

The Iron Sinking and Swimming

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[0:00] Turn to 2 Kings chapter 6. While you're turning there, I guess I've got a couple questions. I've had that happen.

And so if you've had that experience, then you might have a little in common with the man that we're going to talk about tonight. Go ahead and stand, if you will, with me. We'll start reading chapter 6.

We'll read the first seven verses. It says, And he answered, And one said, And he answered, So he went with them, and when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood.

But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water, and he cried and said, Alas, master, for it was borrowed. And the man of God said, Where fell it?

And he showed him the place, and he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither, and the iron did swim. Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand and took it.

[1:42] Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you for everyone that's here tonight, Lord. I just ask that you would bless them for their faithfulness. Lord, I just ask that you would work in our hearts.

Just let us glean what you have for us tonight. Lord, I just ask that you would let me speak forth your truths found in Scripture.

I just thank you, and I love you. In Jesus' name, amen. You can go ahead and be seated. So with this being more of a Bible study tonight, that's kind of something I was doing. And the Lord kind of had me going all sorts of different ways with this, and I think we finally got it settled tonight.

I was doing some studying, and the sons of the prophets, these were usually, these were kind of what I would consider for us to get an idea of would be like Bible college students.

These were young men who were devoted to learning Elijah and Elisha, and they wanted to be prophets, and they were kind of disciples, if you will.

[2:53] And so being that I had gone to Bible college, I felt a little more kinship to this individual. And the first thing I saw here was in verses 1 and 2, and I see the mission.

And we start off this chapter with a really good problem, growing pains. They come to Elisha, and they're like, hey, you know, you could say our dorm, it's filling up.

We're cramped. We need to expand. And we know here at Plains about building projects, and there's always excitement. You can hear the buzz, you know.

People are excited. They're envisioning what could be. There's also, with that excitement, a lot of times there's an expectation, right, that the project is just going to go flawlessly.

And, of course, you plan for things to happen. You know, you want efficiency. And the men, they got it all figured out.

[3:54] They go to Elisha. You know, Proverbs 29, 18 tells us where there is no vision, the people perish. And they had a vision, you know. I've been in a guy's dorm, and I remember we had 11 guys in that area, but we only had four showers.

So it was constantly a challenge. Someone would leave their stuff in there, and you'd be like, hey, don't leave that stuff in here. You know, and there was always sorts of button heads going on. We only had one washer and dryer, so it was a fight to figure all that out.

So I can just imagine these guys are excited. We need a place to build a new area. And no doubt that these guys, they had divine guidance, wise counsel, clear direction.

We see here that they understood that it was going to take personal sacrifice. There in verse 2, it says, every man a beam. Everybody was going to grab those lumber after they'd cut them down

and work.

It was a project that they were all on board with. And they kind of understood what was going on. I can kind of imagine them even singing, you know, we'll work till Jesus comes.

[5:07] They're full of excitement. Things are happening. And Christ tells us in John chapter 9, verse 4, that we only have a limited time of work.

The Bible says that soon it'll be dark and there will be no time to work. Paul writes to Galatians in chapter 6, verse 9, And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

We know that there is work to do, and we've got to stay busy. I think one of the phrases that came to my mind, and especially since I couldn't say it any better, but the English cricketer who turned missionary, C.T. Studd, he famously said, One life will soon be passed, only what's done for Christ will last.

And these guys, what they were doing is building that place. They wanted to learn, and everything, you know, this is good. These first two verses, everything's kind of going the way that they want it. In verses 3 and 4, I have the master. We see that these workers were wise because they wanted their master to go with them. They say in verse number 3, they say, Any work independent from our master is a waste.

[6:35] And beside that, Elisha would be somebody that you would want to be going with you. In just 2 Kings, okay, we're in chapter 6. In just 2 Kings up to this point, Elisha had already performed 11 miracles.

In 2 Kings 2, verse 14, he had parted the Jordan. Chapter 2, verses 18 through 22, there was some poisonous water that he purified.

I kind of like this one personally, chapter 2, verse 23 and 24. There were some youth mocking him because he was bald. So some she-bears came up and got him, and I was like, hey, amen.

God doesn't cover his best furniture, by the way. 2 Kings 3, verse 16 through 25, he was able to dig ditches for water for Israel, and they had victory over the Moabites.

Chapter 4, verses 1 through 7, he provided the widow with oil. You know, they all ran and got the empty dishes and kept filling it up.

[7:44] Chapter 4, verse 18 through 37, he raised the dead son of the Shunammite woman. Verses 38 through 40 of chapter 4, he healed the poisonous pottage.

Again, I can kind of feel that was another time he had the sons of the prophets, and they went out and they were putting a stew together, and someone had said that he grabbed some stuff. He didn't know what it was. They tossed it in, and people were getting sick. And so he healed that. I can, you know, you're kind of a knucklehead in Bible college. 2 Kings 4, 42 through 44, he multiplied the loaves.

2 Kings 5, we see that he healed the leper Naaman. 2 Kings 5, verses 25 through 27, he cursed Jehazi and gave him that skin disease.

So this guy has some experience, some talents behind him, and no wonder they would want him on their side. And I believe in verse 4 there, it says that, well, verse 3, he says he will go.

[8:53] Verse 4, it says, So he went with them, and when they, plural, I believe that's Elisha included, came to Jordan, they, plural again, cut down wood.

I believe he was right there in the thick of it with their growing pains. So many times in our growing pains, God is there too with us. Sometimes when things are clicking, we may not always notice. But then that's what happens. I can tell you one time when I was working at a previous job, I was a stump grinder.

I just grind out stumps, and I pretty much hated that job. But every day I would try to beat my record and try to get so many stumps done.

And I was blessed one day that LES had done a line clearance, and there was 40 stumps. And I was like, oh, man, I'm going to beat everybody because no one's in the top 40 stumps.

[9:58] And I remember I was grinding away, grinding away, and I had a, we called it the tree trailer. It was not a dump trailer, but I had that, it had three-foot sides, and I had this thing just heaping.

There was so much room I couldn't even get the stump grinder back on there. So I knew I was going to have to go back and then hand unload it with a pitchfork. That's why I did not like this part of the job.

And so I drove back. It was starting to get dark. And when I came back to the site, which was kind of out in the country, I could not find the key, just this little piece of metal, to get the stump grinder going.

It's dark. My back is sore. I'm hungry. I want to go home. And I can't find the key. And it just kind of ruined my attitude. I let that happen.

In verse 5, this is what happens. We see the mishap. I can imagine these guys at work. You have one crew over here, and they're felling down the trees. The trees are coming down.

[10:57] You have another crew coming in. They're bucking it up. They're taking all the limbs and branches off. They get carried off to another crew, and they're getting the dimensions for the lumber. They're cutting it up.

And you have another crew who are setting the beams and getting everything built. And I can just imagine everything's just running smoothly, and then you hear a cry. You hear this, alas, is the word that he uses.

And we don't really use that word, so I had to look it up. I was like, what is this alas? And that's an expression for pain, for grief, for distress.

I've made a similar sound to that before. If you've ever wrecked your knuckles when you're working, and you're, ah, you know, it's just, ah. If you've ever maybe had an accident, and you damaged something, you're like, ah, you know, you're like, I can't believe I did that.

One time while I was stump grinding, we were taking down these bushes, and it was on kind of like a waterway, and there was like a six-foot drop-off where the, like a retaining wall.

[12:11] And I was getting, I was working, and the machine, every now and then it would kind of like do this jump, and it rolled out of my hands. And as the cutting wheel is turning, it hit that wall, and it bounced straight up.

And so I'm underneath it, and I just see this machine coming at me. I roll, and it goes right off the six-foot wall. I made that same, ah! You know, it's like my boss is going to kill me.

Well, this is what the problem this young man was having. He yells, alas! You know, it was borrowed. It wasn't his axe. This time, during this time in Israel, you could basically say they're kind of at like the Bronze Age.

They don't have the type of equipment readily available. It's not like he could have, oh, broke the axe, I'll just drive down to Menards, get a new one. That wasn't the case.

I mean, here he is, he's borrowed this, and again, if he's a Bible college student, I was living on Pop-Tarts and ramen. I had no money to borrow tools and equipment, but now you've broke it.

[13:24] I can imagine the pain, the grief, the distress that he's going through. I think it's interesting that Scripture doesn't allude to him being negligent. He wasn't using the equipment improperly, but sometimes things happen.

It was an accident. You know, sometimes in our lives, when we have these growing pains, things happen. It's part of life. It's part of being human.

You know, not only is it a part of being human, it's a part of being Christian, because you're going to get tested. And if you're a Christian who's trying to strive after God and go above and beyond, then you're asking for it.

And that stuff happens. And those are the opportunities that we have for growth. And so this happens. I can understand that he's feeling distressed.

And so many times I know in my life, I get that way. I get discouraged. I kind of want to have a pity party. I want to pout. I want to look at how everything is so much better for everybody else.

[14:29] But if you noticed in our text, he didn't do that. He says he goes to the master. So verses six and seven, we see the miracle. Our young man went to his master, Elisha, to solve the problem.

And I think we need to take a lesson from that. Elisha calmly asked, where fell it? When it says that he cut down a stick in verse six, behind that word, there's a sense of crafting.

It's not like he just walked over, grabbed a stick. This is my personal belief. So this, you know, this is the EDB version. But he's making a new handle for that axe because it's broke.

What good is an axe head without a handle? And so there's probably some time there to craft a good axe handle. And I can just imagine, if I were in this young man's shoes, I'd be like, Elisha, please stop whittling.

I borrowed this from my dad and I do not have money. I barely pay my tuition. I, come on, man, I need help. And so many times, though, we get like that with God.

[15:39] We don't understand why he's not working in our time. And you know, most of you know, I've had a pretty big event in my life where I didn't understand, you know, what God was doing.

Basically, starting in 2019, my whole life was starting to really unravel. The church that I was served at and I was a member of for a long time, I got really hurt there.

And it was really hard to see what God was doing. So I leave. I go to another church. And a couple of years later, my dad is killed.

Again, I'm wondering, what are you doing, God? You know, I went to Bible college. You know, I go to church. You know, I was helping as the assistant.

What is going on? And this is what this young man is feeling like. But then we see the miracle. He asked where it fell. So the young man took him to the place.

[16:45] He said, this is where it went. Elisha, who'd been crafting this stick, he throws it in. And we see a miracle. The iron floats.

The Bible literally says it swims. This is just me again. So this is just my preference. I got to put that out there. I personally believe when he threw that stick into the water, the iron came up.

I personally believe that axe became whole. You might be thinking, oh, that's a stretch. Well, iron swam. So, you know, that's what I personally believe.

And then I think it made sense to the young man. Wow. You know, it's whole. I bet you it was a better handle than it was before. And you might be thinking, man, Brother Ethan went through his points really fast.

Well, we're getting into the meat of it now. But the message, you might be wondering, all right, Brother Ethan, this is a neat, you know, little tidbit here.

[17:48] What's it mean? You know, are we not supposed to loan out our tools? On the flip side, are we not supposed to borrow tools? Oh, I got it. You know, don't build on waterfront property.

You know, hire professionals because you get what you pay for. You know, those aren't what I got out of this. I used to read through Scripture and I think it's a good thing.

But I would always try to figure out, what does this have to do with me? What can I learn from this? What can I apply into my life? You know, what are the do's and don'ts here?

And I think those are good things to look for. And it really wasn't until recently, which I feel like a moron, but, you know, God's word really isn't for us necessarily to better ourselves, but it's to get to know who God is.

And looking at it from that perspective, things became a little more clearer to me. The first thing I noticed was God's providence.

[18:57] If you turn with me to Romans chapter 8, I think so many times we think that God is kind of like a goalie. He's just on the defense. When Satan attacks, you know, God bats it out. But that's not how God, God is so many steps ahead.

You know, he's orchestrating this whole ordeal. You know, God knew that Elisha was going to be there when it happened. This kid, he didn't know that, but God was already way ahead of him. Romans 8, 28, it says, and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

As believers, we don't need the faint during the alas times, during our times of pain, grief, and distress.

Why not? Because God has a perfect plan. It's a two-fold plan. It's simple. His glory, our good.

[20:12] His plan for us and our desire should be to be like Christ. If you'll turn with me to Ephesians chapter 1, we'll start reading in verse 4. It says, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

This predestination, it only pertains to us who are saved. I have not been able to find anywhere in Scripture where God predestines people to eternal condemnation.

Those people choose to reject Christ and his free gift, his shed blood. Turn with me to John chapter 3 just to further drive that point home.

As I've gone out and talked to people about Christ, there's been several times people will ask, well, how can you serve a God that and fill in the blank? I remember one guy, he was Native American and he asked how I could serve a God that allowed so much tragedy to happen to Native American people.

I don't have an answer for you. I just asked how come there's so many babies dying because I saw that he had a pro-abortion sticker in his window. There's no answer.

[21:39] I'm not God. but I think there's interesting things to know. God already knows this stuff. John chapter 3 verse 18 getting back to our point. He that believeth on him which Jesus Christ is not condemned but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God and this is the condemnation that light is come into the world and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved. God chose us at the beginning we see that in 2 Thessalonians 2 13 and 14 let's turn there we still got time 2 Thessalonians verses 2 or chapter 2 verse 13 and 14 says but we are bound to give thanks always to God for you brethren beloved of the Lord because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ he chose us and those of us who responded to his call were justified will be glorified let's turn real quickly to John chapter 17 verse 21 that they all may be one as thou father are in me and I in thee that they also may be one in us that the world may believe that thou has sent me and the glory which thou gave us me

I have given them that they may be one even as we are one I in them and thou in me that they may be made perfect in one and that the world may know that thou has sent me and has loved them as thou has loved me so we already share the glory of God so then why do we get discouraged why do we get frustrated our suffering today only guarantees that much more glory when Christ arrives it took me a little while to understand that the heartbreak that I went through at my former church was just God orchestrating the opportunity that I would get to meet my wife I would never would have met her if that hadn't happened God just used the person to get that going and I don't I've told my wife this it's done and over with I'm so thankful because in Bible college I was praying

God I want to have a wife I want to have a family and years you know a decade goes by and I'm still being faithful to the Lord I'm still doing what I need to do and this isn't happening well God was orchestrating it the whole time just like God knew that that axe handle would break and Elisha was going to be there I just didn't see it at the time and I'm so thick headed just like the children of Israel you know with the business I think to myself oh man Lord we're in the thick of it you know alas and you know what God is orchestrating and he's there he knows he knows what's going to happen he's going to take care of it I just have to trust him so that's the first thing I saw in this was God's providence but then secondly God's attention to the little things you might be thinking about this account because I know I was if I'm going to be completely honest with you

I was like that's neat that's a cool account you know iron float everything that you could have put in the Bible and we get this story frankly I would like to know a little more about the Garden of Eden what fruit really was from the tree of knowledge of good and evil I got to thinking it would have been more interesting in my opinion to know what exactly was Jesus writing in the sand when they found that adulterous woman I personally believe it was the names of the guilty but I don't know I was thinking to myself you know we hear about behemoth unicorn leviathan couldn't we get a little more

information I mean the axe head was cool but I mean these are fire breathing underwater creature that's pretty cool God pays attention to the insignificant in chapter 5 of 2nd Kings Naaman who is the captain of the host of the armies of Syria he's basically the general of the enemy enemy and he's sick and he comes and he gets healed by

[26:32] Elisha and you know what happens the king of Israel starts getting scared he's like what is that guy doing here we're gonna get attacked we are about to get attacked and there's chaos brewing you read the rest of chapter 6 guess what happens Syria comes and they're ready to attack and you see another miracle performed one of the servants comes to Elisha and he's scared and Elisha blinds the army we have all this chaos all this war going on and God breaks to give us a story about a nun named man with his axe how important are we God says that he takes care of the sparrow he dresses the lily he knows the hair on our heads some of it's easier than others but he knows those things that's how important you are he sees what you're going through and sometimes

I look around and I see all the chaos in our world and sometimes I really have to rein myself in because I'm like what is the point there's so much evil so much wickedness but you know God knows that and he's taking care of the little things when we like the man in our text learn to just give it to our master don't worry about it God makes a way would you have ever guessed that he would have made the iron swim no but God has a way to do that throughout scripture do you think he would have closed up the lion's mouth for Daniel God did it it was already handled I think about Joseph getting sold into slavery twice and now he's rotting in prison he might be thinking what is going on but God had orchestrated all of that so that his family could be fed essentially saving the world because Egypt was the powerhouse feeding everybody all throughout scripture there's instances like this

God has it under control and all we need to do is trust that he's caring for us because he says he does I had a lot that I wanted to say tonight and I think that's where I'm going to leave it go ahead and bow your heads with me we'll pray