Study of Elisha - Part 8

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Kenneth Stewart

[0:00] Seeking the Lord's blessing, we'll turn again to the first part of scripture we read, the second book of Kings, chapter 13.

And we'll read at verse 18, chapter 13 and verse 18. And Elisha said, Take the arrows, and he took them.
And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times.
Then hast thou smitten Syria, till thou hast consumed it. Whereas now thou shalt smite Syria, but thrice. In this passage, from the 14th verse onwards, we have an account of the death of Elisha, the man of God.
And when we consider his death here tonight in relation to his experience with Naaman and Gehazi, we have to understand that very many years have lapsed or passed between these two events.
[1:32] In fact, around about 45 years have lapsed of Elisha's life. And we're told next to nothing about these 45 years.

The scripture more or less passes over them in silence. There were two kings reigning over Israel in that time. The king Jehu, who reigned for 28 years.
And his son Jehu Ahaz, who reigned for 17 or perhaps 18 years. But during those reigns, we are told virtually nothing about the prophet of God, Elisha.
Until we come to this significant event here, just at the close of his life, just before he dies. Around about 800 years BC.
Now at this time, Elisha is obviously a very old man. He's in the latter part of his 80s or perhaps in his early 90s. And he has been over 60 years in the prophetic service of God.
[2:33] And that is a long, long time to be a prophet. And at this particular point, he's just about to enter into his own rest.

And to pass into the immediate presence of God. Now God is not going to give this prophet the same kind of ascension or translation that he gave to his predecessor.
Elijah was privileged enough to be raised in a chariot of fire into the presence of God. That is not what Elisha has to have. But Elisha doesn't complain about that.
In fact, we find that he falls sick. His lot is just the same as our own. He's smitten with a sickness. And this sickness is going to bring him to death. But I've no doubt that although Elisha is not going to be raised in a chariot of fire, he still probably sees a chariot of fire.
He was a great man of faith. And if you read the 8th chapter of this book on your own, you'll find that it's the 6th chapter. If you read the 6th on your own, you'll find that his faith is clearly seen there.
[3:38] When one time he is in Dothan with his servants, and the Syrian army encircles that town. And Elisha's servant becomes frightened at the sight of the Syrian army.

And Elisha prays to God that he would open his servant's eyes. And sure enough, the Lord answers the prayer of the prophet, and the servant's eyes are opened. And the servant sees another host. He sees an angelic host, chariots, chariots of fire, encircling the Syrian army. So that he could say, greater is he who is for us than he who is against us.
The Lord was on our side. And the fact is that Elisha saw that constantly, and saw it by faith. But he asked the Lord to enable his servant just to see it with the eye of sense.
Just so that he would understand once in his life, in a powerful way, just how God guards and keeps his own church. How God protects his people, how he is with them. In their hardships, in their afflictions and difficulties, the angels of the Lord encamp around about those who fear them.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[4:46] There they were, encircling the Syrian host. Jacob saw them like that. When Jacob was about to face Esau, his brother, he had a vision.

And in that vision, he saw a great sight, and he named the place Mahanaim. And that name means the place of two camps, or two hosts, Genesis 32.
And what that meant was this, that Jacob saw in a vision that not only was he there with his wife and with his children and with his armed servants, but he saw the angels of God.
We are two camps, he said. There is no need to fear. The Lord is around about us, and the Lord is with us. And Christian friend, there are many times in your own life when you need to lay hold of that by faith.
To remember that the chariots are around you, and that they work, his angels, in mysterious ways, which we can hardly begin to comprehend or understand. God's love is upon his own, and he is continually encircling them.
[5:49] Now, the chariot of fire was revealed again for Elijah when it came down to take him into the presence of God. It was a fiery chariot, because the angels burn. They are called seraphim, sometimes the burning ones.

All the angels burn in blazing holiness, and they burn with their speed of zealous service for God. They came down to take Elijah. But is it not written in the word of God that they come down to take every soul into the presence of God?
Is it not true in the parable that when Lazarus died, that the angels took him into Abraham's bosom? Does that not indicate that the angels of God have a part to play when every soul passes from this world into the next?
And I've no doubt that when this man of God, Elisha, is lying there in his deathbed, he is very conscious of the reality and presence of the angels. And whether it's a visible thing or not, I'm sure he waits and expects the fiery chariot to come down and to receive himself.
There have been even many accounts of God's people, sometimes here in this island, who have passed away. And the last words sometimes heard in their lips were, they are coming, they are coming.
[7:03] People have wondered who they were. I wonder if they were privileged to see the same legion, the same chariot, conscious that the angels of God were sent, to bring the souls of believers into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They accompany them. There is a triumph and joy in heaven when every redeemed soul enters it. There is a procession of angels along with the soul brought into the presence of God.
Ye gates, lift up your heads on high, ye doors that last foray. The King of glory comes in. And for every soul that belongs to him, the gates are lifted. And there is a triumphant and there is a joyful procession.
And so Elisha doesn't mind if that is not visible and if he must fall sick because he is conscious that he is about to enter into the presence of God. But just as I, by the way, it's really not worthy that 45 years of his life are passed over in silence.
I suppose you may be thought sometimes while we looked at this man's life that there is something vastly different in this man's life compared to your own. In this respect, that he seems to have one spectacular experience after another.
[8:20] Well, that is to misunderstand the situation. The scripture perhaps records about eight or nine notable experience in Elisha's life. A man who became a prophet at 30 and who died nearly in his 90s.

Does it mean that the rest of his life was a waste of time or that it was uneventful or unprofitable or unfruitful? Of course it doesn't. But it meant that this rest of his life was a still small voice.
He went about quietly doing the will of the Lord as he was able to do it and as he was given strength and grace to do it. He gave a word of encouragement here and a word of rebuke there. He ministered to the sons of the prophets.
He prayed for the kings of Israel as well as counseling the kings of Israel. He went about and did good, sometimes in a very quiet and in a very unobtrusive way.
But the Lord seeth. What is done in secret shall be rewarded openly. And that is what matters. It's not how spectacular your life is or mine. It's how faithful your life and mine is.
[9:22] That is what matters. That's what counts at the end of the day. That is what the Lord is concerned with. The vast part of his life and of his own service to God went largely unnoticed.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Only at certain times did God, as it were, haul him into prominence to perform a great work. The rest of the time it was what you would call the ordinary unspectacular work of the gospel.
And is there not encouragement in that? And I'm not talking to or about preachers of the gospel. I'm talking about everyone who is in the Lord's cause and kingdom. Is there not encouragement in that?
Just to go about doing good. And that is what the Lord himself requires of you. Now, as he lay dying, he had an unexpected visitor.
And that visitor was the king Joash. Not to be confused with another Joash, the king of Judah. This was Joash, the king of Israel.
[10:27] He comes to see him just before Elisha dies. And it's a very significant meeting. It tells us a lot about the king of Israel.

And I would assert that it tells us a lot about Israel as well. It tells us about the kind of man he was. And it tells us about the kind of country that Israel had become.
And all these things are clearly seen in this visit here. Now, I want to look at three things. I want to look, first of all, with you at the faith of this man, Joash.
What kind of faith did he have? In the second place, the way in which Elisha tested the faith of the king. And in the third place, the way in which the king responded to that test.
And it all has to do with the flying of the arrows. It all revolves around this. The faith, the test of his faith, and his response to that test.
[11:33] Now, first of all, it's clear that this king, Joash, has some kind of faith. I suppose everyone has some kind of faith. Everyone here tonight has some kind of faith.

Now, this man clearly does. And where it comes out is in this, his attitude to the prophet. Now, you would have expected that this man would have despised Elisha.
And despised him completely. Why? Because he was an unbeliever himself. If you look at verse 11. Verse 11 opens with this about Joash.
And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. He departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin.
But he walked therein. So, he was a man who was pronounced evil by the Lord. Now, that didn't mean that all his ways and all his actions were distinctively and openly evil.
[12:37] What it meant was that this was the habitus of his will. It was the habit or the walk of his life. He did not do the will of God. And that is, in the last analysis, what marks out the believer from the unbeliever.

The believer loves and does the will of God. The unbeliever does not. So, you would have expected him to be hostile to Elisha.
But notice, he's not. In verse 14, we're told that when Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness, that Joash, the king of Israel, came down unto him.
And listen to this. He wept over his face and said, Oh, my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.
He's grieved at the sickness of the prophet. And perhaps once he's looked at him, he's discovered for himself that the prophet is at death's door. And he's saddened by it.
[13:36] And he's distressed by it. And he utters it in these words, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel. You would think, is he being ironic here?

Is he mocking the prophet? Well, no. You can understand that on the face of it, that he's serious. He's in earnest and he means it. He feels in that sense towards Elisha.
He feels as though he stands in that relation to him, that he values him. And he somehow needs him as a horseman and as a chariot, as a defender and a fighter.
In that capacity, he feels that he needs him. Now, you might recognize these words, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.
You might recognize them from chapter 2 of 2 Kings. Because they were the words that Elisha himself used when he saw Elijah being taken up into heaven.
[14:40] When he saw his own predecessor being lifted up by God in a chariot of fire, these were his words, My father, my father, Israel's chariot and its horsemen.

Because he felt that a light had gone out in Israel. He had looked upon Elijah as the defender of the cause of the Lord. And now he felt that the Lord's cause had received a blow that it could hardly sustain.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

But on that occasion, these words came from the lips of a believer. But on this occasion here, the same words come from the lips of a non-believer.
Why? Why? Well, because his conscience told him, when he was face to face with the death of the man, that he was looking at a godly man.
And that he was at the deathbed of a man of God. His conscience told him that. Now, his life, his own life, wasn't a religious life. Not properly religious anyway.
[15:50] But still, in the hour of extremity, and at an hour such as this, he knows who he is dealing with. And he knows the kind of man he's got.

And it's amazing how death sometimes brings these things before us. And brings them very clearly before us. Here's a man you've always known and always seen. Perhaps you've always respected him.
But you've pushed him out of your thoughts. And you haven't let his lifestyle, good and godly, make as much of an impression on you as it ought to have made an impression of you. But come his death, or come his deathbed, or hers, and you look upon her, or him lying in that deathbed, it all comes upon you.
And it comes upon you very clearly. Here is a man, or here is a woman of God. And I ought to have known it. And I ought always to have believed it. And I ought to have responded to it.
By developing and nurturing a similar godliness in my own life, death brings these kind of realities home to us. And it brought it home for a time to this man, Joash.
[16:57] Now, I suppose that for a long time he would have called Elisha strict. Joash was a Jehovah worshipper of a sort. Not the real thing, but he was a Jehovah worshipper of a sort.

And he would have thought that Elisha was maybe just too strict. But you know, his death brings this clearly before him, that he was a better man than himself.
A much better man than himself. And he knew, and his conscience told him at that time, that that man on his deathbed stood in a relation to God of which he knew nothing.
Nothing at all. That man was happier on his deathbed than Joash was in the fullness of his prime as king of Israel looking down at him.
And he knew it. He knew it. And it seemed to come home to him very clearly at this particular time that the future of his kingdom lay in the hands of such people as this and not in the hands of such people as himself.
[18:00] The reality of godliness was impressed upon his mind at this man's deathbed. At this man's deathbed. Now my friend, that tells us something.

It tells us that good people leave their mark on the world. Good people leave their mark on the world. I've no doubt that good people have left their mark at some point on your own souls.
I've known of people who were raised in godly homes and who turned maybe to drink or to drugs or something of that kind. And their mothers and fathers were prayerful people in Israel.
Godly men and godly women. But you ignored that. Maybe you're here today and you ignored it and you forgot about it. But one day the hour of death came and it was imminent.
And you realized on that day and at that hour who it was that was departing your home. You realized it was your chariot and your horsemen. It was because of them you felt that you were alive at all.
[19:07] That God only still looked upon you with any measure of restraint or long suffering just because your mother or father were praying for you. That soul about to draw its last breath was your chariot.

It was your prayerful wall of defense. And they may have gone years ago but here you are still today and nothing can eradicate that impression from your mind. Nothing can take it away from you that there was a chariot and that there was a horseman.
And when they went out a light went out in your own life. You know my friend it's true. It is the presence of God's people in the world and I'm not going to dwell on this because I recall I said it not too long ago.
It is the presence of good men in the world that restrains the judging hand of God from falling down. Ye says Christ are the salt of the earth.
Had there been ten in Sodom Sodom would never have been destroyed. And where the righteous disappear God's judgment is about to break out on a people or on a church or on a land.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[20:14] And when you see the mighty in prayer and when you see the powerful in godliness being called home it is time to weep and to mourn because the judgment of God is about to be unleashed upon a people or upon a church.

The righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to heart. And let's be clear about this as well.
A godly life might bring you persecution. Paul tells us that. A godly life might bring persecution but deep down it will bring you respect as well.
But the flippant, careless, easy, casual Christianity of the late 20th century is bringing nothing but contempt upon the church visible.
Nothing but contempt. True godliness will merit respect but casual Christianity will only bring contempt.
[21:18] And you ask yourself am I meriting the contempt of the world or its respect? You ask that to yourself and I'll ask it myself also.

Godly living brings out this kind of respect from the world. Now then I've said that Joash was some kind of worshipper of God and it seems to be very earnest when he meets the prophet he falls and he weeps and he says my father the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.
But Elisha comes and he seems to summon a new kind of strength at this point. He seems to raise himself up of his deathbed. He has a work to do and God is giving him always being tested and the tests move on in varying degrees of severity and they come in unexpected ways and they come at unexpected times but there's a test.
Life is just a sin. You proceed from one thing to another to see what our life is like and what our religion is like and Elisha presents a test before this man.
This is a man who weeps. Well how deep is his weeping and how real is his weeping? This is a man who professes that Elisha is the guardian of Israel. Well how deep is that? How much does he mean it?
[22:45] How much of a hole do these things have on his heart? Well Elisha will test him. Now let's look at this test for some time. It's a strange test. It's hard to understand in some respects.

Elisha takes him over to a window and he asks the king to take bow and arrows and the king does that. And then the king takes the bow in his hands and Elisha very deliberately puts his own hands on top of the king's hands.
So Elisha's hands over the king's are holding the bow and holding the arrows. And then Elisha tells the king to fire the arrow out of the window towards the east.
And he does that. He fires the arrow. And Elisha calls it the arrow of deliverance. He tells the king what it is.
This is the arrow of deliverance he says. The arrow of deliverance from Syria. You shall smite the Syrians until you have consumed them. And so he tells the king smite more or take more arrows and shoot them.
[24:00] And the king does that. He releases three arrows hard into the ground out the window towards the east and he stops there. Now that is the test.

The test revolves around the taking of the arrows and the firing of them. Now what does the test mean? What does it symbolize? Well, first of all we have to understand this, that the king is given a task to perform.
And the task which he has to perform is this, that he has to conquer the Syrians. That is his task. Now the Syrians lie to the east.
Notice the east coming up again. the Syrians lie to the east and they represent the world, they represent the power of evil, the seduction of Satan, Satan as a serpent, Satan as a liar, his power and his power to seduce.
These things are wrapped up under the title Syria. Syria. This is the world that is constantly seeking, as it were, to bring down the Christian to destroy him, to mar him.
[25:19] And it is the king's duty here to take the arrows and to destroy them. Now my friends, that is your task and that is mine, spiritually.

We are to take arrows and to fight against the Syrians. Now you're not, you who have enlisted, shall we say, in the Christian army, you who have professed the Lord and professed to belong to him, you're not meant to be in the army as some kind of idle spectator.
You're not just meant to sit back once you profess Christianity and leave it like that, as though there was no battle to be fought and won. If the Christian life means anything, it means this, that it is a

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

battle.
That it is something you have to fight in and something you have to work at. And the Lord gives you arrows to that end. And you have, as it were, a battle to fight.
And the Lord will teach your hands to fight and he'll teach your fingers to make warfare. All around you, make no mistake, there are dragons, serpents, there is a pestilence through the night.
[26:26] There are all kinds of dangers that Satan is putting in your way. Now I know that when the world comes into your life, you cease to recognize the world for what it is.

There are many people stumbling around in the church today and they're saying, what is the world? What is the world? Well, my friend, if we were alive, we would know the world. It's a strange thing to me if we don't recognize our enemy.
A strange thing indeed, if the world has become so confused in our experience that we don't understand it. The world, as I said this morning, is whatever makes the law of God heavy on your back.
Whatever makes obedience to God distasteful. Whatever makes it hard for you, whatever influence or power in your life makes it hard for you to take yourself to the prayer meeting or to the house of God or into the fellowship of God's people.
Whatever it is in the world or in your life that makes it hard for you to share your faith with another or to speak about the things of Christ with another believer, that is the world to you.
[27:32] It is to be assassinated, to be killed, to be destroyed, shoot an arrow at the thing. Whatever it is, get it out of your life and deal with it because it is the world and it's forever the tendency of the world to wrap its tentacles around you and to draw you away from the Lord Jesus Christ.

This world lies in the wicked one. It lies in the wicked one. And that's why you have to take the whole armor of God and to put that armor of God on yourself and do his will.
You'll never do his will without the armor. If you don't have the armor you'll die. You'll be like the corpse that fell in the wilderness and never made it to the promised land.
If your Christianity is so easy that you don't think you have to fight you're finished. Finished. And me with you. It requires labor and fighting to enter into the kingdom of God.
Now that's the first thing that's brought before us here. This king has a task and the task is to destroy the enemy. In the second place you'll notice that the resources for that are given to him.
[28:50] Elisha gives him arrows now there are five or six arrows that he gives to the king that's part of his resource. The other part of his resource is more subtle than that.

The other part of his resource lies in Elisha's own hand on top of his own. Look at verse 16 again. And he said to the king of Israel put thine hand upon the bow and he put his hand upon it and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.
That's the second part of the resource. Elisha puts his hand upon the king's. Now my friend that's your resource and that's mine.
God gives you a quiver full of arrows they are the means of grace. You use them. You use the means of grace and the weaponry of God to fight.
The sword of the spirit blessed spirit of righteousness your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace the helmet of salvation read it for yourself in Ephesians chapter 6. That is your armor.
[30:04] Here it's all brought under arrows. He has an arrow to fight with. God doesn't send you naked into the controversy. God doesn't send you into the battlefield without an arrow.

He says here take my Bible. Let it be your constant companion. Let it never leave you. Let the law be in your mouth. Meditate upon it day and night. That's what he said to Joshua.
Who was Joshua? A military man. He was the greatest general the world has ever seen because he fought in God's army against the army of the wicked one.
What did God say to him? Let not my word depart from your mouth. Meditate upon it. Meditate therein day and night. He's given you the arrow. He's given you the arrow of prayer. The arrow of his word.
The arrow of fellowship. The arrow of witness. The arrow of the church. All these things. He says these are yours and fight with them and smite with them. And not that's not all.
[31:01] He says my hand will be upon you. My hand will help you in these things. You're not as it were to fire the arrow on your own. It's not as though I will leave you to do all these things by

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

yourself.

No, I will energize you in these things. I will accompany you. I will empower you. I will meet you at the throne. My spirit will groan within you.
I will intercede for you. I will help you to read. I will help you to understand. I'll help you to witness and I'll help you to fight. my hand upon yours shoot the arrow and you will destroy the Syrian.
Just as I said, teaching our hands to fight and our fingers to war. As the psalmist says in Psalm 144 and in Psalm 35, God teaches us to fight.
But not only that, there is a third thing. He has a task to do. He has the resources given. To complete the task. And you'll notice that he also has a promise.
[32:07] In verse 17, let's read verse 17 again. And he said, open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, shoot.

And he shot. And he said, the arrow of the Lord's deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria. And these are the words. For thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek till thou have consumed them.
Now, it couldn't be clearer than this. What he is saying to the king is this, smite, he says, and shoot. Because this arrow is inflicting defeat.
Keep on firing, because, he says, you will smite until you consume. Now, what's that but a promise? And what is it saying? Well, it's just saying this, keep going.
Persevere. Even when it gets hard, keep going. You keep doing these things and firing these arrows, he says, and you will consume them.
[33:10] That means that you will destroy the enemy. It means that you will inflict a final defeat upon Syria. You shall enter the kingdom of God triumphantly, and the powers and the principalities shall be under your feet.

Is that not what Paul said to the Romans in chapter 16? He said, the God of peace shall crush Satan underneath your feet shortly. That is what you will do if you persevere and if you keep firing arrows.
Whatever your hurdle is, my friend, whatever your persecution or temptation or difficulty, fire the arrows at it that God has given. Fire them and you'll consume your enemy.
consume. Satan cannot, he cannot conquer the Lord. He cannot prevail against the weaponry that the Lord has given you.
Go naked into the fight and you'll lose, but go armed and he can never win. The victory must be yours. And what a promise that is to the king. There you are, here is your task, here are your resources and here is a promise to you that you shall smite until you consume.
[34:22] Now as you'll see in a moment all this is a parable. It tells us what the king is like spiritually and it tells us what the church or Israel is like spiritually.

Well then how does he respond to it? Well notice in verse 18, Elisha said take the arrows and he took them and he said to the king smite on the ground and he smote three times and he stopped. Now that's the key for you there in the whole passage. That's the heart of the matter. He smote three times and he stopped. And he thought that was enough.
And he turned around and if he expected to see the prophet happy, if he expected to see the prophet content, he was wrong. Elisha we're told was wrath. He was angry.
His face revealed it. It was a righteous anger. It was an anger of judgment on the part of the prophet of God. And he immediately denounces the man and he said to him, you should have smitten five or six times.
[35:31] You should have used your quiver in other words. You should have used what I gave you and not stayed your hand. In other words, he's saying to the man, you did a half job.

And what's half done in the spiritual realm is undone. It's as good as not done at all. In other words, this king's disease was half-heartedness.
Half-heartedness. He was not whole-hearted in the service of the Lord. Lord. Now, my friend, if there's anything that causes people to fall away in the church, it is this, that they were and are just not whole-hearted in their pursuit of the Lord.
There is just no deep enough hunger and thirst for righteousness in the hearts of these people. there is just not sufficient desire to be like the Lord, to love him, to do as he does, and to please and to honor him.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

It is just not there. And the half-heartedness gradually reveals itself. And the job is half-done. Now, you know as well as I do, that if anything is to succeed, you've got to work at the thing.
[37:01] Whether it's your marriage, whether it's your family, raising a family, whether it's your job, it'll never succeed, unless you work at the thing.

But some people have an idea that Christianity is different. That Christianity is just a matter of just sitting back and letting it all wash over you. That that's the way it works.
That all you have to do is just have a vague notion of belief in your head and there you are sailing along into heaven. Is that the religion of the prophet? Was that the religion of Isaiah and Jeremiah? Was that the religion of our Lord and Savior? No, it was not. How faithfully and how frequently they told us that without laboring and agonizing you could not enter into the kingdom of heaven.
It is only a fighter who enters there. The man who gives up just will not make it. Look, there's a list as long as my arm of examples of that kind of thing.
[38:01] Half-heartedness. Take somebody like Orpah, the sister of Ruth. Her zeal took her as far as the border of Moab and Israel.

Notice that? It took her right to the border. Her zeal also caused her to kiss her mother-in-law. She kissed Naomi.
But at the critical point, she went back and ended up kissing her idols again. Half-heartedness will take you to the edge sometimes of the promised land.
But it won't take you in. It won't take you in. You've got to be out and out altogether committed to the Lord of glory. That's just one example.
What about Laodicea, the church? Half-heartedness will raise its temperature to lukewarmness. To lukewarmness. But what happens to a lukewarm church?
[39:02] The Lord vomits it out of his mouth. He spews it out because it is lukewarm and not hot or cold. And so the Lord will spew you out of his mouth if you are only half-hearted in his service.

Half-heartedness means that you'll conquer Amalek but you will spare Agag. And that again is a picture of the half-hearted Christian. He gives up halfway.
He sits back and he sits back at ease and in sloth. It was half-heartedness that made the Israelites enter into the land of Canaan, fight halfway and then entered into peace treaties with the people who are left.
How often you see that? How often you see people going along for a while and then coming to peaceful terms with the world. They don't fight the world anymore. They may pretend to but they don't.
They've long since ceased to recognize what and where the world is. It's all a fog and the fighting has stopped dead in its tracks. Oh, does the voice of the Lord not come out as such?
[40:14] And does it not come out and say, repent and do the first works or else I will come to thee speedily? You might be a true child of God in that position which perhaps you can hardly see any mark of your own sonship.

Perhaps there's very little left to you because of how dull of hearing you've become under the gospel. Because of how little relish and zest you have for that gospel. You've lost your way.
Come back, come back to the first works and do them speedily. Seek the Lord, fire the arrows that he's given you. Every single means, use them and fire them.
Gird the armor before it's too late. You're already half dead. You're already wounded. Perhaps Apollyon himself is gloating over you, ready to slay you and to destroy you.
If you're his, you'll rise back on your feet. If you're not, you'll fall. I will spew you out of my mouth. Where is the Laodicean church today? Spewed out.
[41:14] That's where the Laodicean church is. I'm sure many of them were saved indeed and many of them heard that letter and repented. I'm also sure that many of them didn't. I'm also sure that many of them didn't.

And then again, does the Lord not tell us what half-heartedness does? He says that it builds a tower but can't finish it. Which one of you, he says, in building a tower does not sit down first and consider whether he have enough to finish it?
Half-heartedness begins building but isn't able to finish. Now, my friends, our spiritual life, and look, I'm saying this to myself as much as to yourself.
I'm saying it to us all because we live in a day of declension, a day of declension. If your spiritual life is not one you're fighting in, then look to yourself and look to yourself urgently.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

You notice in the Bible how every aspect of your spiritual life is described as a labor, even prayer. Does Paul not say to remember Epaphras who labored in prayer for you?
[42:23] I think it's to the Colossian church that he says that. Even prayer is a labor. Now, some give up and can't finish the tower.

Work at it. Seek the Lord's grace to work at what he's given you. Remember this, my friends, don't be gracious to your sins because they won't be gracious to you. They won't be gracious to you. You can spare Agag but what will Agag do? He'll turn around and he'll kill yourself. That's what Ahab found out. He spared Ben-Hadad when he shouldn't.
And that was to his ruin. Ben-Hadad turned around later and the Syrians destroyed them. You spare them, they won't spare you. You cannot serve two masters.
You'll hate the one and love the other. You'll cleave to one and you'll despise the other. If you've got a mongrel religion today, it won't last. If your religion is part world and part Christ, it's not going to last you.
[43:29] It'll die. You must be out and out and all together the Lord's. Now, maybe you say, well, I can't do that.

I am so weak and so poor that I just cannot do what you're telling me there. I am failing. I'm failing all the time. Well, my friend, the point of it all is that the resource is here for you.
How much more could you ask for than having the arrows put into your hand? And not only that, but the promise of the king's hand upon your own if you but ask him.
How much more could you have than that? The Lord is not sending you to war at your own expenses. He's sending you to war at his expenses. And you here who are saying, I can't even begin on this path.
Oh, my friend, if the Lord is urging you, he will propel you onto it. And he will convince you of this, that it's not your battle, it is his. It is a matter of you casting yourself on him and going out to fight.
[44:40] And at every twist and turn and at every hardship, you will say, I can't do this. And it's true, you cannot do it. But repair yourself to the Lord and you'll find that in him you will do it.

You will be sustained, you will be carried, and ultimately you will have the triumph. You fight, but you fight in the Lord. That is faith, that is the gospel, that is its glory, and that is its beauty.
And that is why the scriptures can say that we are more than conquerors through him who loved us and gave himself for us. You see, my friend, he teaches us to fight.
Now, warfare is difficult, and every young soldier needs to be trained. It's one thing to enlist in the army, but if you really want to serve the king, if you want to serve the country of heaven, and if you want to serve the king of heaven, and you go into that army, then you just be open for the king to teach you.
He'll teach your hands to fight. He'll teach you how to wield that Bible of yours. He'll teach you how to pray and to come to the throne. He'll teach you how to overcome the difficulties and the hardships. He will teach you.
[45:47] Just cast yourself upon him, and he will do that. Now, before I close, there's just one last thing that I want to say about Elisha here in this chapter.

And it relates to his death, and this is a remarkable thing. Look at verse 20 with me. Now, if you read verse 20, we're told there that Elisha died, and they buried him.
And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, but behold, they spied a band of men. And they cast the man into the sepulcher of Elisha.
And when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood up on his feet. Now, that seems a strange way to end the history of this man of God.
What an unusual event. The Moabites started invading at springtime. And here, they were carrying the coffin of a dead man.
[46:55] They were carrying a dead man. And when the Moabite raiders appeared, they just threw the dead body into the nearest sepulcher they could find, the one that was lying open. And whose was it but the sepulcher of Elisha, the prophet.

And the minute the dead body touched the bones of Elisha, the dead man came back to life. Now, it's remarkable. It is a miracle.
What does it mean? Well, on more than one occasion, I have said that Elisha in the Old Testament remarkably prefigures the Lord Jesus Christ in his life and ministry.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

And we've seen it at every turn. His name, his raising from the dead, his healing of the leper, having a traitor next to him, so on. There are so many instances of Elisha prefiguring Christ.
Now, I wonder, my friends, if this is not perhaps the most glorious example of that. Elisha's life. This is the greatest miracle perhaps of Elisha's life, and it occurs paradoxically in his death.
[48:04] Who does that remind you of? Who is it who in his death is more fruitful than he was in his life? Who is it but the one who is the true Elisha, or the New Testament Elisha, who died and who gave birth to a church, to a multitude which no man could number?

It is as though in a parable it is saying to the Jews, when your Messiah comes, do not be surprised if your Messiah dies. For it is in the Messiah's death that his greatest work is performed.
Although Elisha is dead, he still speaks. He has the power, as it were, in the death and in the grave, to raise the dead. And that was going to be true of the Messiah himself.
That is why Jesus could say, I must be put to death. And almost in the same breath he could say, I am the resurrection and the life. If the Jews had been taught, if they had used the armor, how they would have discerned these things.
They wouldn't have stumbled at the paradox. They would have gloried in it. I must die. I am the resurrection and the life. Here it is prefigured in Elisha.
[49:25] Life from the dead. Oh, my friend, will you not come then to the greater than Elisha yourself? He died, but he lives forever more. And he can raise your soul from the dead.

Be in earnest about it. Be in earnest. Say, it is enough of the old. It is time for the new. I have been long enough, too long, in this condition.
It is time to embrace the Lord and to follow him. I cannot do it myself. Lord, help me. Help my unbelief. I must follow thee, and I must follow thee today.
May the Lord bless us. Let us pray. Oh, Lord, thou art the Lord of glory, the God of all grace and mercy.
Wilt thou not make us altogether thine own? Deliver us from the lethargy that causes so many to perish, and so many souls to fall by the wayside.
[50:32] Give us that earnest spiritual life that will desire to cleave to thyself until our soul is severed from our body, and we are ushered along with the presence of angels into thine own marvelous presence.

Bless thy word to us, and may it be fruitful. For Christ's sake, amen.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host