

How is Your Thirst?

1 Kings 19:19-21, 2 Kings 2:1-14

Preface

Illus: A woman's husband had been slipping in and out of a coma for several months, yet she had stayed by his bedside every single day. One day, when he came to, he motioned for her to come nearer. As she sat by him, he whispered, eyes full of tears, "You know what? You have been with me through all the bad times. When I got fired, you were there to support me. When my business failed, you were there. When I got shot, you were by my side. When we lost the house, you stayed right here. When my health started failing, you were still by my side. Do you know what I think?"

"What dear?" she gently asked, smiling as her heart began to fill with warmth.

"I think you're bad luck."

Some people just don't get it. Some people have a tendency to completely miss the obvious.

It has always bewildered me how some people just don't get God.

Some people seem to have indifference toward God. They might come to church once in a while just to check it out but they seem to get nothing from it. It is as if it doesn't matter what goes on around them or what happens in their life, they can't seem be drawn close to God.

On the other hand, others have a thirst to know God. They want to understand His teachings and long to know as much about God as they can. They desire to please God and experience all they can of the things of God.

It seems as though while some people thirst to know God, others just seem to have no interest in God.

Scripture

¹⁹ So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. ²⁰ Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. "Let me kiss my father and mother good-bye," he said, "and then I will come with you."

"Go back," Elijah replied. "What have I done to you?"

²¹ So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant. 1 Kings 19:19-21 NIV

²¹ When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel."

But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

³ The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," Elisha replied, "but do not speak of it."

⁴ Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho."

And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went to Jericho.

⁵ The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?"

"Yes, I know," he replied, "but do not speak of it."

⁶ Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.”

And he replied, “As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them walked on.

⁷ Fifty men of the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. ⁸ Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?”

“Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,” Elisha replied.

¹⁰ “You have asked a difficult thing,” Elijah said, “yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise not.”

¹¹ As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. ¹² Elisha saw this and cried out, “My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them apart.

¹³ He picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ Then he took the cloak that had fallen from him and struck the water with it. “Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?” he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over. 2 Kings 2:1-14 NIV

Introduction

Elijah was the great Prophet of God with strong words and even stronger actions. It was Elijah who said to King Ahab, “As the Lord

lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.” And it was so.

Elijah was a man of God with great discernment and boldness to speak the word of God. It was Elijah who had all of the worshipers of Baal gather on Mount Carmel and bring two bulls with them. There they built two altars one for Baal and one for God. Elijah challenged the followers of Baal to pray to their god that he might set their altar on fire. When they could not get the altar on fire, he taunted them and encouraged them to pray harder and louder. When they had failed, Elijah prayed, “O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” Suddenly the altar was bursting with fire and all the people acknowledged God.

It was Elijah who boldly told King Ahab and his wife Jezebel that they had sold themselves to evil. Later when Ahab’s son became king, Elijah once again denounced his worship of Baal and told him he would never leave his bed, he would die in it. The king was so filled with fear that he sent a Captain and fifty men to fetch Elijah from a hill. Elijah called fire down from heaven and they were destroyed.

Elijah was a powerful prophet filled with the spirit and power of God. God used Elijah through the years to speak to the people and call upon them to return to their relationship with God.

But even Elijah’s days were limited and God chose to take Him away in a miraculous manner. Before doing so, God told Elijah to anoint Elisha to become His replacement.

As we read this text each of us should long to be like Elisha. We should long to have the attributes that Elisha so clearly displayed.

1. Elisha displayed unwavering dedication

When Elisha was called as a prophet, he was out plowing in the field when Elijah found him and placed his cloak around him.

Elisha immediately knew the meaning of Elijah's action. He knew what God was calling him to become. He only had one request, to take the time to kiss his father and mother to tell them good-bye.

Now we should not misunderstand Elijah's response, "What have I done to you?" This was not a negative statement. It was sort of their way of saying, "nothing is stopping you" or "I am not holding you back from doing that." So Elijah was telling Elisha it was fine to go back and say his good-byes.

1 Kings 19:21 (NIV) *"So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant."*

So what did Elisha do? He threw a big barbeque. He cooked his oxen and he burned his plowing equipment for cooking.

This tells me two things. First, Elisha was not ashamed of his decision as he was willing to tell everyone about it. Secondly, this tells us that Elisha was sealing his decision. You talk about burning your bridges; Elisha fixed it where there could be no turning back.

Illus: When Spanish explorer Hernando Cortez arrived to conquer Mexico, he ordered his men to "burn the ships" that had carried them to the new land. This forced them to "fight or die".

As Christians, we need to exhibit unwavering dedication to serving God. When God calls us to serve, we need to set our sights on that service and not look back.

When Jesus Christ calls you to the cross, you better go and you better mean business. God is not interested in half-hearted service. He expects total surrender and commitment to Him.

I am reminded of the statement Jesus made when speaking to His disciples about their *commitment to Him*. He said, ⁶²*"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."* Luke 9:62 NIV

We sing the old hymn, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back." We must ask ourselves if we really mean those words.

We live in a day when few people are really dedicated to serving the Lord. In every Baptist church, we have more consumers than we have contributors. We have many attendees and few willing workers.

Do you have unwavering dedication to the Lord?

2. Elisha displayed relentless determination

Elisha was determined to glean all he could from Elijah. He wanted to learn from him and he desired to acquire the kind of relationship with God that Elijah possessed.

Somehow everyone knew that it was Elijah's time. We don't know if he told the other students or how they knew but everyone knew his days were severely numbered.

Three times in our text, Elijah tells Elisha to stay back in safety and not to follow him to his destination. All three times Elisha was determined to stay the course.

¹*"When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. 2 Kings 2:1-2 NIV*

Elisha knew that God was going to take Elijah to heaven and he was not about to miss it. Each time he responds with relentless determination.

Not only does God want us to be dedicated, but He wants us to be determined to stay the course. Too many Christians start out serving God but when the least little storm comes, they throw in

the towel. When we get a little weary, we drop the ball and move on to something else.

Illus: I spent yesterday at the auction of Faith Baptist. It was a sad day. Though there were many factors in that situation, one thing I can promise you took place; some people did not remain determined to serve. I am sure many did but I am sure even more did not. When a Youth Minister or a Children's Director leaves; instead of stepping up and serving, people say they are leaving to find a church that offers the programs they need.

It amazes me how people can be so dedicated and diligent with other things in their life. But when it comes to serving God, if everything isn't just right; they no longer desire to serve in their called capacity.

How important is God's presence and power to you? How determined are you to experience all that God has planned?

Are you a determined servant or a quitting servant?

3. Elisha displayed a burning desire

Elisha displayed unwavering dedication and relentless determination. But as it turns out, there was something very important at the heart of his devotion. Elisha had a burning desire to know God the way his mentor knew God.

²When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?" "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied. ¹⁰"You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours--otherwise not." 2 Kings 2:9-10 NIV

Elisha could have asked for money or fame. He could have asked to be the greatest prophet who ever lived – but instead, he asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Elisha wanted a spiritual blessing rather than a material blessing.

Elisha was asking for an ability to know God not only the way Elijah did but doubly so. Suddenly, it all makes sense. Elisha's burning desire to know and experience God explains his unwavering dedication and relentless determination.

This tells me that **our faithfulness and our determination is a direct reflection of our desire to know God**. If we find ourselves giving up or quitting on God's service, it is an indication that our desire to know Him is weak.

Do you desire to know God like Elisha? How are you responding to God's call to live for Him and to serve Him?

Elisha wanted to be right there when Elijah's cloak fell and he was taken away. His desire was so strong to know God that he was willing to endure whatever it took. Nothing was going to keep him from experiencing the fullness of what God offered.

Oh what would our churches and our world be like if all Christians had Elisha's desire to know God?

Do you have a burning desire to know God?

Conclusion

Notice there were 50 in the company of prophets who had the same knowledge of what was going to happen to Elijah. However, they lacked the desire, dedication and determination to stay the course and be ready to take the cloak of God.

Whatever their reasons, they stayed back and watched as Elisha received the blessing and power of God.

For each one of us there is a place and a time when God lays a cloak before us. It may be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Where are you in your service and relationship with God? Are you staying up close and faithful? Or do you stand at a distance from God like the 50 others? Do you thirst to know Him or is your thirst for the things of the world?