

Elisha 2

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[0 : 00] Seeking God's blessing, we'll turn to the first portion of scripture we read, 2 Kings chapter 2 at verse 23, 2 Kings chapter 2 at verse 23.

And he went up from thence unto Bethel, and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou baldhead, go up, thou baldhead.

And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tear forty and two children of them.

And he went from thence to Mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria. Now after eight years in the fellowship of Elijah the prophet, it is time for Elisha to be parted from his master, and to begin to wear his mantle.

And Elijah one day knows that the time of his own departure is at hand, and he begins a tour of the schools of the prophets, which were located at Jericho, Gilgal, and Bethel.

[1 : 49] And he takes Elisha with him on that tour. Elisha himself senses, as do the sons of the prophets, that the time has come for his own master to be taken away.

And he has a particular request to make of them. And Elijah knows that he has something to ask, and Elijah turns, and he says, Before I am taken from you, what can I do for you? And Elisha asks, as you probably well know, for a double portion of your spirit to be upon me.

That didn't mean that he was in any respect greedy, or that he wanted to be twice as great a man as Elijah was. What it meant simply was that he would have a double portion, or twice as much, as it were, as anyone else was to have of the spirit and power of Elijah.

Just as the father would leave a two-fold portion to the eldest son, so Elisha asked for a greater portion than the rest of the prophets were to receive.

And he asked that because he knew that he himself had particular responsibilities, and also because he was particularly aware of his own need of that. He had great spiritual need.

[3 : 02] He was aware of his own weakness. And the man who is most aware of his own weakness is the man who will most ask help from the Lord. The man who is most in prayer and in meditation upon the truth is the man who knows himself to be nothing.

The man who can dispense with these means of grace is the man who is really walking in his own strength, whatever kind of vain show he might make. It is the amount of time that we spend in reliance directly upon the Lord that determines what manner of man you are and what manner of man I am.

And so he humbly asks for a double portion of Elijah's spirit to be upon him. And Elijah, of course, gave that reply, if you see me when I am taken from you, then the request will be yours.

And not too long after that, the great chariot of fire came down from heaven, the great train or chariot of angels. And in the accompanying whirlwind, Elijah was carried up into heaven.

Elisha is overcome with grief, and he cries out, my father, my father, for that is what you wear to me, and you are the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.

[4 : 13] You wear our defense, and you wear our shield. And what now are we to do without you? But then Elisha is aware, first of all, that he has seen him, parted from him.

That is a sign to him that a double portion of the spirit is going to rest upon him indeed. And along with that, he sees the mantle falling gently to the ground.

And that reminds him that he is to take that mantle, and he is to wear that mantle himself. Because God's work will go on. And whether Elisha feels up to the task or not, it will go on through himself.

There are many times when you feel inadequate for the work and witness that God has called you yourself to, whatever work and witness that is. But it is God's desire to work through yourself and to bless through yourself.

And you must be willing and ready to undertake that. So he takes the mantle, and he immediately puts it to the test. And he stretches it out over the waters of the Jordan. And he says, where is the Lord God of Elijah?

[5 : 16] And the waters parted before him, as a sign that God is still with him. And so he goes, and he makes his way then around the schools of the prophets himself.

He goes to visit Jericho first. He then goes to Bethel. And then he goes to Gilgal. Now it's remarkable that Elisha begins his own prophetic ministry with two miracles.

And if you look closely at the miracles, you will see that one is a miracle of mercy, and the other is a miracle of judgment.

The miracle of mercy is performed at Jericho. That city had been rebuilt in Ahab's day. There was a curse pronounced by Joshua many years before on anyone who would try to build it, that in laying the foundation, he would lose his firstborn son.

And in putting up its gates, he would lose his youngest son. That came to pass. It was built in Ahab's day, and the builder lost both his sons. But after that, the city became inhabited.

[6 : 25] But there was one problem, and that was that the water was somehow diseased. Elisha is called upon to help, and he puts some salt into a new bowl, and he scatters that salt upon the fountain of the water.

And the water is cleaned. Now that is symbolic of the power of the gospel, bringing health to a diseased place and to a diseased people. I don't want to look at that with you particularly tonight.

I want to look at it with you a little later on in the life of Elisha. But it symbolizes the mercy and the power of the gospel, neutralizing disease, bringing health, and bringing blessing.

But he's hardly moved on from there to a place called Bethel to visit the schools of the prophets there, when there is a great miracle of judgment and destruction.

One that has caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. And perhaps as you read this, or as you heard it read tonight, perhaps you blasphemed yourself. And perhaps you said, well, if that is the God of the Bible, then that cannot be and will not be my God.

[7 : 33] And you justify yourself for resisting the claims of the gospel upon you. Now that might well be the way that you've thought or the way that you think. But may the Lord help you to see it differently before we've finished looking at it.

It is a work of judgment that Elisha performed and that he had to perform, and performed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now I said that it's interesting that he begins with a miracle of mercy and a miracle of judgment.

And it's interesting for this reason. His name, Elisha, means God is my salvation. And his ministry, more than that of Elijah, was perhaps a message of salvation and of blessing.

Elijah thundered the law and called the people to repentance. And the pinnacle of his work was at Mount Carmel, when the people fell on their knees and said, The Lord, he is God.

The Lord, he is God. Or Jehovah, he is God. And that is precisely what the name Elijah means. Yah is God. Elijah.

[8 : 48] God is the Lord, or the Lord, he is God. And Elijah's calling was to bring people to repentance. To bring back the consciousness of God onto people's minds.

The consciousness that they had forgotten a long, long time ago. And that work was done by a mighty reformer and by a preacher of repentance. But now comes Elisha.

God is my salvation. And his message is largely one of peace and one of salvation. And that reminds us of John the Baptist and Christ.

John the Baptist first is sent to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord. And he breaks their hearts with again a message of repentance. He calls them to that.

And he brings God back into the consciousness of the people. And then Jesus comes, whose name again means salvation. Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.

[9 : 48] And he brings the gospel. The good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus compliments and fulfills what John himself said and did.

And so Elisha compliments and fulfills what Elijah did before him. In fact, you can extend the same thing back. I don't want to go too far off the track.

But you can extend it back into Moses and Joshua as well. Moses brought the law. But he did not lead them into the land of Canaan. That was left to who?

To Joshua. It is the same name as Jesus and Elisha. It means salvation. Joshua brought them into the land of rest.

He brought them into the land of Canaan. Now there's an important truth there. It's a timeless truth. And the truth is this. That God, whenever he is about to work, brings a people first of all to repentance.

[10 : 48] He brings his church to repentance. It's not a matter of the church suddenly being filled with sweetness and light, as it were. Or of revival just being poured out like that.

What God does first is he summons his people into sackcloth and ashes. And he brings us into a realization that we are too much in frivolity and too much in the flippant.

He brings us to a place where we set our face to seek the Lord. And where we turn aside, if need be, from lawful, perhaps even lawful recreations.

Or things that are taking up our time and energy. And that we give our time and our energy to bring in the Lord's blessing back upon us as a people. Because that is the most important thing to you and the most important thing to myself.

At least it ought to be. And if I so divide my time and so divide my life that I give most of my time to these things, innocent though they might be, what does that say?

[11 : 48] Of my urgency in spiritual things. Do I want the salvation of the lost? Do you seek it? Do you wish the Lord to return? Do you desire him to build up Zion? Then turn to him.

It is time for sackcloth and ashes. And if ever the church needed sackcloth and ashes, it needs it today. Let us repent and do the first works that the Lord may come.

That is when Elisha comes. That is when Jesus comes. That is when Joshua comes. After Moses, Elijah and John have summoned the people and brought them to their knees.

And so may we hear the calling of those men that the gospel might be blessed to us richly and abundantly. Now then, as I said, I want to leave this incident at Jericho for the moment.

And to turn with you to the second incident that we find at Bethel. I should, I omitted to mention there. I was going to mention the Lord Jesus Christ himself, you'll notice, began with a ministry of mercy and of judgment.

[13 : 02] His first work as befitting the messenger of the gospel. His first work is a gospel work. He turns the water into wine.

As much as to say, this is the characteristic of what I have come to do. And he turns the water into gospel wine and gospel blessing, which is going to give the world to taste.

But just in case you think that the gospel has lost its cutting edge. Or that because he came as a savior, he is no judge. To reinforce that, his second work is a work of judgment.

When he scourges the people out of the temple. To remind us that he is a judge as well as a savior. Now I'm going to return to that as well just a little later on.

But it's interesting how it's paralleled in the life of Elisha. Blessing in Jericho, curse in Bethel. It almost warrants us to see a direct time between Elisha and Jesus himself.

[14 : 04] And again we'll see some of that later on. Now look with me at this journey into Bethel. And we'll notice three things. First of all, the place that he's going to.

Verse 23, the opening part of it. And he went up from thence, that's from Jericho, unto Bethel. Secondly, what met him there?

And as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, who mocked him and said to him, Go up, thou baldhead, go up, thou baldhead.

And then thirdly, his response. Verse 24, he turned back, looked on them, cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tear 42 of them.

Now then, look first at the place where he is going to. And it's written that he went from thence unto Bethel.

[15 : 07] Bethel. What a fragrant name Bethel is. How outstanding a place Bethel has in the history of Israel. How full of spiritual significance that name is.

And how full of rich religious history is the name and the word Bethel. The word Bethel itself can be split up into Beth and El, which means house of God.

That's where Abraham pitched his tent when he came into the land of Canaan. He pitched it beside Bethel, having Bethel on the west and Ai on the east.

There, Abraham raised the first altar unto the Lord. And from that moment, it became associated with worship itself. When Jacob was fleeing his own family home, he had nothing but the clothes on his back and the staff on his hand.

And he was wondering if God had forsaken him. If God's promises meant anything anymore. Seeing as he was as desolate as he was. And he went to sleep in this place. And he had a dream of the ladder or the stairway.

[16 : 14] The stairway to heaven. Its bottom on the earth and its top in heaven and the Lord standing upon it. And he woke up and he said, the Lord is around me. The Lord is with me. I didn't know it.

But he's guiding me. He's everywhere I go. And he called the place Bethel. That's when it actually received that name. This is the house of God, he said.

And this is the gate of heaven. And from that day onwards, this place became important in the life of Israel. It had profound religious significance.

This is where their forefather was blessed. And when Israel returned from Egypt, he built an altar here unto the Lord.

When he returned, sorry, from Pidan Aram, he built an altar again at Bethel unto the Lord. There he praised him and there his goal. And he's about to enter Bethel.

[17 : 10] He's entering a different kind of place altogether. Bethel has changed. And it's changed through the years. Elisha is now face to face with the contemporary reality.

Bethel isn't really the house of God anymore. In fact, it's become the complete opposite. Bethel had become the center of the apostate worship of Jeroboam and the Israelites.

This is where they set up the rival worship of Jehovah. It looked a bit like the original and true worship of Jehovah, but it was a deviant form.

It had aspects of idolatry thrown into it and aspects of human wisdom. It was their own rules governing the priesthood. It was their own rules governing the worship.

It was their own rules governing the temple. And seeing as it was done that way, it gradually began to deteriorate more and more and more. Until in the days of Ahab and Jezebel, paganism came into it into a large measure.

[18 : 12] So that this became apostate and it became corrupted. And that, as I mentioned not too long ago, is the way it works with the worship of God. Once corrupted, it begins to backslide and to decline until paganistic values come into it.

Human wisdom, human thought, and then all the barriers are broken down and the thing becomes corrupted altogether. The only true safeguard against that is to worship precisely, exclusively, as God himself has commanded and outlined in his own word.

By the time of the later prophets, Bethel had become known as Beth-Avon. And that means house of vanity. What a stark contrast.

What a complete change. How have the mighty fallen? The house of God has suddenly become the house of vanity. And all it takes is one generation for that to be so.

One generation can destroy my family and destroy you. You can undo what your mother and father has done painstakingly with yourself over many years.

[19 : 23] By your own carelessness and your faithlessness in transmitting that to your own children. The Lord's work requires work. How often has that been brought home to us?

You think perhaps that your children will automatically imbibe what you yourself imbibed. And you leave them carelessly open and exposed to every kind of influence under the sun, thinking that they have what you have, until too late you realize that they don't.

Because you didn't take the time, and you didn't give it the endeavor. And they haven't grown up like yourself at all. You've lost them. And sometimes it's because, sometimes it's because, you haven't worked at it.

Bethel, Bethel, the house of God, in your forefathers, has suddenly become, in your children, the house of vanity. And it takes but one careless generation to effect that.

And how often you see it, in the institutions, and even in the churches, of our land. You look through the place names, take a map for yourself, look through the place names of Scotland.

[20 : 28] How many places have kirk in them, or have kill in them. How many places, in our own highlands, almost every place has some kind of association, with a church, or with God.

Because these places, were once characterized by that. This was what characterized them. When the people named them, that's what mattered to them. But you look in these places now.

In your folk kirk. Or in any other place. And what is the house of God there? Nothing. Nothing. If the people were going to name those cities today, I'll tell you, they would name them something else.

They would name them something else. Of course, the motto given to Glasgow, was let Glasgow flourish. By the preaching of the word of God, that is cut off. It is no let Glasgow flourish.

That is indicative of what would have happened. It is simply to get God out of it. Now that is what rules know. Put God out of the thing. Out of your cities. And what was once good, and beautiful, and wholesome, has now become ugly, vain, and empty.

[21 : 34] Walk through the cities, of our own nation. Edinburgh, full of spires, and full of churches. That looks so promising. And a visitor thinks it's promising. And then you go to these houses, and it's a bingo hall.

Or it's a place of amusement. Or it's a cinema. Or it's a dance hall. And what can you say? But that Beth-El, has just become Beth-Avon. That the house of God, has become the house of vanity.

And when that happens, the cup of God's wrath and fury, waits to be poured out, in such a place. Because, these changes can happen, very, very quickly.

And I ask you, what do you think, of our own heritage here, in these islands? Of your own heritage in Stornoway? Do you think, it's a fortress impregnable? Oh my friend, the worst thing to see, is complacency, in a church.

Or to think that, we've had this for 50, or a hundred years, we'll have it tomorrow, and we'll have it next year. Not so. Not so. All it takes, is the carelessness, of one generation, to transform it, from a house of God, into a house of vanity.

[22 : 47] And that is what, the word of God tells us. It's up to you, and it's up to me, to preserve, what the Lord himself, has given us. Now, inside Bethel, there was one, good thing.

And that was a small school, of faithful prophets, in that place. In spite of the persecutions, and in spite of the hostility, of the ruling classes, still, this school, was somehow preserved.

God himself, preserved it. And God, looked after it. And Elisha, is here coming, to visit it. And he's coming, to encourage it. Now, it's interesting, that, the Lord's people, will have a desire, to maintain the Lord's cause, wherever they are.

It's not a matter, of selling out anywhere. Wherever there is a foothold, the church of Christ, should seek, to advance in it. And that's what was done, here in Bethel.

Especially, especially, when it's a stronghold, or a prominent place, like Bethel. It wasn't just, written off, and they weren't told, leave Bethel. He went there, and visited there, and stayed there.

[24 : 02] And that is the attitude, that the Lord's people, should have, to bring the world, back into subjection, to the gospel. It's none of this, wringing hands, and saying that the whole thing, is hopeless and lost. What's the point of that?

What is the point of that? Have things not been low before? Were things not desperate before? Is that not a time, to urgently revive? What's weak? And to quicken it?

And to implore the Lord, to return? Well, that is what Elisha is doing. And he goes into the weakness, of this prophetic school, in Bethel, and he goes to exhort it, and he goes, to encourage it.

Now, what meets him there? What meets him there? Well, we're told, in verse 23, As he was going up by the way, there came forth little children, out of the city, who mocked him, and said, Go up, thou baldhead.

Now, first of all, I think it is one of the most unfortunate things, that this word here, has been translated, little children. It can mean that, but, it is a, clear, fact, that this word, in the Hebrew, is used to apply to adults, as well, to those who are, young, in adulthood.

[25 : 19] For example, this word is applied to Joseph, at the age of 17 years of age, when he was taken, from, Shechem, when he was taken, from his father's house, down to Egypt.

Then again, this word is applied to Jeremiah, when he was called, into the prophetic office. It's applied to Solomon, when he was 20 years of age.

And it's quite clear, from the whole context, that, you don't have little children, in this passage here, at all. What you have is, young men, those who are, in adulthood, and those who are going towards, the prime of their strength, and the prime of their days.

Those are the kind of people, brought before us, in this chapter. Now, we're not told how many there were of them. All we're told, is that 42 of them, died.

Now notice that. It's very often said, that there were 42, but what's actually said, is that the bears, tear 42 children, off them. It's very probable, that there were many more, than this number.

[26 : 27] There could even have been hundreds, for all we know. Who these youths were, we'll see just a little later on. But there were many of them, 42 were mauled, by these bears.

Secondly, the question, what were they doing? Well, we're told, that they were mocking, Elisha. They came forth, out of the city, and mocked them, and said, go up, you bald head.

Now, bald head, was just then, a term of abuse, just as it's still, sometimes used today, as a term, of abuse. A bald head, was meant to be a person, who was weak, or a person, who was insignificant, or a person, who was an outcast.

It was just used, off the cuff, or derogatory, in that way. You are a bald head. Up you go, you bald head. That is what the youths, were casting, in the teeth, of Elisha.

Now, the mockery, goes much deeper, than that. It is not just, a matter of calling someone, a bald head, and that is all. It goes deeper. How?

[27 : 38] Well, there are two ways, in which it goes more deeply. First of all, this. The word mocking, in the New Testament, is translated as, persecution.

This Hebrew word, in the Old Testament, has a Greek word, in the New Testament, which is translated, persecution. And that is precisely, what this, mocking is.

And I want especially, to draw your attention, to another incident, in the Old Testament. When Isaac, was being weaned. Whether that was, the first weaning, or the second weaning. Maybe he was around, five, six, seven years of age.

The second weaning. And Ishmael, his brother, began to mock him. Now, Ishmael himself, was 17 years of age, at that time. He was again, in adulthood.

That was considered, very much, into adulthood, amongst the Hebrews. And we're told, that he began to mock him. And that was so offensive, to Sarah, Abraham's wife, that she turned to Abraham, and she said, cast him out of the household.

[28 : 40] Now, why was it so offensive, to Sarah? Was it just a matter, of one boy, playfully, mocking another? No, it was not. It was deeper than that. It was a spiritual thing, or if you like, a non-spiritual thing.

What Ishmael, was doing, at 17 years of age, was mocking, the God of Isaac, and he was mocking, Isaac's religion. He was mocking, Isaac, because he was already, sharing the religion, of his father, and of his mother, Sarah.

Whereas, he was very much, in the religion, of his own mother, Hagar. That was his way, and he had well chosen it, by the age of 17. And he takes, the winning, and everything, that's associated with it, as his opportunity, to laugh, at his religion, and to laugh, at the religion, of his father.

He mocks it, and he persecutes him, as Paul tells us. He persecutes him. And that is precisely, how you should understand, the mocking, of Elisha, by the youth, here in this chapter.

They are laughing, at this man, and they are laughing, at this man's religion. They are laughing, at his religion. And that comes through, in another way. They are saying to him, go up, you bald head.

[29 : 52] Go up, you bald head. Now the word means, to ascend. And I have no doubt, that they're not saying to him, go up to Bethel, you bald head.

What they're saying to him is, ascend up into heaven, you bald head. In other words, we have heard, and they're in the arrogance, of their own youth. We have heard, of this supposed, great miracle, that your master, and your teacher, actually rose up, bodily, into heaven.

And not only that, but he's supposed to have done it, in a whirlwind, with a chariot of fire, accompanying him. Is that true? Of course it's not true. You go up, like him.

You show us, your power. You show us, the truth of these things. On you go, Elisha, you bald head. Ascend up, into heaven. Like your own master, and like your own teacher.

And when you understand it like that, you begin to see the depth, of the mockery, that is going on, of this man Elisha. This is the prophet of God. Here is God's anointed. And this is what is cast, in his teeth, by the youth, of this place, Bethel.

[31 : 06] Now, that tells us, something more. These youths, are not here, shall we say, spontaneously.

It didn't just happen, that they were all out walking, hundreds of them, one day, and they just met Elisha. That's very unreasonable. The fact of the matter, is that they know, who he is.

And not only that, but if you look at this, dispassionately, you have to understand, that they were expecting him. This is none other, than what you could call, a kind of welcoming committee, for the prophet of God.

It's not the welcome, that he would desire. I've no doubt, his heart is heavy, going up to Bethel. He remembers, its proud past, and he's about to confront, all that's bad in it.

Perhaps he expects, to meet the son of the prophet, to escort him, into the city. No. What he meets, is a rabble. But it's not really, a rabble. It is an organized rabble.

[32 : 04] It's an organized mob. And in fact, I am pretty convinced, for what it's worth myself, that these young people, actually belonged, to the rival school, of the prophets, that existed in Bethel.

That they belonged, to Jeroboam's religion. That these were the upholders, and the future priests, those who were training, and those who were learning, to be the upholders, of the pagan false religion, with all its immorality, and all its false ways.

These were the upholders, of it in Bethel. And they heard, that Elisha was coming, the leading representative, of the church of God, in the place. So they'll come out, and give him a reception.

And if he's going, to do anything in Bethel, well they see to it, that he won't. By this time, he's reached its gates, he'll be so discredited, and he'll be such, a laughing stock, that no one will listen to him, and that no one, will take him seriously.

And that, is what is going on, at the close, of this chapter in Bethel. And that's how you have, to understand it. Now we all know, what these organized campaigns, are like, against the church, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[33 : 12] We know, that there are people, still in the world, who like to do it. To bring up, the representatives, of the church, and to blacken, or malign them. Or take a congregation, or take a church, and say, see, look, this is what is true about it.

And the insult, is thrown. And the epithet, is thrown. And the character, is brought down. And the church of Christ, is made to look pathetic, in the eyes of people.

And the objective, is attained. How much, so called, journalism, passes for that, in the world today. I thought a journalist, would just tell me facts. But no, today's journalists, are master analysts.

They know the world, inside out. They'll not only tell you, what's happening, but they know, why it's happened. How it's happened. What everybody thought, and what's going to come of it. And that is how, they proceed, to tear the church of Christ, down, in the eyes of people.

It's the same thing, that's happening here. They shout out, and I've no doubt, that there are other witnesses. It's not just, the reception committee, that's gone out, to make this man, as nothing.

[34 : 16] I've no doubt, that there are other, representatives of the city. And here, they all are, shouting at them. Elisha, go up, ascend, you bald head, you weak, you insignificant man, ascend up into heaven, as your master did.

Go on, show us your power, show us the power of your gospel. And in that way, they mock him, and they try to bring him, to nothing. Now, of course, all that is just, an attempt, to ridicule, his God.

It is an attempt, to ridicule, his God. That is what it is. Those who hurt his people, attack the apple of his eye.

And that is, right at the heart, of the eye. To hurt the people of God, is to attack God himself. And that is how the Lord, takes this, and how the Lord, responds to it.

He loves Elisha. Even if he looks, like somebody, that's not perhaps, as powerful, as his predecessor, he loves him. And he will defend him, because he is, his own anointed, at this time, and in this situation.

[35 : 25] Now, my friends, and especially, young friends, I warn you, against sitting, in this corner's chair. Sit anywhere you like, before you sit, in that chair.

Because that is the chair, next to hell itself. The chair of, the scorner. Blessed is the man, that walketh not astray, in counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinner's way, nor sitteth, in the scorner's chair.

Have you ever noticed, the progression in that? It's not just, a poetic progression, there is a spiritual, progression in it. First of all, walking, in the way of the ungodly.

Further than that, standing, in the way of sinners. Last of all, sitting, in the chair, of the scorner. Now, you know yourself, that somebody who sits, is as it were, immovable.

Or he's in his place. He's sitting there. While he's walking, in the way, that's one thing. But standing, in it is another. But then he sits, in the chair, of the scorner.

[36 : 37] Now my friend, if you're in the chair, of the scorner, and I mean this, you're in the most dangerous place, that your soul, could possibly, be in. And what does the chair, of the scorner mean?

Well, it means just, that there's a certain, coarseness in your life, in dealing with the things of God. There's a flippancy, and a carelessness, about the very way, that you speak about God, and that you speak, about the church.

You mock him. You make light of him. You make light of his name. You use it irreverently, and you delight, in using it irreverently. And if there's someone, even around, who shows that he's maybe, sensitive to the things of God, you take particular delight, in showing just how you, can blaspheme that name.

Or just how easily, you can put it into the dust, and trample upon it. Very well, you are sitting, in the scorner's chair, by behaving like that. You blaspheme, and you blaspheme easily.

And not only that, but you mock, the people of God. You mock his prophets. You mock his ministers. You deride them. You deride the way they look, or you deride the way they speak. You bring them into the dust, or you bring them into the gutter, and you delight in doing that.

[37 : 47] It's your delight. You like to make the church, look objectionable, in the eyes of people. And you deride his works, the works of God. Where are his works?

In the Bible. His sandy works. They're declared for us here. All the miracles he has done. You poo-poo that, and you rubbish it. And you don't believe a word of it.

Perhaps you spend your strength, for all I know, trying to disprove these things, and laughing at them, and laughing at them in public. You're sitting, in the scorner's chair. It would be one thing for you, some kind of saving grace.

I speak loosely, in that respect, if you restrain yourself from that. Or if you sat back and said, well, I don't understand it, but I'm not going to mock it. But no, not you. You'll make it as cheap as you can, and you'll laugh at it, as much as you can.

You're in the scorner's chair. Before I came out to church, I looked up the word scorner, in the book of Proverbs, because I knew that the word scorner, was often mentioned, in the book of Proverbs.

[38 : 48] And it is. You can look it up, in the concordance, yourselves, if you have one. Look up the word scorner. Everything that's said about the scorner is so negative. And the one thing that struck me, in all these texts, was this, that the people of God, were told, not to bother, rebuking a scorner.

Does that not terrify you? If not, perhaps you're too far gone already. Perhaps you're too far gone already. If it's your business, especially young man, and young woman, you who are still in school, to mock these things, and to profane them.

And if you don't care about, what I'm telling you, just now at all, if you don't care about it, then that might be, a sad indicator, that you are so far down this road, that it's a waste of time, for you to be rebuked at all.

All these texts, seem to say, not to waste your time, in rebuking a scorner. Because he's in the chair, next to the door of hell. It's one thing to neglect, it's another thing to abstain, it's yet another, altogether, to scorn.

And these people, were scorning God's work, when they were saying, ascend Elisha. They were mocking the ascension. Perhaps you mock, the resurrection of Christ. You mock that he ever, rose from the dead, or ascended into heaven.

[40 : 10] You make fun, of the way in which, Christ was taken from the earth, into the celestial presence of God. And you ask, silly scientific questions, about how it was possible, for his body to do that.

That is mockery, mockery, mockery. And as I said, that brings down, the judgment of God, in a serious way, as we'll see in a moment.

Now what was Elisha's response? Well in verse 24, he turned back, and he looked on them, and he cursed them, in the name of the Lord.

It seems as though, this crowd, swiveled round behind him, a large number of them, and there's no doubt, that they were a threatening mob. You know how threatening, a mob can be, when mob rule prevails.

Here they are, tens, perhaps hundreds of them. And they're coming up, behind him, and closing in on the man of God, insulting, and jeering at him. And perhaps he fears, for his life.

[41 : 11] Or does he fear, for his life? He turns round, and his eyes flash like steel. And if they thought, he was a soft touch, compared to Elijah, they were wrong. He looks at them, and he seems to look, for a while, perhaps before he speaks, but when he opens his mouth, he curses them.

And he doesn't curse them, out of his own, personal vengeance, or personal vendetta. He curses them, we are told, in the name, or by the authority, of God. He pronounces them, dead, spiritually dead.

He pronounces them, under the curse of God. And he pronounces them, as under imminent, threat of judgment. And when that word, comes forth, from the mouth, of the prophet, out of the woods, nearby, there come two, she bears.

Now the she bears, or the female bears, were more, more voracious, voracious, and more ferocious, than the male. And they come out, seemingly angry.

And they break into, this company, of young prophets, outside, the gates, or outside, the walls of the city. And God, sets them, loose, in this company, of young, mocking, irreverent, irreligious people.

[42 : 30] And, they destroy, 42 of them. In an act, of fearful judgment, they are cut down. And the Lord, displays there, his power, and his glory.

42 young men, because of their, irreverence, and their, irreligion. Now you know, as well as I do, that amongst, young people, irreverence, is growing.

And irreligion, and mockery. It's in the music, you listen to. The popular music, of today, is more and more, full of words, and of music, which fly, in the face, of the truth of God.

Bringing God down, bringing Jesus, of Nazareth, down, not only, to the level, of a man, but even below that. You're listening, to that. You listen, to that.

And you think, it's okay. You think, you have a special license, because you're young. You think, when you're young, things don't really matter. These died young. 17, 19, 20, they died.

[43 : 41] And they died, under the judgment, of God. And you can die, just like that, yourself. The day will come, when God will say, of you, you mocker, that it is enough.

God is not, mocked, for whatsoever, a man soweth, that, shall he also reap. And the scorn, it is in the dangerous position, whether he's young, or old.

And if you are mocking, and irreverent, whatever your age, you are in the most serious, condition, imaginable, as far as your soul goes. And here, they are torn down, by the two bears.

Suddenly, there is a death, a stillness. There's not much said. And Elijah, or Elisha, turns his way solemnly, and makes his way, into Bethel.

And now they know, that a prophet, of the Lord, is among them. Now, I want you to notice, some things, just in the closing. First of all, perhaps you say, well, this kind of judgment, is unusual.

[44 : 46] Well, in a sense it is. But it would be, the norm, were it not, that God himself, is merciful. Why do you live? Why do you draw birth? Oh sinner, you who are not reconciled to God, why do you still have your life?

Because God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. That is why, you live. If God was just to enact, his justice there, and then upon you, we would all be cut down, and we would all have been cut down, a long time ago.

But the day shall surely come, when the sinner shall perish. And when they shall perish, irretrievably, irrevocably, lost, utterly lost, and undone.

And this incident is also a reminder, and we need them knowing again, that God is not asleep. And just when the world thinks, it can do what it likes, God rises himself, as a mighty man of war, and God comes down, and breaks forth in the world.

And just when the world thinks, it's had its day, God works in a particular way. God is not mocked. Don't go to the brink, lest you find yourself in a place, where you cannot come back.

[46 : 01] And then again, there's this, God is establishing, his own prophet. And God has his ways, of establishing his own people, of certifying who they are, and especially those, who are proclaiming the truth.

Oh, he said already, that perhaps Elisha, might not have been as formidable, as Elijah. Maybe, he was, even for one thing, bold, as his predecessor was not.

And that by many people, was looked down upon. Is Elisha, not to be listened to, because he looks weaker? Or perhaps, he has a softer voice.

Perhaps he looks more meek. Is he just to be abused? No, he's not. Meekness, is not weakness. And the Lord saw to it, that he defended his own prophet, and that he stood up for him.

God will protect his own people. And it's remarkable to see, even sometimes, in a place, like school, where he has his own Christians, young, and sometimes they look, perhaps, to be insignificant, in the place, or perhaps, easily put down upon.

[47 : 07] He has his ways, of vindicating them. And he has his ways, of standing by them, so that bystanders, see if they're honest, that the Lord's blessing, and the Lord's mercy, is upon them.

He never leaves, his own people, without strength, and he never leaves himself, without a witness. And Elisha shows here, the severity, of the Lord, as well, as his goodness.

And last of all, my friends, this reminds us, that salvation, has its dark side. It has its dark side. Elisha means, God is salvation, but nothing has changed, with respect, to the judgment of God.

Is that not so? Jesus of Nazareth, was the one, who spoke of hell. And he was the one, who spoke, of lostness, and of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

He was the one, who cast, the money changers, out of the temple. The gospel, is like that. There's a lot of people, who like to dwell, on gentle Jesus, as they say.

[48 : 10] And they like to think, of him, as meek, and mild. Meek he was, mild he appears to me, not to have been. He is meek. But there he stands, before you, as a judge, and a saviour.

Is he compassionate, and merciful, in the gospel? He is. And he is preeminently, the preacher, of the good news, of the gospel. But is he, with reverence, is he easy, to be won over?

Can he be fooled, and can he be deceived? Can you make play, of his mercy, and his kindness? No, he cannot. Look at him, on the throne, with a sharp, two-edged sword, proceeding out of his mouth, and he will wield it.

The gospel sword, has two sides, it cuts both ways. It will save, and it will destroy. Make no mistake, kiss the sun, lest in his wrath, you perish from the way.

If once his wrath, begin to burn, blessed all, that on him stay. Let us pray. Our gracious God, we pray that they would keep us, from the chair of this corner, and enable us, to have respect, and reverence, to the things of God.

[49 : 19] We ask thee, to restrain us, by thy grace, and give us that heart, that will seek thyself, and that will seek, the mercy of God, and Christ, that our souls, might be saved, and that we might know, the joy unspeakable, and full of glory, for Christ's sake.

Amen.