

**1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19: 19-21; “Elijah’s Protégé Elisha” Message # 12 in the series –  
“Lessons from the Life of Elijah”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall  
on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

We have seen thus far that Elijah the prophet was greatly used by the Lord during this time period of Ahab’s rule in Israel. He was used to confront Ahab and Jezebel concerning their sin of leading the people into the false worship of the Baal’s. In the contest with the prophets on Mt. Carmel, he was used by God to prove to all Israel that the Lord, the God of Israel was the only true and living God. At this time, I want to build on all the truth that we have studied thus far, by seeing how God led Elijah further yet, so that he would fulfill God’s purpose for his life. God helped him to fulfill his ministry by giving him a protégé to stand next to him. He gave him the prophet Elisha to help him in this final stage in his ministry.

A protégé is a person who is guided and supported by an older and more experienced or person. They are a person under the patronage, protection, or care of someone interested in their career, office, or occupation. It was God who appointed Elisha to be Elijah’s protégé. He was to learn a good many things from Elijah, and they would begin immediately after He called him. 3 significant actions Elijah took to teach his protégé about God’s calling him to succeed Elijah in his ministry. 1<sup>st</sup> of all – Elijah threw his mantle on Elisha. 2<sup>nd</sup> – Elijah showed him how affection for family is right in a minister. 3<sup>rd</sup> – Elijah’s patience in his instruction of Elisha. **1<sup>st</sup> of all – Elijah threw his mantle on Elisha.** (verse 19)

“So he 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.” This action of his throwing his mantle on Elisha meant that Elijah had understood that Elisha was being called by God to a full time ministry as a prophet in his place. Elijah knew that Elisha would be his successor as God’s most prominent and important prophet to confront evil and to promote righteousness in the nation of Israel. This was what Elijah had been doing for all of these years, and now the mantle of appointed authority was going to be passed. That authority would be more formally transferred after the protégé had learned all that God would have him to, from Elijah.

I want you to notice the suddenness of Elisha’s call to the ministry. It came out of the blue for Elisha. He was not expecting it. It came initiated by the prophet Elijah, who was representing God in the matter. It is a good thing when a minister has a protégé; when he has someone who is willing to follow Christ by following him as Christ’s servant. Only God can establish such a relationship, although the minister ought to be on the lookout to see who might fulfill the office of a pastor in his place; someone who he can see has a call to preach. It is a good thing for a young men who desires someday to be a minister, to stand next to one who presently is a minister, so that he might learn from him. And so that he might learn to help the man who is already in the ministry.

We see here from verse 19 that Elisha was a hardworking man. He was a diligent man. He was not at all afraid of taking on hard jobs. In fact, at the time when Elijah found him, and God called him, he was working in the field plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he was with the twelfth. I like what Matthew Henry says about this. “That it was an unexpected surprising call.” “Elijah found him by divine direction, or perhaps he was before acquainted with him and knew where to find him.” “He found him, not in the schools of the prophets, but in the field, not reading, nor praying, nor sacrificing, but ploughing.”

“Though a great man (as appears by his feast, mentioned in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19: 21), a master of the ground, and oxen, and servants, yet he did not think it any disparagement to him to follow his business himself, and not only to inspect his servants, but himself to lay his hand to the plough.”

“Idleness is no man’s honour, nor is husbandry (farming) any man’s disgrace.” “An honest calling in the world does not at all put us out of the way of our heavenly calling, any more than it did Elisha, who was taken from following the plough to feed Israel and to sow the seed of the word, as the apostles were taken from fishing to catch men.” “Elisha enquired not after Elijah, but was anticipated with this call.” “We love God, and choose Him, because He chose us, and loved us, first.”

So, it is always a good thing when we work hard at our calling. It is apparent from the fact that Elisha was working with 12 yoke of oxen that he was a wealthy man, but it is also apparent that if it took 12 yoke of oxen to break up the ground, that the ground must have been pretty hard. This plowing the hard ground is a picture of what Elisha would be called to in his ministering to the people of Israel. He would be called to preach and teach in such a way that, with the Lord’s blessing, the hard ground of their hearts would be broken up. Look at Hosea 10: 12-15 with me for a minute. “Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till He comes and rains righteousness on you.” “You have plowed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity.”

“You have eaten the fruit of lies, because you trusted in your own way, in the multitude of your mighty men.” “Therefore tumult shall arise among your people, and all your fortresses shall be plundered as Shalman plundered Beth Arbel in the day of battle – a mother dashed in pieces upon her children.” “Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel, because of your great wickedness.” “At dawn the king of Israel shall be cut off utterly.” Now, although these verses apply to the last king of Israel, Hoshea, they could well apply to the time of Elijah and Elisha. They would sow for themselves righteousness, and they would reap in mercy, in both of their ministries.

They would break up the fallow ground of people’s hearts, so that they would seek the Lord and He would come and rain righteousness down upon them in their ministries to Israel. But when Ahab went into battle, he would die and perish in his sins because he had plowed wickedness and reaped iniquity. He ate the fruit of lies, and would lose everything. But Elisha was a man who was called in the midst of trying to be faithful to his earthly calling of being a farmer. And we should be those who are attempting to be faithful in whatever calling we are in.

Turn with me over to Luke 16: 10-13 – “He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.” “Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?” “And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give you what is your own?” This was the way that Elisha was. He was trying to be faithful in his calling of being a farmer, and in the midst of it, God would give him a promotion. He would give him what he was not expecting, because he had been faithful. Because he was faithful in earthly things, God would entrust him with the true riches, even the heavenly riches. He still would have much to learn, but Elijah would take him under his wing, and he would teach him what he could.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> – Elijah showed him how affection for family is right in a minister.**

Verse 20 says – “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?’” Now, here we see the eagerness of the young man to serve the Lord. He left the oxen and ran after Elijah. He had been called, and he responded with joy and eagerness by running to Elijah to affirm to that call. And yet, we find that he did not forget his past, and what his dear parents had done for him. He asks permission to go and kiss his father and mother. And Elijah did not deny his request, but affirms that it was good.

The right kind of affection for family is a good thing in a minister. It is the kind of affection that honors father and mother; that remembers their prayers and their training and instruction and wisdom and counsel, and love in providing everything that was needful and good; everything including sharing the gospel and teaching good Biblical principles to live by, and

teaching kindness by loving example. Elisha loved his parents for all of this, and he wanted to kiss them goodbye before he launched out into this new calling.

But turn over with me to Luke 9: 57-62. I want to show you that this good affection for parents was much different thing from the men in this passage who said that they wanted to follow Jesus. “Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, ‘Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.’” “And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’” “Then He said to another, ‘Follow Me.’” “But he said, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’” “Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.’” “And another also said, ‘Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.’” “But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.’”

Now, I hope that you will try to think about the difference here, between these men and Elisha, in his following of Elijah. The first of these men said that he would follow Jesus wherever he would go, but he hadn’t really counted the cost of how rugged it would be to him to sleep out under the sky and have no bed to lie down in. And so he refused going. This Elisha did not do with Elijah. He had counted the cost and he would follow; even if it meant his having to give up living in a nicer house, or having to give up much more pleasant circumstances, in terms of housing, and not having a bed to sleep upon.

The next man that Jesus asked him to follow Him said that he wanted to first go and bury his father. Jesus’ saying to him that he should “let the dead bury their own dead” meant that this man should have let those who were spiritually dead bury the physical dead. They would have nothing better to do. But as a follower of Christ, there was something more important for him to do – He should go and preach the kingdom of God. And this is what Jesus told him to go and do. The 3<sup>rd</sup> man said that he would follow Jesus, but he wanted to go and bid those who were there at his house farewell. It appears that when he said this, he was implying that he really wanted to somehow hold on to his old worldly life.

But Jesus told him, that once he had put his hand to the plough, he should not look back to the kingdom of the world; that, to try to pursue both the world and a spiritual ministry of the word, cannot stand together. He could not look back, and think that he would be fit for the kingdom of God. Preaching Christ and following Christ are of far greater priority and importance than any earthly comfort or consideration. But Elijah let Elisha go back so that he could kiss his parents goodbye because he knew that Elisha would leave everything behind to follow him and be his protégé. He let him go because he wanted to affirm how important it was for a minister to have affection for his godly parents. He must lovingly care for their welfare and he should honor all the good work that they have done for him in raising him to walk with God.

**Then, 3<sup>rd</sup> – Elijah was patient in his instruction with Elisha.**

Verse 21 says – “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. The actions of Elisha here show that he was not turning back, in any way, in a permanent sense, from following Elijah and becoming his protégé. Instead they confirmed that he would leave all and follow him. He takes a yoke of oxen and he slaughters them and he boils their flesh. And he uses the oxen’s equipment for firewood, and he gave the meat to the people to eat.

The people that he gave this feast for, were his servants and other relatives and friends who he was going to leave behind. At the feast he would tell them about Elijah’s need of him, to be his servant and his protégé. But, after he told them this, he also would not leave without first making provision for them, and giving them final instructions. In this regard he fulfilled the saying of Jesus in Matthew 19: 21 – “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to

the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” He explained to his people the meaning and implications of his call from God through Elijah. Let us see that there is a very great reality to the words of Christ in Matthew 19: 29 – “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.” Elisha would come to know the reality of this saying in his life.

Let us also see that Elisha started out his work as a protégé as a servant. It says that he arose and followed Elijah and became his servant. He came to know the reality of Matthew 10: 24 where Jesus said – “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.” “It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and servant like his master.” Elisha would become like Elijah as he spent time with him. He would even pray to have a double portion of his spirit when Elijah was about to be taken from him. As disciples of Christ, let us pray that we would have more of the power of the Spirit of Jesus, so that we might serve Him better, and be known as His friends – His protégés; those who are under the patronage, protection, or care of the One who is interested how we will do His work.