Study of Elisha - Part 1

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[0:00] Seeking the Lord's blessing, we'll turn to the second portion of scripture we read, the Old Testament, the first book of Kings, and chapter 19.

And at verse 19, chapter 19 at verse 19.
So he departed thence and found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelve. And Elijah passed him by and cast his mantle upon him.
Now, not too long ago, we looked at the life of Elijah, the great prophet of God. And most of you may remember one particular incident in Elijah's life, when he fled into the wilderness of Sinai and lodged in a cave belonging to that mountain.
And he went there because he was dejected and because he was depressed. But there in the cave the Lord met with him, not in the earthquake or in the fire, but the Lord met with him in the still small voice.
[1:50] And the Lord's presence was very much in that still small voice. And the still small voice conveyed to Elijah that God would work in his own quiet way.

He would work in providence and he would work in grace. And he would do that. And the Lord seems to intimate to Elijah that he would do it especially through the anointing of his own successor, the man called Elisha.
And Elijah is humbled by that, no doubt, that the Lord will do great things through the one who is to follow himself. But nonetheless, Elijah is heartened by that.
And he goes out straight away from the mountain of Sinai and he makes his way northwards, 160 miles, to make a journey right up northeast, really, to the small village of Abel Mahola.
And it's not difficult to believe that the journey itself would have been a lot more pleasant for Elijah than the journey down to Sinai was in the first place. When he went there, the ground was still dry and was still parched.
[3:02] But there had been more than a month of rain and the ground would have blossomed. And I'm sure as Elijah was making his way back north over that long journey, that that itself would have been a promise of spiritual things to him.

That the desert would bloom as the rose and that there would be a spiritual awakening and a spiritual blessing once he anointed his own successor, Elisha. And so he does that and he makes his way to the half-tribe of Manasseh and to the village of Abel Mahola.
And there he finds the man Elisha, the son of Shaphat. Now very little is told us of the background of this man.
We meet him here ploughing on his father's field. Now Abel Mahola was named that because of its fertility. It consisted of a lot of fertile plains.
And Elisha was here ploughing. Clearly he was a wealthy man or perhaps you could say his father was a very wealthy man. To have twelve yoke of oxen and to have twelve servants ploughing using those oxen means that he was a man of great substance.
[4:15] A man of great wealth. So if Elisha didn't actually possess that himself then you could say that he stood to inherit it. And that certainly becomes significant later on.

And he finds this man here ploughing. And I'm sure he ploughed enthusiastically. This was the first time in three years that the rain had fallen and that the ground was promising.
And so Elisha and his servants would have gone out full of expectation. And it seems fairly clear from the narrative that Elisha is already a man of God. And that he has come from a family of God also.
That his mother and father were godly people. And I have no doubt what would have engaged that conversation and their minds as they were ploughing. The rain has just come for the first time in

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three and a half years.
And they're thankful to see it. And the promise and the fertility of the ground. And no doubt their minds are still full of the great contest that took place at Mount Carmel. When Elijah slew the prophets of Baal.
[5:16] Just over a month before. And that's remember the distance or the length of time between the contest at Carmel. And this particular calling of Elisha. So that is on everybody's lips.

Everybody is still full of it. The destruction of the prophets of Baal. The great victory of Elijah. Elijah. And I have no difficulty in believing that Elisha himself is praying.
That as he ploughs the ground and as he plants the seed. That the Lord would turn the land truly. That he would build upon what was done in Carmel. And that he would bring showers of blessing down upon the earth.
And that no doubt is the substance of the conversation. The first time they plough after three years of drought. And there's no doubting the name on everybody's lips. And that is the name of Elijah. The great prophet of God. And I've no doubt again that Elisha. Like the rest of the 7,000 of God's people. Whom he had preserved in Israel. He's wondering along with the rest.
[6:14] What has happened to this man? He came and again he disappeared. Just at the moment of his apparent victory. He turned around and he hasn't been seen for over a month.

Now, Jezebel has put out a death warrant. They know that. But at the same time they know he's not a man to run away from a death warrant. And so they wonder where Elijah himself has disappeared.
All these things constitute the conversation. And that is the name on everybody's lips. And as they're ploughing in that quiet place. On that fertile plain with the 12 yoke.
A stranger walks towards them. And as he comes closer. He becomes very distinctive. He has his distinctive garment. And the distinctive belt around his waist.
He has a man who has a rugged appearance. And the closer he comes. The more recognizable he is. It is none other than Elijah himself. The great prophet of God.
[7:16] Here in Abimehola. He has appeared there. And he's making his way. With a deliberate step. Towards themselves. And it's not difficult to believe that they stopped their ploughing.

As the man came closer. They knew him. They knew his sight. They knew his appearance. And Elijah makes his way past every plough. Until he comes to the last plough.
Where Elisha himself. He was supervising. And Elijah takes his famous cloak. Off his back. And he puts it. Or he throws it. On the shoulders of Elisha.
He doesn't say anything. He just performs that highly symbolic act. And then he walks on by. In silence. Elisha knows the significance.
Elisha. And after a pause. He runs after Elisha. Elisha. And he says. Let me go back home. And kiss my mother and my father.
[8:13] Before I leave. And Elijah turns around. And gives him an abrupt kind of permission to do that. Elisha does it. And then he returns.

And he takes two of the oxen. And he kills them. And there and then. He boils them. Using the yoke itself. As an instrument.
Or using it as a fire. Using it as wood for the fuel. There and then. He burns the oxen. He boils it. And he makes a feast. For those who plough with him. And they all partake.
Of that feast. That Elisha has made. And when the feast is finished. Elisha rises up. And he follows the great man. Elijah.
And so. With that begins. Fifty years. Of prophetic ministry. Eight years he spends. With his master Elijah. The next forty two.
[9:10] He spends on his own. As the great prophet. Of Israel. And that is the calling. To which God called him. And he calls him to it here. And when you look at it.

And when you reflect upon it. You'll find it full of instruction. For yourself. And for myself. Showing as much as it does. About the way that God deals. With souls.
In his own particular way. Now his. Prophetic ministry was a great one. It spanned the reign of four kings. And he was much more of an international prophet.
Than Elijah himself was. He had great influence in other kingdoms. He was well known in Adam. He was well known in Moab. He was highly influential. In Damascus. And in Syria. And you shouldn't think of the Lord's cause.

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In that way. As being just confined. Amongst the people of the Jews. It was never like that. The religion of the Jews. Was well known everywhere. And the prophets of God. At some particular periods.
[10:07] In Israel's life. Were well known. Respected. And their counsel was listened to. Even if it was not always followed. In other nations. Surrounding Israel. And that dignity.

Particularly fell to the still small voice. To Elisha. The one whom God called. To replace Elijah. Now I want to look with you. Tonight. At the man.
Briefly. Secondly. And more particularly. The call. Which he received from God. And third. And finally. His response.
To that call. Now first. Just briefly. The man. The man himself. What do we know of him. Or what do we glean.
Of his life. From these brief. Introductory verses. Well you would probably say. Not much. And in a sense. That is right. There is not that much sketch. But the little that there is. Is fairly significant.
[11:02] In the first place. I said he was a man. Of wealth. And we shouldn't just pass that by. There are twelve yoke. And twelve servants.

People sometimes speak. As though God only cared for the poor. As though there was no place for the wealthy. In the kingdom of God. Or that God didn't look upon those with wealth. Of course there were many people with wealth.
Who served the Lord. Sometimes God asked them to forsake that wealth. Or to forsake a measure of it. Other times he didn't. Their lives consisted of an addition. Upon an addition.
Of wealth. To their substance. Thinking of people like David. And of Absalom. And Abraham. Or people even like Job himself. Who ended up. Despite his trial. A much wealthier man.
Than he had ever been before. God has a place also. For the wealthy. In the kingdom of God. And Elisha. And his mother and father. And if there was anyone else. In the family.
[11:58] Weren't no doubt. Servants of God. Before Elijah ever came this way. Now wealth can be a barrier. There's no doubt about that. How hardly shall rich men enter into the kingdom of God.

Christ himself said. But nonetheless. God calls the wealthy also. And uses the wealthy. For the furtherance of his own cause. And the furtherance of the gospel. But notice especially.
That Elisha is diligent. Now notice that expression. In verse 19. We're told that. Elijah departed thence. And found Elisha. The son of Shaphat.
Who was plowing. With twelve yoke of oxen. Before him. And he. With the twelve. Now a man of this kind of wealth.
And substance. Could have said. Well you do all the work. And just come to me. Now and again. For some instructions. But you have the dirty hands.
[12:54] And I'll make sure that I have no dirty hands myself. I'll just supervise. And I'll supervise from a distance. But Elisha doesn't live like that.

That's not the way he lives his life. He believes his own work that God has given him. Is an honorable calling for him to do. And if God asks him to work the soil.
He'll work the soil. He'll supervise from the twelfth plow. And I believe that he's in the twelfth. Because he is supervising the work of the rest. But nonetheless. He is in the twelfth.
He's not at home. As a man of leisure. Wasting away his time doing nothing. He's in the twelfth plow. And that shows him as a man who is willing to do.
Whatever God gives him to do. And to do it as unto the Lord. Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do. Do it with all thy might. Now there's an important lesson in that.
[13:51] He doesn't sit down and dream of greatness. And say. Well I'm really worth much more than this. I should have a higher station. Or a higher calling than the one I've got. I should be somewhere else doing something else.

He's not like that. He values all kinds of work. And all kinds of service. And he views work as a noble calling. In whatever sphere it is.
And he will do it. And he'll discharge it unto the Lord. And he doesn't see work as beneath him. The work of the soil is not beneath him. He loves it.
And he will do it. And he will discharge it. Now my friend. Let me say quite bluntly. That the person who will not do what he can do.
A work that is available for him to do. Is fit for nothing at all. There's no point in having the attitude that. I'm not going to do that. That work is beneath me. And you see that even outside the kingdom

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of God.
[14:48] There are people who see the work. That they are offered to do as being beneath them. I won't do that kind of work. Or I won't clean the toilets. Or whatever. That is beneath me. Or I am too good for that. Now my friends.

Is that the attitude of the kingdom of God? Is that the attitude of a man or a woman. Born of God. Who knows that the whole world is full of work. Different kinds of work.
That are to be done to his own glory. And to his own praise. No task is too menial. Nothing is too small. Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do.
Do it with all thy might. And I'm quite sure. If Elijah had come. And found Elisha. Not willing. To partake of the work. He would have said. Well. There is some kind of mistake here.
Because if he is faithful. If he is not faithful in the least. He will not be faithful in most either. This is how he found him. He found it. He found him working. And then again you'll notice that.
[15:49] Elisha. Is a dutiful. And a respectful son. His request when he runs after Elijah. Is this. Let me.

In verse 20. I pray thee. Kiss. My father. And my mother. And then. I will follow thee. Now. That tells us.
That he kept the fifth commandment. That he honored. His father. And his mother. And so his days were long. On the land which the Lord gave him. He was a man who loved the commandments of God.
And who respected the relations. In which God had put him. And God's people should do that also. Those of you who have mothers and fathers living. Those of you who have wives or husbands or sons or daughters.
Should act towards those as God has commanded you precisely to act. You who have wives. Honor them. Give respect and affection unto them. And love them.
[16:47] You who have husbands. Recognize and reverence them. As set over you in the Lord. Honor thy father and thy mother. He knew that. Let me kiss my father and my mother.

A greater command is laid on me. A higher authority is no mine. Or a greater responsibility. But I cannot leave. Without kissing them. In a token of love.
Respect and affection. For his own upbringing. For their kindness to him. For taking care of him. And no doubt for showing him. The way of life. From a young and early age.
Now my friend. We live in a day. And in a society. Where there is precious little respect. For mothers and for fathers. This commandment does not cease to bind you. When you turn to be 20 or 21.
Or when you turn to be 40. Or even 50. Your parents are to be honored by you. As long as you live. And as they cared for you. You see to it.
[17:48] That you care for them. And that you love them. And that you honor them. And that you respect them. The Lord watches. For these things. And the Lord esteems these things.

Even if the world puts them very very lightly. In our own day. And generation. So he's a man of wealth. He's diligent. Doing what God has given him to do.
There and then. And he's dutiful. And respectful. And he appears to have respect. To the commandments. Of the Lord. And in that situation.
The Lord calls him. Now the call. Is in some respects. A silent one. There is no voice from heaven. It is a prophetic action.
It is a gesture. It is a sign. When Elijah comes. And puts his mantle over him. Elisha knows what it means. It is a sign that says essentially.
[18:43] Follow me. Follow me. Follow me. Where? Or to what? Or what for? Well follow me. Into the prophetic office.

That is what it means. Yield yourself. To the kingdom of God. Absolutely. And yield yourself. Unreservedly. Come and follow me.
Elijah says essentially. And preach. The gospel. That is the call. That was laid upon. Elisha. Now my friend.
When this calling comes to a man. It is as real. And it is absolutely as urgent. And as powerful. As when God first calls you. To believe.
Or when God first summons you. Into his kingdom. All the calls of God. Are alike in that respect. That there is a necessity. Belonging to them. There is an urgency.

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[19:40] God himself is not uncertain. When he calls. When he called Abraham. When he called him. To be his own child. He said. Abraham. Get thee out of thy country.

Out from thy kindred. Unto a land. Which I shall sow thee. There is no mistaking. What God wants you to do. Urgency. The same must needs.
Is involved in it. When God calls you to one. And when he calls you. To the other. Put it this way. When God calls. Either to his kingdom.
Or to preach in his kingdom. He is calling you to relinquish something. There is no doubt about that. He is calling you to relinquish something. He is calling you.
Who belong to the world. He is calling you to relinquish. Your life. Your old life. And your present ways. To leave them. Your ambitions. Your selfish ambitions.
[20:37] Your self-centered ambitions. Your godless ones. He is asking you to leave them. And to forsake them. They have no place. In the kingdom. To which he is summoning you.

And to the new life. Into which he is calling you. They don't belong there. He is asking you to relinquish. The sin. That you love. That you cleave to. And that you hold on to. The thing that is as dear to you.
As your right arm. You have to cut it off. And to put it far from. You. You have to leave all that. And to forsake it. Perhaps he asks you even. To leave your family. To forsake your own father.
Or mother. To forsake a boyfriend. Or a girlfriend. Or something. Something that takes that place. Or something that is very close. Relinquish. And you know fine well.
That what I'm telling you is true. There is a soft gospel out there. That asks you to relinquish nothing. It tells you to come into the kingdom. And you can enjoy it just as you are.
[21:35] There's no need to change. There's no need to forsake anything. It's an easy path. But you know that the Bible is not like that. You know that God's command is not like that. You know it. To be true.

He is asking you to turn. To change. And to relinquish. And whatever it be. Cut it off. That is necessary for you. If you are to enter into the kingdom of God.
And so it is with the gospel. If God calls a person to preach the gospel. He does the same thing. He is asking you also Christian. To relinquish a measure of your independence.
Perhaps your own ambition at your work. Or the great plans and great designs that you have for yourself. And the great advancement. He is asking you to relinquish that. He is asking you to relinquish your independence.
And he is asking you to cast yourself upon the care of the church. And upon himself. In a particular and in a distinctive way. He is asking you to relinquish.
[22:38] Relinquish. And that he will urgently press. Upon the conscience and upon the heart and soul. Of someone whom he is calling. To preach the gospel in his own kingdom.

And then again. There is not only to relinquish. But he calls to reproach. Reproach. And that is also true. When he is calling a person into his own kingdom.
You. Who have great honor and esteem. You who are popular. He is asking you to trade your popularity. For a reproach.
And for a cross. That comes inevitably. In coming into the kingdom of Christ. Christ. And at certain points in the Christian life. It is put more and more to the test. You'll find yourself unmistakably.
And distinctively. Outside the camp. In the place that is obnoxious. And distasteful. Where nobody wants to know you. Or nobody agrees with you. And people find your views unpalatable.
[23:39] And they don't like your stand for the gospel. Or for the truth. You must go outside the camp. Bearing his reproach. He's calling you.

Out of the populous place. And into the wilderness. Into many wilderness experiences. Into a dry parched land. Where there is very often no water.
Into a place of persecution. That is where the Lord is calling you. And if you're carrying the proper cross. You know what reproach is.
You know that the world doesn't like a proper cross. Because they find it offensive. And so it is. If you are called to preach the gospel.
The reproach is only increased. The 7,000 in Israel felt lonely. But who was more lonely than Elijah? He was even more lonely than the 7,000 were lonely.
[24:38] He was even more reproached than the rest were. And to preach the gospel means. A measure of reproach. That is distinctive. It means a cross that is distinctive.

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And you who are called to it. Don't shirk from it. And I have no idea. But that I might not be addressing somebody in particular. You who are called to it. Don't shirk from it.
Because the reproach will be yours. At some point. And in many respects at all points. But at some points it will press heavily on you. You will be the offscouring of the world.
And sometimes you'll find yourself like that. Even inside the very house of God itself. There are many ways in which you will find yourself tested. And then again you are called not just to relinquish.
Or to reproach. But you are called to responsibility. And is that not true? When you are called into the kingdom. Ah my friend it is. We all have our own duties.
[25:40] And our own responsibilities. From that moment on. We wear a name on our foreheads. We are no longer our own. We are no longer to live to ourselves. But whether we live or die.

We are to do so unto the Lord. Who bought us. Who purchased us. With his own precious blood. And that means responsibility. And the Christian life is like that. It is a responsible life.
And you remember that. You who profess his name. And me with you. I am responsible. The Lord expects me to walk in a certain way. To be a fragrance of the gospel.
To commend the gospel. And to live like that. Realizing that my fall. Is the fall of many others. You realizing that when you stumble.
You perhaps put someone else off that very gospel. You are responsible. God expects you to nourish. To cherish others. To point others on the way. To help a younger person.
[26:36] To give a word of encouragement. And so on. There is responsibility. And you are called to that. And is that not so. When you are called to preach the gospel. Paul enumerated all his difficulties.

And at the end of them all. He said besides that. He says what comes upon me daily. The care of all the churches. Now the care of all the churches. Doesn't come upon anyone. In the way in which it came upon Paul anymore.
But that is a responsible burden. Of the gospel. That the Lord puts. On the shoulders of those who preach it. And that is not to be shirked either. Well then.
It is small wonder. That Elisha stops. You notice that Elijah doesn't stop. He just walks right on. He doesn't stay around and say. Elisha you've got to do this.
He doesn't say. Elisha you're the best man for the job. He says none of that. And there's a lot of that going on. He doesn't say any of that. He just puts the mantle on him.
[27:34] And leaves it all to himself. Between himself and the Lord. And as for Elijah. He just walks right on by. And there appears to be a pause.

In the narrative. Because Elisha has to run after him. In verse 20. And he left the oxen. And ran after Elijah. And in that time. How many thoughts pressed.
And crowded into. The heart of this man Elisha. How many twists and turns. This mind took. How many prophetic forebodings. Came before his mind's eye.
But he thinks. He pauses. And he stops. And he realizes. That when God calls. God means business.
He knows. That he must. Believe the call. He knows. That he must accept it. He knows. That he must close in with it. And he knows. That he must preach.
[28:29] The gospel. And that is how it is. When the spirit of God. Is sent. To call. An individual. Into the kingdom. As well. God may be summoning yourself.

To believe. The gospel. And to embrace Christ. And if that is so. Then it presses. Upon your conscience. With the utmost urgency. You'll know.
At that moment. That you cannot go back. Neither for that matter. Can you stay where you are. Any moment longer. There is only one path for you. And that is forward. You leave it.
Or you resist it. Or you refuse it. At your peril. Now then. What is his response. To this call. Well. You see it in two actions. First of all. He requests to kiss. His father and his mother. That is one act.
[29:28] And then you see it. In the second act. Where he returns. In verse 21. And takes a yoke of oxen. Kills them. Boils their flesh. With the instruments.

And gives it. To the people. The kissing of his father and mother. Or the request to do it. And the burning. Or the boiling of the oxen.
Both indicate. Elisha's response. To the call. Of God. First of all. He asks to kiss. His father. And his mother.

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Now that I would understand. As an expression. On his part. That his heart is set to go. And his heart is set to do.
What Elijah. Has commanded him. To do. Now you may say. Well. That is a strange inference. For you to draw. Because the only other example. We have in the Bible.
[30:24] Of someone wanting to kiss. Those who were in his home. Before he left. Was the example. Of someone. Who was unwilling. To do. What the Lord. Wanted him to do. And I'm speaking here.

Of that man. In Luke chapter 9. And we read. The narrative together. When Christ was preaching. The gospel. Three individuals.
Came to him. All of them. Desiring. To follow him. And it's the third person. That's particularly interesting here. In Luke chapter 9.
And in verse. 61. The second last verse. Another also said to him. Lord. I will follow thee.
But let me first go. And bid them farewell. Which are at home. At my house. And Jesus said unto him. No man. Having put his hand.
[31:23] To the plow. And looking back. Is fit. For the kingdom. Of God. Now here you go forward. Eight hundred years. And the sin.

In some respects. Is almost repeated. Except that this time. It is the man himself. Who is volunteering. His services. He says. Lord.
I will follow thee. And then he has this request. And it seems so harmless. And it seems. But a little thing. He says. But let me first go. And bid them farewell. Which are at home.
At my house. And I can't help. But think. That the Lord's own mind. Goes back. Eight hundred years here. To when Elijah calls Elisha. Because it's interesting.
That he refers to the plow. Because all that is involved. When Elisha asks. To go and kiss his own father and mother. Here there is a reference again. To a plow.
[32:17] I wonder if the Lord's mind. Is going back. To that particular incident. If so. He turns it around this way. In a surprising way. In a different way.

To what you would expect. And he says. No man. Putting his hand. To the plow. Is fit. For the kingdom. Of God. In other words. Your desire.
To follow me. Is equivalent. To putting your hand. To the plow. But. Your request. To go back. And to bid farewell. To the people at home.
Is equivalent. To looking back. And he says. No man. Having put his hand. To it. And then. Looking back. Is fit.
For the kingdom of God. At all. You cannot plow. A straight furrow. You'll never make it. To the end. You will plow. Squint. And you won't make it.
[33:13] If you're going to make it. You must put your hand there. Deliberately. And resolutely. And keep it there. And keep it there. To the end. Now you may say.

Well what's the difference. Between this man here. And Elisha. Well my friends. The difference. Must have been. Simply in this. In their state of heart.
In their state of heart. And who can discern that. But the discerner of hearts himself. Elisha. Elisha. Elisha. Is going to kiss. Because he's determined to leave.
But the other man. 800 years later. Is going to kiss. Because he's not quite sure. Whether he wants to stay at home. Or whether he wants to follow the Lord. And as I said.
Who can detect that. But the Lord. Of glory himself. Who searches the heart. Who tries the reins. Whose seven eyes. Go to and fro. Over the whole earth.
[34:10] And just as he detected. The covetousness. In the heart. Of the rich young ruler. So he detected. That the home life. And the home situation. Was something that was. Keeping this man.

From plowing. I believe as a preacher. In the kingdom. Of God. And I. Actually believe. That what the Lord. In fact is saying to him. Here is this.
That. You. If. If you resist. My call to you. You are demonstrating. That you are not fit.
To have any part. Or lot. In the kingdom of God. At all. That that is the force. Of what the Lord. Jesus Christ. Is telling this man. Here.
God's call. Is that urgent. And it is that urgent. As I said. Even to preach. Have you ever heard about. John Knox. The way that he was called.
[35:06] To preach the gospel himself. It was a strange ordination. That that man had. It was irregular. In every respect. He felt.

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Many times. Perhaps some kind of urge. Or desire. To proclaim the gospel. But he felt himself. Highly inadequate to it. And he always shrunk.
From the task. He had a view. Of the difficulties. And of the hardships. And of his own. Incompetence for it. But he was often asked. To do it.
There were others. Godly men and women. Who asked him. And urged him. To think. And to consider. That he ought not to be preaching. The kingdom of God. And one day.
A man called John Ruff. Lived up to his name. And literally took hold. Of John Knox. In the congregation. And said to him. That in the name of God. And in the name of the people.
[36:01] Who were all consented. And united to it. That he preached. The gospel to them. And John Knox. Burst into tears. And went outside. Of the sanctuary.

And for days. Wore a heavy countenance. As the burden. Lay heavily upon him. Until he finally stepped out. To preach. The gospel of Christ. My point is.
That that call. Is as urgent. Heavy. And demanding. As the call. To enter into the kingdom. I have no doubt. That you. With whom the Lord. Is wrestling. As an unconverted person.
Has the same kind of countenance. You are under some kind of strain. Listening to me. You know. I find well. That the Lord. Is calling you. And you know. That is. The king's business. Requires haste. And you are frittering away. Your time. And you are wasting it. And time is of the essence. You know it all. And may the Lord. So call. And so work. Until you come out.
[36:56] And come out. On the Lord's side. And do so decisively. Even as Knox. Then took the step. And marched out. Preaching the gospel. And we know. What great results.

That had. In the kingdom of God. In our own nation. And in our own. Country. It is a burden. And there are some people. Who tell you that. The call of God.
Doesn't really come. That way. Now there's. The call of God. Comes through the church. That is very.
Very true. No man can assume. The office. Of a preacher. In the church of Christ. Without the call. Mediated through. The church of Christ.
There is no doubt. About that at all. It's not up to anyone. Who thinks himself. Called. To be a minister. In the church. Church. But nonetheless. It is different. To say.
[37:52] That there is no conviction. And no urgency. Pressing upon the heart. Of that man. It's the most dangerous. Thing in the world. To say. That just because. Other people. Tell you to do it.

That you should do it. Accompanying that. Must be. Deep down. The conviction. That you are. To be doing it. And that the Lord. Is requiring you. To do it. These two.
Must be together. You mustn't put them asunder. They belong together. They belong together. In the church. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. And not only that.
He kills the oxen. In verse 21. He returned back from him. And took a yoke of oxen. And slew them. And boiled their flesh.
With the instruments. Of the oxen. And gave unto the people. And they did eat. For all the world. This sounds like. An ordinary feast. That he's just.
[38:45] Boiling the oxen. And making a feast. For the people. Before he goes. But there's more. Than a feast. There's a statement. Because it's not common.

It's not ordinary. To take the yoke. To take the instruments. Harnessing the oxen. And to use them. As your fire. There's a statement.
It is a symbolic act. What is the value. Or the meaning. Of that symbolic act. Well it is. Just this. That Elisha. Is leaving.
What he was doing before. In order to do. What he is going to do now. He doesn't combine it. He's not going to be. Part time. In that respect. He is going to yield himself.
To the prophetic office. Altogether. Just as the apostles. Would not leave. The word of God. To serve tables. Just as they left. Their nets. In order to follow the Lord.
[39:42] And that wasn't. Their conversion. That was their call. To the full time. Gospel ministry. That was when they left. Their nets. And followed him. They were disciples. Of Christ.

While they were still fishermen. But Christ came to them. After they were converted. And called them. To leave their nets. And to preach the gospel. That has always been. The pattern.
That those who preach the gospel. Should live. Of the gospel. Now my friend. I don't say that. For any reason.

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Other than this. Quite simply. That the health. Of the church of Christ. Depends on that. In a way in which. You or I. Can scarcely begin. To realize.
There is a massive movement. In the church today. For what people call. A part time ministry. In other words. That ministers. Should have some other. Kind of employment. And that they should just. Preach.
[40:36] On the Lord's day. And that has become. Extremely pervasive. In churches. That were. Reformed. That are still reformed. In other ways. That has become. The pattern. Now that is the most.

Dangerous thing. In the world. For any church. To entertain. Do you believe. That the preaching. Of the gospel. Is a part time thing. Do you believe. That it can be done.
When you are. Yielding yourself. To the calling. That God has given you. In the ordinary things. Of the world. And then coming. As it were. To adopt the work. That belongs to another. Full time calling. Do you think.
These two things. Can be married. Just like that. Well if you are. Or if you do. Then that only. Demonstrates. That you have no conception. Of what the preaching. Of the gospel requires. And that deep down.
Is the problem. And my friends. Is the problem. In the church. It's the problem. In the church. That there is no. Conception. Of the call of God. To the preaching. Of the gospel. And to the yielding.
[41:33] Of yourself. To prayer. And to the ministry. Of the world. It has been lost. It is viewed. In a part time way. So it's become. A part time thing. And it even becomes.

That before. It becomes that actually. That is not. How the things of God. Are to be dealt with. The Lord still says. Leave your nets. Burn your yokes.
Follow me. And become. Fishers. Of men. And as I say. The health of the church. Depends upon that. Far more. Than you realize.
Let me put it this way. When these three people. Came to Christ. In Luke chapter 9. The first one said. Lord I will follow thee. Whithersoever thou goest. And again.
From the context. That appears to me. As a preacher. And the Lord says to him. Voxes have holes. And the birds of the air. Have nests. But the son of man. Hath nowhere to lay his head.
[42:32] Now have you ever given thought. As to what that really means. And what the significance of it was. To the person who asked the question. Did the Lord have a place to sleep?

Well yes of course. He had a place to sleep. There were those who gave him. A place to sleep. There was a home open to him. In Bethany. I believe there was a home. Open to him in Capernaum.
There was a home. Open to him. Everywhere he went. What did he mean? He meant. That he was not. In that respect. Well it's difficult to put this. And retain reverence.
It meant that. He did not. As it. He was not. As it were. A master of assets. That he could call his own. He was cast upon the care. Of the church.
That is what is meant. And that is what is asked of the Levites. That they be cast upon the care of the church. That they be willing to do that. And that the church also maintain them.
[43:29] That was what was asked of the sons of the prophets. Those who learned the word. And to expound it in the Old Testament. It was the same with them. They were to be maintained by the church.

And they were to put themselves into that situation. And no case at all. With one small exception. Which I'll come to in a moment. In no case at all.
Should a minister of the gospel. Have his own independent subsistence. And just put himself out. Now and again to preach the gospel. And then take refuge back in his own job.
Or in his own security. Which is apart from the church of Christ. It is just not on. And you may say. Well it allows the minister more security. Well maybe it does. But it's a false one.
It is not what God asks. And it is not what God requires. He requires that those who preach the gospel. Live of the gospel itself. The exception that I gave was Paul.
[44:25] Who was a tent maker when he preached. There's an old expression. Which doesn't really make sense. But it's uncanny how useful it is. The expression is. There's an exception which proves the rule.

That is an exception which proves the rule. Paul was a missionary. A missionary. Working in heathen places. He did not wish to compromise the gospel.

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Or to be misunderstood. And so he worked as a tent maker. But his instruction is. That when a church is settled. Set up with elders. With deacons. And with preachers. Then the old order should be returned to.
That the preacher should be maintained. And the preacher should cast himself. Upon the care of the church of Christ. Now you may think that there's no point in talking about this. But I'll tell you my friends.
These things are up and coming. They're around the corner. If they're raging. In other places. They're up and coming here also. But the word of God.
[45:24] Will not allow the ministry of the truth. To be a part time thing. Because it is just. Not that. My soul and your soul. Needs more than a part time thing.

Needs more than that. It needs a yielding altogether. To the word of God. And lastly. We're told. At the end. The very end of the chapter.
Then he arose. And went after Elijah. And ministered unto him. There's the decisive act. When the Lord calls. He arose.
How precious these words are. How beautiful they are. How glorious when we see the unconverted. Arising. Hearing. Arising. And following.
The one who has called them. He arose. And he followed. And for eight years. He ministered. Unto Elijah. The word used of Elisha.
[46:19] Very often means. An exalted minister. Someone who has the position. Of being as it were. At his right hand. But nonetheless. Is serving him.

What is he doing? He is learning his trade. He is learning his trade. I've often heard of people. Saying that there were no colleges. Or things like that. That people were just called.
And out they went. Well that is not the case. What would you call eight years. As an assistant to Elijah. But the greatest training. That any person could have.
Except perhaps for the three years. The apostle spent with the Lord himself. What is that? But a great training. For the preaching of the gospel. He arose. And he ministered.
And to him. And eight years begin. Of close fellowship. Close harmony. When the word of the Lord. Starts. To have an effect. Upon Israel.
[47:11] And let me close. Just by saying that. Because. The still small voice. Seemed to say to Elijah. That God would work. And God began. During these eight years.

The schools of the prophets. Began to glow. And they began to flourish. And that means that prophets. Were being raised up by the Lord. And the word of God.
Went abroad. And we'll see. God willing. Next week. What happens. When Elisha. Goes to visit them. And one of the strangest. Incidents. In the Old Testament.
Occurs. Friends. Listen to the call of the Lord. In whatever form it comes. And don't stay. Nor linger. But follow it. Let us pray. Eternal God.
Give us an ear. For the call of the gospel. And when thy voice is persuading us. To take up the cross. And to follow thee. May we take it.
[48:10] Upon our backs. Give us grace. To persevere. Without thee. We can do nothing. And we learn that. In the wilderness. We cannot take one single step.

Without thy grace. And without thy strength. Help us. O Lord. To know the truth. And to know what thy word requires. Of ourselves. And of the church.
We ask thee to have mercy upon us. As sinners. Show us the fountain. That was opened. For sin. And for uncleanness. For Christ's sake. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Thank you.

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