

Needed — The Double Portion

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in "Free Methodist"

As we observe the tremendous machinery of the church today and note the downward trend of morals, the indifference of people toward the church, the lack of power of those who are active, and the failure to transform lives of sinners and make saints who would rather die than transgress God's Word, we are forced to cry to God for His help.

This is a day of increased learning—from religion to politics, science to farming, theology to more theology; and yet our problem is not solved. Everything is tried except what God has promised will be successful. How long will men pride themselves on their puny wisdom, and attempt to do a God-given task without His anointing! Many strive for knowledge, but few agonize for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and fewer yet are willing to pay the price for it. This alone is capable of moving machinery.

When Jesus chose the disciples, He did not look for well-learned men but for ordinary people. They were performing their jobs normally. One, a physician, was probably the best-learned man in the group; several were fishermen; one was a tax-collector. Christ did not immediately make them spiritual giants, but they listened to the Master Teacher until He had left an indelible impression upon their lives.

They were men of natural ambitions. Once they came to Christ and asked who would be greatest in the Kingdom. On another occasion two of the disciples attempted to get ahead of the others by putting in their bid for the most honorable seats in His Kingdom. When they were passing a village of Samaria, and the people would not receive them because Jesus had His face set to go to Jerusalem, the disciples asked, "Shall we call fire down from heaven and consume them?" Again, Peter asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother, seven times?" Their vision was that of the unspiritual man, and in this state they were not able to do the work planned for them.

Before Elijah's translation, Elisha knew the time of Elijah's departure was at hand. He had been a willing student of the senior prophet; and now, though he did not understand what was to take place, and his heart was heavy, he did not cast away his spiritual resources. Elijah spoke to Elisha while they were at Gilgal, telling him that the Lord had sent him to Bethel, and he requested that Elisha tarry at Gilgal. Gilgal means a rolling, unsettled place. A great many folk seem to be content to live in such circumstances, but not so Elisha, for he said, "As long as the Lord lives and you are alive, I will not leave thee."

Elijah spoke again, saying, "The Lord has sent me to Jericho; tarry here at Bethel." Bethel means the house of God. Everyone will agree that it is a good place; but just to come to the house of God, carry on a few duties, and absorb the agreeable parts of a sermon are not enough. Elisha no doubt loved the house of God, but he was not going to limit his spiritual growth at this point, for he said, "As the Lord lives, and while you are yet alive, I'll not leave you."

When they arrived at Jericho (which means fragrance—where many arrive, but are never of any use to God from that time forward, having a state of considerable moral perfection, in which achievement they live and glory), the sons of the prophet met Elisha to remind him that his master was going to be taken away. Is it not strange how even religious people try to discourage those who are striving for the full anointing—the unusual place

of service and sacrifice? Again Elisha's answer was the same.

The next step of the journey meant crossing over Jordan. Jordan is spoken of as the crossing of death, and on this occasion it was nothing less to Elisha. Elijah smote the water with his mantle, and the waters parted. For Elisha to walk across with Elijah was a death to self. Watching them were the sons of the prophet. Elijah had parted the water with the power of God, and now it was quite possible that after the parting took place, Elisha would have to come back on a boat or swim. Facing the fifty sons of the prophets, they would soon spread it around that Elisha had no power. When they had reached the other side, Elijah asked Elisha, "What shall I do for thee?" Elisha sensed his inability to carry on without God's anointing and had his reply ready: "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." Until a person is willing to take the death route to self, he will not receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Elisha was not asking this to keep himself from being shamed by the watching prophets; his was not a spirit of self-glory. Elijah and Elisha had had many talks together, and Elijah had told how God had used him in the case of the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil that wasted not; in the raising of the widow's son; of racing ahead of Ahab's horses as the rain ended the famine.

Elisha wanted a spirit which would enable him to sacrifice all; would make him willing to risk his life as did Elijah in the face of the four hundred prophets of Baal; would make him patient as Elijah when he fled for his life to the wilderness, where he was fed of the ravens; would give him courage to deliver God's message, even to the ungodly who were in power, then trust God for the outcome, as did Elijah meeting King Ahaziah's servant on the way to inquire of the god of Ekron whether Ahaziah would recover from his injury. Elijah had told the servant to return to his ungodly master and tell him that he would surely die because he dared to forsake the God of Israel.

To Elisha's request for a double portion of his spirit, Elijah replied, "You have asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." Elisha, if you weaken under the test now—if you just loiter around and are not sober, wondering how little you will have to do to receive this, "I shall not be so." Elisha was not a waster, nor a seeker of vain things, and as they were walking along, holding a conversation, the chariot of fire parted them, and Elijah was gone.

Elisha received his desire because he set his whole heart on this one thing, and was not turned aside by pleasant places, nor by the sons of the prophets, nor by the crossing of death to self, nor by vain things that do not profit. Rather, he gave his undivided attention to this one purpose; he picked up Elijah's mantle as it came floating down, went back to the river Jordan, smote the waters, watched them pile up, and went across on dry ground. He went over Jordan the first time a powerless man with a heavy, seeking heart, but came back a powerful man, filled with the Spirit of God.

It is this same spirit after which the apostles agonized. When they were threatened, they went down before God and cried, "Lord, behold their threats; now, Lord, give thy servants boldness to carry on"; and another deluge of the Spirit of God came upon them. Thus Jerusalem was filled with their doctrine, and the world

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