

The Mantle of the Prophet – Obtaining the Double Portion

2 Kings 2:1-14: This passage records the moment when one of the greatest men in the Bible was taken to heaven by a whirlwind. Elijah emphasised an unconditional loyalty to God. His strange dress sense and appearance; his rugged constitution and cave-dwelling habits; all suggest that he was a robust, outdoors-type of person. Elijah was a nonconformist who shaped the history of his day and went on to dominate Israelite thinking for centuries afterwards, but the day came when it was time to pass the baton on to the next generation. To a person who could wear the “mantle of the prophet”!

Our text tells us about a young man named Elisha. He was totally different to Elijah. He cultivated a different image - he was more typical and average. Instead of following Elijah’s example as a loner and complete outsider, Elisha chose to work within the established system. Through prophecy, advising and anointing kings, helping the needy, and performing miracles, he enjoyed a harmonious existence with the administration. But what stood out more than anything was this - he was a man hungry for all God could give him. He genuinely wanted the Lord’s power in his life and was willing to pay the price to get it.

This passage tells us what it took for Elisha to obtain the **double portion** he had asked for; and what we can learn from him here will be valuable in our own lives as well. The “mantle of ministry” for this generation rests upon you and me. If we’re going to be as effective as we should be for God’s kingdom, then we too need the awesome ‘power’ of His Spirit to come upon us. This text tells us how to go about getting the power of God to rest like a cloak on our lives.

1. ELISHA MADE AN HONEST SPIRITUAL REQUEST

Observe the following:

(a) **The Content of His Request** - *verse 9*. Elisha asked to receive “double portion” of Elijah’s spirit! The request was not for twice the power that had rested on Elijah. The request was to be recognised as Elijah’s replacement. He merely wanted to take over where Elijah had left off. He wanted to be the next prophet to Israel! Of course, he had already been selected by God for that position (1 Kings 19:16), and it was common for firstborn children to receive a double portion of their father’s estate. Notice in *verse 12* Elisha called Elijah “my father”. Elisha was asking for the right of the firstborn! He was asking that the same Spirit that had empowered the ministry of his great mentor be given to him as well. But what kind of spirit was he asking for?

- A Spirit Of Faith - Elijah learned to trust in the presence and power of God. He knew that God was in absolute control of every situation. He walked by faith!
- A Spirit Of Obedience - Elijah immediately obeyed and without question, even when the commands of God made no sense at all!
- A Spirit Of Courage - His faith in God and his obedience to God combined to give him the courage to stand for God, no matter what!

(b) **The Character Of His Request** - *verse 10*. Elisha is told that he has asked a “hard thing”. In other words, it

was beyond the power of Elijah to grant such a request. Only God could raise up prophets and give positions of power and influence. On the surface, Elisha's request seems a little selfish! It seems as though he is asking for twice the power and twice the glory, etc. In truth, his request is most humble in nature.

Elisha knows that Israel still needs a man of God to deliver the word of God and do the work of God for that generation. He also knows that if he is to be that man, then he needs power that he does not possess! He needs the power of God working in him, and through him, if he is to accomplish this ministry! Note: Elisha wasn't asking for power, wealth or position. He was asking to be controlled by the Spirit of God. In fact, to be a dedicated, outspoken man of God during the dynasty of the house of Omri and Ahab, was to live a life under constant threat! He was asking for "divine power" to accomplish the will of God. This request was not about pride, it was about necessity!

(c) **The Condition Of His Request** - *verse 10*. Elijah tells Elisha that if he is with him until he is taken out of this world, only then will he have the very thing for which he is asking. The idea here is that this blessing can be his, but Elisha must remain faithful right up until the end! It would have been far easier for Elisha to have stayed in one of the towns they passed through, but had he dropped out along the way, he would never have received the "double" blessing he desired and desperately needed!

If there was ever a day when we needed people with a heart like Elisha's, it is now! When will this generation learn that it can never do what the Lord has called it to do without His power? For far too long, the church has tried to operate in the machinery of human wisdom and power. As a result, we have lost the power of God that made us truly remarkable. A.W. Tozer commented that without the ministry of the Holy Spirit, 95% of what the early church did would have ceased. He went on to say that if the Spirit were removed today, 95% of what we do in the modern church would continue unaffected!

Yes, we need to seek the Lord for spiritual power in these days. We don't need to get concerned about numbers. We don't need to be concerned about becoming seeker friendly. What we need to do is to carry out the command of Ephesians 5:18. We need to be "*filled with the Spirit of God!*" We need to get before the Lord and request an outpouring of His power and His glory in these days! Oh how we need Him and His power more than we need crowds, money, or any of the things we hold so dear. We just need Christ - and Him alone!

However, this kind of blessing and power does not come upon the uncommitted. It is reserved for those who will pay the price in prayer and holiness before the Lord. If you are willing to go all the way with God, He will bless your life with His power and glory. It isn't about pride to ask Him to fill you with His Spirit and to use you for His glory, it is about necessity! The future demands that God's servants be "filled" with God's Spirit. We need that same spirit of faith, obedience and courage that rested on Elijah to be placed within us too!

2. **ELISHA DISPLAYED A STEADFAST RESOLVE**

From the time it became apparent that Elijah was leaving until the moment after he had left, and Elisha received the double blessing, several trials crossed their paths that attempted to hinder them. However, Elisha remained focused on obtaining the double portion.

Note, the following:

(a) **Opposition Did Not Shake His Resolve** - verses 3-5. At every turn the sons of the prophets asked Elisha the same question, *“Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today?”* This question is literally this: *“Why are you still following that old man? The Lord is through with him and is calling him to heaven today. You would be better off to stay with us, or to move out and start your own ministry.”* They tried to talk him out of his resolve! If you decide that you are chasing after God until you obtain the double portion, you had better watch out! All around you there may be people who will do their best to talk you out of it! I don't know if they are bothered or offended when someone progresses farther than they have, but you can be sure that they will oppose you if you go with God! Wholehearted commitment to the cause of Christ leaves many people baffled. So don't let that crowd shake you, just run with God!

(b) **Opportunities Did Not Shake His Resolve** - verses 1-6. Every time they passed through a city, Elijah attempted to get Elisha to stay. This wasn't an effort on his part to hinder Elisha's progress, it was designed to test his resolve. These were viable opportunities for Elisha to stop and to settle down! Let's examine them:

- *Gilgal* - The place of beginnings. It was here that the Israelites first celebrated Passover in the promised land. Here the males born during the wilderness wanderings were circumcised and the covenant was renewed.
- *Bethel* - The place of dreams. It was here that Jacob met God and dreamed of angels descending and ascending out of heaven.
- *Jericho* - The place of past victories - It was here that Israel had its first military victory in the promised land. Jericho was also a border town. To pass beyond this location was to enter wild, new territory.
- *Jordan* - The place of death. That river represented the boundary for the Promised Land. To cross it meant to enter into death. It was a formidable barrier that few would ever want to cross.

We too find ourselves at these very same places in our walk with the Lord. Far too many believers spend their entire Christian lives at Gilgal (the place of beginnings). They never grow and they never leave this place. Some go as far as Bethel. They catch the vision of God's great work which must be done. They see the needs, they feel the tug, but they never get past the 'place of dreaming' about what they might do. They never take the next step of making those dreams and visions realities. Still others hold onto their Jerichos. They live in the 'victories of yesterday'. They remember what happened in the past, forgetting that the same God Who blessed them (back then) is desiring to bless now.

Then some come to Jordan. This is the barrier between the self-life and the Spirit-life. Few ever take that final step of faith and sell out to go with God all the way. Notice that of all the prophets, only Elisha had enough faith to cross the river and go with Elijah, and therefore, it was Elisha who received the **double portion**. Don't allow the opportunities that come your way to hinder your progress, but by faith, move on with God and watch Him remove the stumbling blocks.

(c) **Obstacles Did Not Shake His Resolve** - verses 1-6. Even Elijah seemed to be an obstacle to Elisha's

progress. After all, he tried three times to get Elisha to stay behind. The Jordan also stood as a barrier between Elisha and his receiving what he desired. Still he went on! He resolved in his heart to stay with Elijah until he was taken away. He did not want to miss the blessing. Even the Jordan was no obstacle to this man's faith. After all, if Elijah was going to pass over the river Jordan, then so was Elisha! Whatever means his master used would be the means he (himself) would use to cross over!

When you make up your mind to go with God, be forewarned that obstacles will cross your path. So remember, when they do, that they are there because God has permitted them to be there. These obstacles will test your resolve, but they are God's responsibility! When Elijah and Elisha arrive at the banks of the Jordan, Elijah exercised his faith and God parted the waters. Elisha got in on a miracle because he did not back away from an obstacle. If God has put a determination within your heart to go with Him, then let nothing short of death keep you from going with Him! If He has called you, then it is His responsibility to clear your path and make the way straight.

3. **ELISHA SECURED A SOVEREIGN RESPONSE**

Because he would not be deterred short of victory, Elisha got to partake in some wonderful, supernatural events.

- Elisha Watched Elijah's Miracle. Because he remained with Elijah, Elisha got to see the man of God taken up into Heaven alive.
- Elisha Wore Elijah's Mantle. Because he stayed close to the man of God, he was given Elijah's mantle - this sheep skin garment.
- Elisha Walked With Elijah's Master. When Elisha returned to the banks of Jordan, he knew that the mantle and the ministry of Elijah had passed to him. Now, he, in faith, calls on the same God Who had worked through Elijah to work through him. He calls upon the God who: Answers by fire! Stops and starts the rain! Feeds His servants by the ravens! Multiplies the meal and the oil! Raises the dead! And just as they had for Elijah, the muddy, rushing waters of Jordan parted for Elisha. He had now obtained the double portion.

Note: The God of Elijah is still in power (Hebrews 13:8). The problem is not with God. The problem is that we have no Elisha's in the church. God is still looking for people who will take up the "mantle of ministry" and believe God for the impossible! Do you really want the **double portion** in your life? Do you want to be in a position where the God of Heaven is using you mightily for His glory? All that is required is a steadfast **faith walk** with the Lord. God is looking for people who will follow Him anywhere - anytime! When you get to the place where all you want is God, you will find that God is all you need.

To recap... How did Elisha receive the **double portion**? (a) He asked for it; and (b) he was totally committed to it from then on.

The question is... How badly do you want it? Are you prepared to take up the "mantle of ministry" for this generation? Are you prepared to stand, and keep standing, until you see God's power change the world around you? Are you prepared to carry the responsibility of the **double portion**?

If you are, ask for it! Yes, it's a legitimate request. The God of Elijah is looking to empower you with the very same Spirit the great prophet had. What is that Spirit? It is a Spirit of Faith; a Spirit of Obedience; and a Spirit of Courage. It is the Spirit of Jesus Christ that is made available - to be manifest in human vessels. In ordinary people like you and me! We are exactly what God has in mind. We are the people He wants to throw the mantle over. We are God's chosen people!