

**2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 2: 1-8; “Honoring Your Godly Father”, A Sermon prepared for  
Father’s Day, by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015,  
and Delivered in the Morning Worship Service.**

The truth that we are confronted with here in this passage is that there are some men who are more faithful to God than others. And, we can also say that some men know God far better than others. Those men who are mature in their faith and sound in their doctrine, and are men who have learned from God how to lead and teach others in the truth of what is important to God; these are fathers. How men live is judged by God every day. And those who are particularly faithful to God are called “fathers” in the Scripture. Elijah the prophet was one of those men. Similarly there are fathers in the faith of Christ in our own day. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 4: 15 says – “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” Elijah was an Old Testament spiritual father begetting men to a true understanding of what it means to know God. In the passage that we are studying, Elisha is a good example of how a spiritual son can honor a godly spiritual father. I will apply his example to how both biological and spiritual fathers who we may know, ought to be honored in our day.

The question that I will attempt to answer is this: How can you honor your godly father in a way which will please God? How can we honor not only our earthly fathers but our spiritual fathers as well? I believe that Elisha was a model to us, in this regard, in a number of meaningful ways that we can learn from. Elisha looked, it says in verse 12, and he saw Elijah’s translation to heaven and he exclaimed, “My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” He knew that Elijah was being taken away from the sons of the prophets and the people of Israel. He knew that his master, this “father” to him and to many others, had been a great strength to them and their whole nation; even as chariots and horsemen are the defense of a country and its people. It was the spiritual example of his life and his words which Elisha learned from, and it will be the same with you in relation to your father if he knows the Lord.

If it is the case that you have not had a father who has closely followed the Lord Jesus Christ, perhaps after hearing this sermon, you might ask God to direct you to such a man, so that you might receive a spiritual legacy from a faithful and godly Christian man. This morning I want to set before you this man Elisha’s good example of how he honored his spiritual father Elijah. He honored him in these 2 ways: 1<sup>st</sup> – By his determination to stick close to his spiritual father. 2<sup>nd</sup> – By his determination to see what God was doing through Elijah, even in his final days.. Then this afternoon we will think together about how Elisha learned from his godly father Elijah, and applied what he learned to his own ministry. 1<sup>st</sup> – By his determination to have a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. And 2<sup>nd</sup> - By his determination to pick up the mantle of his spiritual father. It takes a godly determination to honor your father and to learn from him, but this is something which will be very profitable to you when the Spirit of God is working in your heart. So listen now as I open up for you -

**1st – The truth that Elisha honored Elijah his spiritual father by his determination to stick close to him before he was taken to heaven.** (verses 1-4)

Verse 4 says: “Then Elijah said to him, ‘Elisha, stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me on to Jericho.’” “But he said, ‘As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!’” “So they came to Jericho.” I want to begin by asking you to consider whether you think that your father is someone who has a spiritual legacy to give to you? Because if he knows the Lord, he does. Elisha thought that Elijah had something to give to him as a spiritual legacy; something that Elijah could and would pass on to him which was of great value. That was why Elisha followed him so closely. That Elijah had been a spiritual father to Elisha in a very special way, during the

time of his instructing him, is very evident when you read of how God sent Elijah to Elisha. Turn with me over to 1 Kings 19: 19. “So Elijah departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth.” “Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him.” “And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, ‘Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.’” “And he said to him, ‘Go back again, for what have I done to you?’” “So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen’s equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate.” “Then he arose and followed Elijah and became his servant.” We should understand that there were many “sons of the prophets” whom God had raised up in that day, but Elijah, according to the leading of God’s Spirit, chose Elisha to be his successor. Thus Elisha became not only one of the “sons of the prophets”, but he became one who was much like a biological son of Elijah. Elisha had had a good upbringing and training at home under the teaching of his earthly father, and now the time was come for him to be promoted to a higher position, and to be under the tutelage of Elijah. Let’s think together for a few minutes about this amazing time in the history of Israel. At that time there were little spiritual schools of the prophets in a number of cities in Israel; there had been, since the days of Samuel. Listen to F.W. Krummacher in his book, *Elijah the Tishbite* –

“Scholastic institutions, according to the modern system, Israel certainly does not appear to have known, at least until the Babylonish captivity. But instead of these, home and school were one, and in the place of hireling lips, instruction was poured forth from the tender hearts of father and mother. The child learnt to lisp the name of Jehovah under the vine and the fig-tree, before the door of the peaceful dwelling. There the sacred histories of antiquity, recounted with the eloquence of affection, passed before its admiring soul. There the ideas of God and of the great ends of human life, were gradually impressed upon the tender mind. There it early learnt that which is eternally true and beautiful, and good for the human mind to know; and this was learnt, in the animated imagery of sacred historic record, by many an Israelitish child, almost before it had become conscious that its years of tuition had arrived. Thus it was pleasantly initiated into Israel’s wisdom, hopes, and prospects, and guided into a way of thinking, feeling, and anticipating, which penetrated upwards through the clouds of heaven, and forwards through the bounds of time. Having enjoyed the benefit of such a popular education in the highest sense of the word, many a young Israelite came forth from the paternal dwelling, vigorous in body and in mind, with an eye open to everything that is worth observing; susceptible, like good ground, of the best cultivation; and carrying in his hand, from his very home, the key of Scripture, of history, and of nature. The stars of heaven, the trees and flowers of the field preached to him; and the instructive voices of the Levities and prophets, which were constantly heard through the country, found in his mind a quick and vivid echo.”

This was the way that this godly young man Elisha was raised by his parents. They actually groomed him through home schooling to be devout, and prayed for him to become useful to God in service to Him. But we need to also understand that it was only by the mercy of God that his father’s prayers were answered and a great work of God’s grace took place in his heart; a work which took away the stubbornness of his heart and made him teachable and gentle and responsive to his earthly father’s instruction. Elisha had a great love for his earthly family, for his father and his mother, and this love came from God. That is why he asked Elijah if he could go back and kiss them and make provision for them by killing the oxen and giving away the equipment. Yes, he was beginning a new phase of his life; he was to leave his father and mother and learn from Elijah, but he wanted to honor his earthly parents. Everything that they had done for him up to that point in his life had led him to this point where he would be called to be a prophet and follow Elijah. His father had taught him well, and he had responded well by God’s grace. Elisha had stuck close to his father’s teaching, and he would also stick close to Elijah’s teaching of him.

The reason that this relationship was so special was that Elisha sought to learn from Elijah, even as he had learned from his earthly father, every single spiritual truth which was of value. He became his servant in regard to learning and living the truth. He stuck close to Elijah so that

he would learn every single practical way to apply those truths that he learned. He was for all practical purposes a disciple of this godly man. A disciple is a learner, and in order to learn, a disciple needs to be one who follows closely their teacher. Certainly we can apply this to our following our Lord Jesus Christ. Luke 6: 40 says: "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher." So we can also say that if we are to be disciplined by a spiritual father in the church that we attend, or even our earthly father who is attempting to raise us to the glory of God, he must be a man who is a spiritually minded man, a man who follows our Lord Jesus Christ closely, in connection with the truth of the Bible, both doctrinally and practically. And he will be a man who is seeking to teach you by word and example the way of the Lord. If you have such a father, or if you can become the friend of such a man, then truly you have every reason to rejoice, even as Elisha saw Elijah as his spiritual father.

Turn with me over to Proverbs chapter 4, verse 1, and you will see an example of the kind of teaching that Elisha no doubt received from his own father, and also in his spiritual father Elijah. "Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law. When I was my father's son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he also taught me, and said to me: "Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live." "Get wisdom!" "Get understanding!" "Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth." "Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you." "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom." "And in all your getting, get understanding." "Exalt her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honor, when you embrace her." "She will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver to you." "Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of your life will be many." "I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths." "When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, and when you run, you will not stumble." "Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; keep her, for she is your life." Sons and daughters, and children among us today: Your father's God has something to give to you, something very valuable, if he has been a man who has followed our Lord Jesus Christ for many years. It is something that you should desire for yourself; that is, a double portion of his spirit to follow Christ and learn the ways of wisdom. Can this really happen? I think that it can if we can see, as Elisha did, the glory of God's work in the life of his earthly father, and then also, in the life of his spiritual father Elijah.

Perhaps you do not have an earthly father who can be a spiritual father to you. Let us understand that God's providential ordering of things is perfect. God makes no mistakes in the things that He does in bringing people together and establishing the different relationships of our lives. The family that he has placed you in is no accident. The father that God gave to you, He gave to you in particular. But I am aware that there are many persons in the world who have not had a father who has been a good example of Christ to them. It is good to remember that it is God's grace that makes any man, or father, into a godly man. It is God who has sovereignly placed you where you are, in the biological family that we are with. You are to honor your father irregardless of whether they have always been a godly parent or not. You do not honor their sinful mistakes, but you honor them as the one whom God has placed you with. As a disciple of Jesus Christ you can even learn from the mistakes which your father has made, and learn to be godly where perhaps he has not been godly, and faithful where perhaps he has not been faithful.

Let us never think that just because a parent has failed and sinned in particular ways, that the child themselves is doomed to do the same because they are his child. God's grace can take you right where you are, and change you. And God can, and He will, teach you so that you can learn from your own mistakes, or the mistakes and sins of others, to do the very opposite; to do that which is right by the grace of Christ. But what I am trying to get at is that it is possible for you as a Christian to learn to stick close to your godly father, or with a particular person who is

godly. It may be possible for you to form a close attachment to a godly “father” in the faith; someone who can teach you the Bible and guide you more fully the way of the Lord. This, as a younger person, or a young Christian, you should certainly seek to find with your own father if you can. And fathers you ought to seek to establish this kind of relationship with your child. You want them to become your child in the faith, just as much as they are your child whom you have begotten in the flesh. This is how children honor their father and how a father loves his child, by providing for them spiritual truth and a good example for them to follow.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – Elisha gives us a good example of how to honor your father by his determination to see what God was doing through him, even in his final days.**

(verses 5-8)

“Now the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, ‘Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today?’” “So he answered, ‘Yes, I know; keep silent!’” “Then Elijah said to him, ‘Stay here please, for the Lord has sent me on to the Jordan.’” “But he said, ‘As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!’” “So the two of them went on.” “And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan.” “Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.” Now, it is obvious that these acts which were done by Elisha were miraculous; they were a sign of his power as a prophet, and that they were a sign of the authority that had been given him by God, even as Moses was given authority by God to divide the waters of the Red Sea so that the children of Israel could go across on dry ground and escape being killed by their enemies. Even so, this miracle performed by Elijah was done to show that his Prophetic leadership and power was being transferred to Elisha and that the remnant in Israel would be continued to be preserved by God through the waters of difficulty which threatened to overflow them and overwhelm them. Elisha would go through the waters with Elijah and it would become obvious to all of the prophets that God’s power would attend His word whether it came through Elijah or Elisha.

Even so, you as children and young people, and especially adult children, need to understand that God has given you a godly father in order to show you how Christ’s kingdom will continue to advance in your lifetime, just as it has advanced in your father’s day. It will be by your coming to believe in your Father’s God, and by proving His miraculous power in your own heart and life. As you see the works of God done for, and by, and through your father, if you have the same faith as he has, you will come to know that the same God that has led him, taught him, and used him to do great things, is the same God who you can trust to lead you. The same God that saved your father from his sins is the same God who can save you from your sins. The same God that changed your father’s heart by grace to become a holy and righteous man can change you to become holy and righteous. The same God who used your father to trust in God’s power to engage in the many good and right things that he did for his family and his church, will be the same God who will work in you to do the same kind of good works according to God’s wisdom and providential ordering of events. What is it that gives hope to the future generation that God shall yet do great things for them? It is what is related by a father, to his children, of God’s great works. Psalm 145, verse 3 – “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.” “One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.” “I will meditate on the splendor of Your majesty, and on Your wondrous works.” “Men shall speak of the might of Your awesome acts, and I will declare Your greatness.”

How did your father feed you, clothe you, and provide for all of your needs, for all of those years during the time when you were growing up? It was because God gave him gainful employment and the strength to do the work. God gave him the mantle of his profession and the

strength to do it well. You have seen him sustained through many trials of his strength in taking care of the needs of the family. How did he focus all the attention that he did on raising you to the glory of God all of these years, teaching you the Bible and conducting many hours of family devotions with you? It was by the power of God's Spirit working in his heart and life. How was it that he continued to take an interest in your spiritual welfare and the welfare of the church that you have attended all the years of your growing up? It was not by his might, or by His power, but by the Spirit of the Lord that he did these things. How is it that you have come to have the kind of spirit that you have, to follow his lead in spiritual things during these years when you have lived at home, so that you really enjoyed going to church, and having him teach you, and explain to you many important doctrinal and practical truths that you heard from the pastor's lips and read in the Bible?

You now stand with him by the Jordan river, as it were. He is getting older and you are, even now, still walking closely with him as he walks with Christ. All of this is a living miracle just as surely as Elijah's dividing the waters and slapping them with his mantel, and he and Elisha walking across on dry ground! Oh, how you ought to praise God for a godly father if God has given you one. Place those good words before you, which were sung by the children of Israel after the Lord had brought them through the Red Sea and delivered them from Egyptian bondage and Pharaoh's pursuing them to death. Exodus 15: 1 – "I will sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!" "The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!" "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." You can honor your father today by learning from the acts of power that the Lord gave your father to do. Learn them and remember them just as surely as Elisha learned the acts of power from his spiritual father; those acts which the Lord gave Elijah to do, even in his old age. Remember the stand that he has taken for the word of God and the worship of God. Remember the grace and strength and wisdom that he has given him, and give thanks. Let us remember those verses in Exodus 33: 25 – "As Asher is the most blessed of sons; let him be favored by his brothers, and let him dip his foot in oil." "Your sandals shall be iron and bronze; and as your days, so shall your strength be." You can honor your father today by believing in your heart that the God who sustained your father in his youth will be the God who will continue to sustain him to his old age and his gray hairs; all the way to death and beyond it, to eternal glory. It is God who even in his old age will give him acts of spiritual power so that he might show them to you when he is on the very verge of eternity. Remember these wonderful words from Psalm 71, verses 17 and 18: "O God, You have taught me from my youth; and to this day I declare Your wondrous works." "Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come." This afternoon I will complete our study of what it means for you to honor your godly father by our looking at verses 9-15.