

OUR LEGACY IN CHRIST

2 Kings 13:14-25

Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, "O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!" And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and some arrows." So he took himself a bow and some arrows. Then he said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on the bow." So he put his hand on it, and Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. And he said, "Open the east window"; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot"; and he shot. And he said, "The arrow of the Lord's deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for you must strike the Syrians at Aphek till you have destroyed them." Then he said, "Take the arrows"; so he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground"; so he struck three times, and stopped. And the man of God was angry with him, and said, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times."

Then Elisha died, and they buried him. And the raiding bands from Moab invaded the land in the spring of the year. So it was, as they were burying a man, that suddenly they spied a band of raiders; and they put the man in the tomb of Elisha; and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet.

And Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. But the Lord was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not yet destroy them or cast them from His presence. Now Hazael king of Syria died. Then Ben-Hadad his son reigned in his place. And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz recaptured from the hand of Ben-Hadad, the son of Hazael, the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times Joash defeated him and recaptured the cities of Israel.

This passage of Scripture tells of the deathbed story of Elisha, the prophet, or as prophets were also referred to in the Old Testament times, he was a "man of God". There are three stories here in this passage of Scripture. The life and death and the legacy of Elisha, the life and legacy of King Joash of Israel, and then the meeting of the two legacys in the midst of this story. The overall purpose of this message for us though, is going to be in considering our own legacy. A legacy is whatever we may pass down to others once we pass on to the other side of this lifetime. That means that it isn't in just wealth and worldly treasures that are passed on. Also, to go along with that, is the fact that we are not put on this earth and

left here just to get us saved, as important as that is. With the recent passing away of my dad, I know God has been speaking to me about his legacy and then my own legacy. So this message is to me but it is also to all of us. As I said before, in our passage of Scripture we have two legacys to look at. One is of Elisha and the other is on Joash, the king of Israel. The first story within our passage of Scripture then is of Elisha when he was on his deathbed and he was visited by the King of Israel, Joash. Another form of his name that he is referred to is Jehoash. Both forms of Yoash or Yehoash means either Yahweh bestowed (or has given) or the other meaning can be Yahweh is strong. Both really, speak of the sovereignty of God, how God IS in control AND in charge of the affairs of mankind, and so in regarding God and in honoring Him as God Almighty, the creator of all things, we can find God bestowing upon us His favor and being strong for us, or it will seem as though we are fighting against God, and not receiving His favor and strength. But in all things regarding OUR legacy we can be reminded of what the Apostle Paul spoke to the Galatians, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." (**Galatians 6:9-10**) We are not seeking the same type of legacy that the folks of the world do. We're not trying to make a name for ourselves so that we can have our name in print in the news or in history books. We are not establishing our kingdom so that 1000 years from now someone will say, "oh this pile of rubble was put here by so and so." We are not seeking to make a name for OURSELVES by our achievements. We are to be allowing God to work in us HIS Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption so that those who glory, glory in the Lord. (**1 Corinthians 1:30-31**) Just as Jesus said, "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (**Matthew 5:16**)

As a side note to this message, as I mentioned already, my earthly father, my dad, passed away this past Thursday. In reflecting upon my dad and our time together, which now seems ever so briefly, it came to me what my dad most instilled in me in what one could call "life's lessons." It was this: my dad, throughout my growing up and even in adulthood, always impressed upon me that there is no easy path to success. There are no shortcuts. That can be a philosophy of the world but it is also a key principle of the Christian faith. As we looked at in the Scriptures last week the Apostle Paul said, "we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (**Romans 5:3-5**) The main thing that is free, that we all must grab hold of is, although "the wages of sin is death", the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (**Romans 6:23**) But even that comes at a

cost to us. We are essentially giving up our lives for His, that is, for the life that is in Christ Jesus. Therefore we are now, as followers of Christ, as children of God to "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (**1 John 3:1-3**) Yet as I mentioned earlier, WE can't purify ourselves on our own. As Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." (**John 15:5**) While I didn't appreciate my dad's words when I was younger, especially through my period of youth where I thought it was my destiny to be a professional baseball player, whether I practiced or not, it eventually took hold of me that what my dad was showing me and telling me and being an example of was that character matters. Speaking of a character that matters, in a book called just that, Character Matters (by Mark Rutland), the author talks of one of the most important elements to one's success is loyalty. "Loyalty is a willingness, because of relational commitment, to deflect praise, admiration and success onto another. This loyalty may well be at great personal expense, but it will edify and bless its object." Most specifically when we deflect praise to ourselves we point to Christ.

Susie told me that she was recently questioned by someone, that every time they thanked her she said, to thank God (as she knows, every good and perfect gift is from above-**James 1:17**). And once again, "he (she) who glories, let him (or her) glory in the Lord" (**1 Corinthians 1:31**) The author goes on to say, "Loyalty never usurps authority. It refuses to accept inappropriate love or praise that might properly exalt another. Loyalty is the glue that holds relationships together, makes families functional and armies victorious. Loyalty is the fabric of society." For us that loyalty is being called upon by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are being told to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (**Proverbs 3:5-6**) After all, this is God's making, and His purpose. He alone knows of what He intends to accomplish overall as well as within each of our lives. It is also a reminder to us that, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (**2 Peter 3:9**) We should always have the hope within us to not only want to honor God and have Him glorified in our lives but also for those around us, those God has placed in our paths. With my Dad, He was one of my biggest cheerleaders, or source of encouragement. He loved hearing about what God was doing in our lives and in our ministry. My dad endured to the

end and I know, if it were possible he would be still cheering us on to finish in Christ, and of what He (God) has already started. As I said the other night, "if you can hear me Dad, save me a seat at the table."

While we have in our passage of Scripture today a Joash who was the king of Israel, there was also the good king of Judah named Joash who, for a period of time, reigned at the same time as Joash, the king of Israel (yeah, sometimes it gets confusing with the same names of the rulers-for instance there were kings of Judah AND Israel named Ahaziah, Jehoram, Jehoahaz, and Jehoash or Joash. There was also a prophet named Jehu and then there was a king named Jehu. There were two Jeroboams who we refer to as Jereboam I and Jeroboam II) It was said of the good king Joash, "Jehoash did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days in which Jehoiada (Jeh-hoi-uh-duh) the priest instructed him." (**2 Kings 12:2**) Why does it say it like that? After Jehoiada died, Joash got on the wrong track. He did wonderful things for Judah while Jehoiada was around, getting Judah back into serving and honoring God instead of false idols. Unfortunately his legacy was marred by the fact that once Jehoiada the priest died, Joash started listening to the leaders of Judah and so Judah went back to the false gods. Joash, king of Judah, was told by the prophet Zechariah, "Thus says God: 'Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He also has forsaken you.'" (**2 Chronicles 24:20**) What did Joash, the king of Judah do? He had Zechariah stoned to death. His legacy, although as good of a leader as he was through most of his reign, in his final days he turned against God and had his prophet killed. A side note to this is that later on there was also a king of Israel named Zechariah, who was the son of Jereboam II, and he is said to have been evil and he was killed six months into his reign.

Jesus even referred to the stoning of Zechariah as being one of the prophets of God that was martyred. Zechariah was actually the son of Jehoiada, the priest who had raised and mentored Joash. In all the good that Joash did in his lifetime he was referred to by Jesus as being one who killed one of the prophets of God. What a sad legacy he left behind him. We cannot assume or know whether Joash, king of Judah went to heaven or to hell but just as it is with all of us, we will all one day stand before God and be judged according to our works. We know though, we are not SAVED by works, we are saved by the grace and goodness of God. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (**Ephesians 2:8-9**) Also, it is the "goodness of God that leads [us] to repentance." (**Romans 2:4**) Yet we also don't want it said to us by Jesus, as it says in **Titus 1:16**, "They profess to know Me (God), but in works they deny Me (Him), being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work."

As the stories in our passage of Scripture reveal to us, the test that comes to each and every one of us is, will we be faithful to the end for the ultimate purpose and glory of God. There is but one way we can overcome the world. "Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:5) Jesus also assures us, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16-17) Then as the Apostle John tells us, in tying the believing in Christ and of how Jesus said we must be born again, that is, born of the Holy Spirit, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12-13) When we receive Christ into our hearts, it is then that we CAN experience "the love of God [that] has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." It doesn't always make life easy but in CHRIST we will overcome the world! Will we remain faithful to the end? What will be our lasting legacy? That really is in how God is glorified in our lives, not just in being saved but in the giving of Christ to others, the sharing of the love and gospel of Jesus Christ.

Joash, the king of Israel, went to visit the sick and dying Elisha the prophet. Even on his deathbed though Elisha is still being faithful to God. In fact his legacy, we find, from the reading of the Scripture, went way past his death. When another dead body was put on top of his dead body in the grave, that dead body came back to life. Now that's a legacy! But the same really applies to us, yet not in such an over-the-top way perhaps but still our legacy hopefully is going to continue to honor God and glorify God. Just as I shared about my dad, I don't think about the struggles we had as father and son. I think of the positive way in which he was pointing me in direction of godly character and in bearing fruit in Christ. I'm not saying my dad was perfect or that he was the express image of Christ but the legacy he left to me, in his character, is one that will always encourage me towards God in Jesus Christ. I was told that some of his last words were that he was ready and wanting to be with God. Now that is a legacy worth leaving behind. Praise the Lord!

One more thing I want to say about Elisha before we get to the other Joash, that is the King Joash we have in our story today is that Elisha was appointed by God to follow in the same calling as Elijah the great prophet of God. What is interesting in Elisha following in the anointing of Elijah is that Elijah had a servant under him that Elijah was mentoring. But God did not choose him. Elisha had someone

under him that he was mentoring and long story short, he lied to Elisha (which in lying to God's prophet you were lying to God) and he ended up with leprosy. One last thing to mention is that when Elijah knew God was about to take him out of this world, Elisha asked for a double portion of the anointing that Elijah had. Now that is a bold request! Elijah, considered to be one of the greatest of prophets, and Elisha asked for a double portion. Yet when we get it in our understanding and have it dwell in our hearts and it becomes your sole ambition to what Jesus said, "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples" (John 15:8), then it makes perfect sense to ask God for a double portion or more. It is especially poignant to ask for more of God to work in you as, once again Jesus said, "he who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." Likewise Jesus said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13) With the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, are we to just try and muddle by until we get to the finish line, until Jesus takes us home? No Lord Jesus, may we be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit that You may be praised and glorified!

Joash, king of Israel was told by Elisha to take up his bow and shoot an arrow. Then he was to strike the ground with the arrows. The commentaries I read on this account spoke of how in the times of the prophets or what were called seers, was similar to the casting of lots that they still did in the times of Jesus. Joash was told to shoot an arrow out the window and by that it could be assumed that God was showing Elisha, maybe based on the direction of the arrow, its distance, who knows but it had a significance beyond what the author of this story reveals. Same thing with the striking of the arrows on the ground. I always thought it was incredible that Joash struck the ground three times. If someone were to tell me to strike the ground with an arrow I'd do it once and then look at them for their reaction. Yet Joash did it three times. It can only be assumed then that there was some understanding between Elisha and Joash that the number of strikes represented different things. Joash may have been trying to play it safe by not striking the ground too many times in case the more he did it the worse the outcome would be. The reason we can assume this understanding is the reaction of Elisha. It says that Elisha was angry with him that he only did it three times. This Joash was not like the King Joash of Judah though. Scripture does not say that he was ever a good king. In fact it says of him, "And he did evil in the sight of the Lord. He did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, but walked in them." (2 Kings 13:11) THAT, was his legacy. In fact, the story we have of him in our passage of Scripture for today comes right after it tells of his legacy and death. This story then is a parenthetical case in point of the lack of faith in God that Joash had in his reign and

lifetime. It could be said that this story of Joash and his legacy is the antithesis or complete contrast to the legacy of Elisha.

What could be assumed by reading this story is that Joash actually had a pretty good run at being king to where he defeated King Hazael's Syrian army three times. But just before the summary of telling us that Joash was victorious those three times, it says this, "But the Lord was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not yet destroy them or cast them from His presence." King Joash had nothing to do with the three successful victories over the Syrians. God granted Israel victory in spite of Joash. The legacy that we want to leave behind, in light of our passage of Scripture today is one of trusting God, honoring God, and blessing God by having us bear fruit for His glory. The one in our story, Joash, or Jehoash who was named as having the gift and strength of God bestowed upon him turned out to be the opposite of what God intended with His leader. Elisha on the other hand means God is salvation. Our two examples of a good legacy and a bad legacy is right before us. Our life isn't intended to be easy, just blessed and when we are blessed we bless God and we bless others. We're not in a competition with one another we are called to be a blessing to each other. We are being called to aspire to be like Christ. As Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." (John 15:11-14) I want to lay down my life for Jesus, as He laid down His life for me. I want Jesus to be my friend. That is what I aspire to as a legacy. How about you?

Heavenly Father,
I confess that I have sinned against You.
I ask that You forgive me of my sins.
I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sins,
I confess with my mouth that Jesus is my Lord,
and I believe in my heart that You raised Jesus from the dead,
so that I can have forgiveness of sins,
and be reconciled to You, God, My Father.
I now commit to You, that I will repent of my sins,
and live in the newness of life,
being led by Your Holy Spirit,
all this I pray, in Christ Jesus,
my Savior and Lord. Thank You Lord!

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." (Matthew 6:9-13)