arrows. **16** Then he said to the king of Israel, “Put your hand on the bow.” And he put his hand on it, then Elisha laid his hands on the king’s hands.

Elisha is dying, Joash, the King of Israel comes to see him and says...

2

“My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!”

This is interesting; Joash here makes the same statement to Elisha that Elisha had made to Elijah in...

2 Kings 2:11-12

3

11 As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. **12** Elisha saw it and cried out, “My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!”

There are some different thoughts among the commentaries on exactly what is meant by this statement made by both of them but the one that makes the most sense to me is that it is an expression of grief that says if you go who is to protect Israel. I can see the connection in the respectful term “My Father” and describing him as “The chariots of Israel and its horsemen.” Joash recognized that Elisha as the prophet of God had been the spokesman for God, the protector of God to the people. Elijah acknowledged Elijah in the same way.

They both pass from this life. But here we have a very different scene from the open plain beyond the Jordan where Elijah was taken. Elisha is dying from whatever sickness that he has, a sickness that the passage says is going to take his life, Elijah did not have to endure physical death the way we know it, he was taken by God. There is a point we need to make here. We don’t for sure know how it happened, but we do know for sure that the physical body that Elijah had while here on Earth is not the body that he has now. Paul writes...

1 Cor 15:51-53

4

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, **52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. **53** For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Elijah did not die, at least, not in the most technical sense of dying, his spirit being separated from his physical body, but he did receive a new body, an immortal body, just as Paul says all who are alive when Christ returns will receive. I guess the point is that God is just as near His followers whether they are in the open of the desert or in the confines of the sickroom.

So, the king of Israel comes to the old prophet. Elisha seems to not notice the grief and reverence expressed by the same statement he made to Elijah, but immediately begins to help Joash.

Here is the prophet dying; and his last words are not edifying moral and religious reflections, nor does he seem to be too concerned to express to the king his last protest against Israel's sin, but rather his thoughts are of warfare, and his last effort is to stir up the sluggish young king with his own enthusiasm in the conflict with the enemy. It does not sound like atypical edifying deathbed. Elisha seems to be thinking that to continue his life's work till the last breath was out of him was what he should do. Seems like a rather worthy end to the prophet's life.

So we see Elisha taking advantage of the obvious respect that Joash has for him and gives him a series of curt, authoritative commands, each of which Joash obeys.

5

“Take bow and arrow”

So Joash took them. Then the prophet lays his dying hand on Joash' hand, and having either in symbol or reality, it doesn't really matter, communicates power to him and says...

2 Kings 13:17

6

17 He said, “Open the window toward the east,” and he opened it. Then Elisha said, “Shoot!” And he shot. And he said, “The Lord's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Aram; for you will defeat the Arameans at Aphek until you have destroyed them.”

Elisha tells Joash...

“The Lord's arrow of victory! . . . Thou shalt smite the Syrians till they be consumed.”

This is where the account gets really interesting. Note what Elisha says next...

2 Kings 13:18-19

7

18 Then he said, “Take the arrows,” and he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, “Strike the ground,” and he struck it three times and stopped.

Doesn't that seem like an odd thing for Elisha to say? Here he is dying and there is an army at door, Joash has come to see him and he tells the king to hit the ground with an arrow. The promise has been given; a door of opportunity has been the opened for the king, and now everything depends on the question of whether he will rise to the height of the occasion or not. This is a test for Joash. Just how willing and excited was he to gain the promise that Joash had presented...

8

Victory!!!

If he had been roused and stirred by what had been said before; if he had any trust of belief in the power of God that had been communicated to him, and any eagerness of desire to realize the promises that had been given of complete victory, what would he have done? What would you do? What would Elisha have done if he had had the quiver of arrows in his hand? Joash hit the ground three times, and having done what it appears he thinks will satisfy the old man's odd command, he stops. There are a lot of questions that come up that we don't have answers for. Did Elisha tell Joash how many times to hit the ground? What was Joash thinking as he responded to the

command? Here is what we do know. Elisha told him to hit the ground and Joash did that, but the way he did it, or maybe the attitude he displayed in doing it, was not to Elisha's liking...

2 Kings 13:19

9

19 So the man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck five or six times, then you would have struck Aram until you would have destroyed it. But now you shall strike Aram only three times."

This is a strange story, very different from other accounts that we see. Yet, I think, there are some principles in it that we can apply for us today.

10

- 1) The Power communicated
- 2) The perfect victory that is possible and promised
- 3) The victory that has already been won

Now, the story seems to indicate that it was just a moment that Elisha held the hand of Joash, because as we saw in the account Elisha tells him to go to the window and fling it open, and draw his bow. So, even though the touch seems to be momentary, a communication of power, whether real or in symbol was given to Joash. Elisha may have been dying, but he was still the prophet of God and wanted to help his people.

11

- 1) The Power communicated

Isn't that the lesson for us? We, if we are Christians, followers of Christ, have a Gospel of Power...

Heb 4:11-13

12

12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. **13** And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

And Paul says in a passage I use all the time in...

Rom 1:16

13

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Christ tells the Apostles...

Luke 24:48-49

14

48 "You are witnesses of these things. **49** "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

The promise of God to the obedient faithful of today can be seen in the promises to His people that He has always given His people. Adam and Eve were given a perfect home with no pain, no tears, nothing that could harm them. The Israelites were given a land that would bring forth abundance and God on their side against their enemies. All they had to do was be faithfully obedient to God's Laws. Failure only occurred when they made the decision to turn away from the Power of God. That dynamic is the same for us today, failure only occurs when we turn away from the Power of God that has been communicated to us through the Gospel.

15 2) The perfect victory that is possible and promised

When the arrows had been shot, the prophet says,

16 *“The arrow of the Lord's victory! thou shalt smite . . . till thou have consumed.”*

1 Cor 15:55-57

17

55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; **57** but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, the arrow is the Lord's arrow, the strength to fire it is His strength, the power behind the bow and arm that shoot the arrow is from God. That makes the victory God's. It is God's victory that is promised, it is Christ's victory that makes it possible. That's what Paul is saying here, God gives the victory through our Savior Jesus Christ. Wouldn't it be nice if all faithful followers realized that in their lives, while men's ideals and aims may not be accomplished, because God is God, His nature is perfection, and nothing that He does goes unfinished? All that comes from Him, does do by His power.

Why can't man just put faith in the only one who offers the power to overcome and be victorious?

Rom 6:23

18

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The death Paul spoke of in the passage we looked from 2 Cor. 15 is eternal death. That is the point. Eternal death is the sting of sin, but God has given us the opportunity to overcome that sting, to have a victory over eternal death through Jesus Christ. Man cannot win that victory without Christ, which brings us to our last point...

19 3) The victory that has already been won

For man to have ever had an opportunity to gain a victory of eternal death, Satan, for sake of argument, Satan's power had to be broken. Notice what Paul says in...

2 Cor 4:3-4

20

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

There are two powers being illustrated here.

- 21 A) The power of Satan to deceive, blind
B) The power of Christ to reveal, shed light

These two powers are battling for our souls. Christ wants to save us to eternal life, Satan wants to deceive us to eternal death. But pay close attention to how Paul describes the power of Satan and man's reaction to it; Satan uses lies to deceive man into being blinded by his own ignorance, arrogance, opinion, so that he turns away from the true and only source of salvation revealed through Christ...

22 ***“The Gospel of the Glory of Christ”***

But here is the real point Paul is making; we blind ourselves. Yes, Satan is the source of all deception, but we make the choice to not see the light revealed in Christ. Note what is said to the Jews in...

Acts 13:46

23

46 Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

The Jews were God's children, the Gospel was spoken to them first. They had every opportunity to accept it and respond in faith. They chose not to and in doing so Paul and Barnabus say that they...

24

“Judged themselves to be unworthy”

Think about that. Who would judge themselves to be unworthy? Why would anyone do that? But in denying who Christ is and not faithfully obeying the truth of the Gospel, in effect we choose to judge ourselves a unworthy of that truth. But that doesn't have to be the case. Victory is possible, victory is promised, if we will but give ourselves to God through Christ.

1 John 5:4

25

4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.