

The Problem of Blindness

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Preacher: Cory Brock

[0 : 00] Read from Scripture tonight. We are reading in 2 Kings chapter 6.

2 Kings chapter 6 verses 1 to 23. Now, the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, see the place where we dwell under your charge is too small for us.

Let us go to the Jordan and each of us get there a log, and let us make a place for us to dwell there.

And he answered, Go. Then one of them said, Be pleased to go with your servants.

And he answered, I will go. So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. But as one was felling a log, his axe head fell into the water, and he cried out, Alas, my master, it was borrowed.

And the man of God said, Where did it fall? When he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw it in there and made the iron float. And he said, Take it up. So he reached out his hand and took it.

[1 : 12] Once when the king of Syria was warring against Israel, he took counsel with a servant saying, At such and such a place shall be my camp. But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel.

Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are going down there. And the king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God told him. Thus he used to warn him so that he saved himself there more than once or twice.

And the mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled because of this thing. And he called his servants and said to them, Will you not show me who of us is for the king of Israel?

And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king. But Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom. And he said, Go and see where he is, that I may send and seize him.

It was told him, Behold, he is in Dothan. So he sent their horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city. When the servants of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, Behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city.

[2 : 23] And the servants said, Alas, my master, what shall we do? He said, Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.

Then Elisha prayed and said, O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see. So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

And when the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed to the Lord and said, Please strike these people with blindness. So he struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha.

And Elisha said to them, This is not the way, and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek. And he led them to Samaria. As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, O Lord, open the eyes of these men that they may see.

So the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw, and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. As soon as the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, My father, shall I strike them down?

[3 : 27] Shall I strike them down? He answered, He shall not strike them down. Would you strike down those whom you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water before them that they may eat and drink and go to their master.

So he prepared for them a great feast, and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master, and the Syrians did not come again on raids into the land of Israel. Amen, this is God's holy word. We're finishing our series tonight called The Gospel according to Elisha and Elisha.

And if you've been around at all, and even if you haven't, the biggest thing that we've been trying to say every single week is that there is a very big connection, very important connection, between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

A very specific connection between Elisha and Elijah in their ministry in the Old Testament and John the Baptist in Jesus Christ in the New Testament. There's a deep connection, one that God ordained, a pattern.

[4 : 27] And you can see that in several ways. When you look at, weeks ago we looked at the transition from Elijah to Elisha, from one prophet to the next prophet, and there's this theme of succession that God sends His Holy Spirit upon Elijah, and then when Elisha comes along, God sends His Holy Spirit upon Elisha.

And we're told that Elisha had a double portion of the Holy Spirit. And if you count up all the miraculous deeds that Elisha does, he did 14 miraculous deeds, some count as many as 16, depending on how you count them.

And Elijah did eight, so almost double, if not double, and he had a double portion of the Spirit. In chapter 6 verse 1 that Simon just read for us, it says that Elisha had sons of prophets.

In other words, it's saying Elisha actually had disciples. So Elijah had a few, but very consistently in Elisha's ministry, there's a following around Elisha. He has disciples. He's got the sons of the prophets.

That's a way of saying disciples that followed him. And then you look at the New Testament, and you see Elijah and John the Baptist.

[5 : 36] And when the angel of the Lord comes to announce the birth of John the Baptist, the pregnancy of Elizabeth, he says, John the Baptist, this baby that you're about to have is going to come in the spirit and power of Elijah.

So at the very beginning, before John the Baptist is ever born, there's a real connection between Elijah and John the Baptist. And then we read in Malachi, one of the prophets, chapter 4 verses 5 and 6, one day before the day of the Lord comes, Elijah will come again.

And there it is, Luke 1.17 and John the Baptist. Elijah comes again, this forerunner of the Messiah that announces the way of the Lord. And if you read the stories really carefully, you'll see, you know, Elijah was a man of the wilderness.

He lived many years away from society, eating food that God brought him in the wilderness. John the Baptist, many years in the wilderness, eating the food that God provides for him away from society.

And then when you get to Jesus, you know, Elijah, Elijah passes his role as prophet to Elisha Howe.

[6 : 42] Elisha crosses the Jordan River, he crosses over the Jordan River through the water, and then the spirit falls upon him. And when the new Elijah, John the Baptist encounters Jesus Christ for the first time, what does he do?

Jesus goes down into the Jordan River. He goes down under the waters of the Jordan River in his baptism, and when he comes up, what happens? The spirit falls upon him. And you see this deep connection between Elisha, Elijah, and John the Baptist, and Elisha, and Jesus Christ.

Bruce Waltke, one New Testament scholar, he says that when you look at even the miraculous deeds performed across these prophets and then by Jesus, this is what he writes, he says, both Elisha and Jesus, quote, cleanse lepers, I won't read you all the passage references because that would take us too long.

Cleanse lepers heal the sick, defy gravity, reverse death by raising sons and restoring them to their mothers. They both help widows in desperate circumstances.

They are both kinsmen redeemers to save people from slavery. They both feed the hungry. They both minister to the Gentiles. They both prepare and sit at the table with sinners.

[7 : 56] They both lead captives. They both have a covetous, treacherous disciple. Elisha had Gihazi and Jesus Christ Judas, and both in their lives in a life-giving tomb from which people run away.

There's a deep connection. Yet, Elisha dies and his bones are buried in Israel. And Jesus Christ dies and lives again. Elisha was just a man anointed by the Spirit.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God anointed by the Spirit. Elisha's ministry ultimately ends in failure. Jesus Christ's ministry ultimately succeeds.

Jesus Christ, the point of the series, Jesus Christ is the new and better Elisha, meaning that the Old Testament is ultimately all about Jesus. That's what we've been learning throughout the series. And so when you read 2 Kings 6 and you have that in mind, the thing that we've been talking about, one of the things you can do is learn more about the gospel. You can go to the Old Testament and learn about the gospel in the New Testament.

[9 : 01] And in the passage we just read, we really just get one new image, one new way of understanding the gospel through the story of Elisha and Elisha. And that's the problem of human blindness.

It's the problem of sight. It's the problem of spiritual blindness. And so that's what we're going to see. Let's think about that together. We learn here about the problem of spiritual blindness, about the grace that all of us need in the light of that and how to live in the spirit-filled life.

So the problem of spiritual blindness. Now in verse 8, the second half of the passage, the king of Syria is at war with Israel, the northern part of the country.

And what's happening is that the king of Syria keeps taking part of his army and going down into Israel, Samaria area. And he keeps attacking, he keeps trying to attack little bitty places across Samaria.

And every single time the king of Israel knows about it, every single time the king of Israel has already maneuvered in the right way. So they're playing a game of chess and the king of Syria keeps losing.

[10 : 13] And so in verse 11, he brings all of his advisors in his court together and says, how in the world is it that the king of Israel is able to move his men every single time the night before I attack?

And he says, which one of you guys in this room are telling the Israelites all of my moves? And they say, none of us are doing that.

And instead, they say, Elisha knows everything you're going to do before you ever do it. And the reason we're told in the passage is because Elisha has the power, the spirit.

So God has given Elisha the spirit and power knowledge of everything that the king of Syria is doing. And there's a bit of humor here. They take it so far. They say, Elisha knows every single word that you say in your bedroom.

That's what they say. And every word you say in your private chambers, Elisha knows about it. And that's why we can't do anything to the people of Israel.

[11 : 14] They keep thwarting us at every single turn. And so naturally, the king of Syria says, we've got to kill that guy. And so the king of Syria takes his men and he goes down to the city of Dothan where Elisha is living and staying there in a tent.

And it's the early morning. Elisha wakes up. He comes out of his tent. It's breakfast time. And they're surrounding the entire city is the king of Syria and his whole army.

And it's Elisha and it's Elisha's servant, one of his followers with him. And immediately the servant says, we are done for. We've got no chance.

The entire army of Syria has surrounded us because they're coming to kill you. And that's when we see something very powerful happen. Elisha then prays down in verse 16 and 17, Lord, he says, Lord, open the eyes of my friend here that he could see what I see.

And the Lord opens the eyes of Elisha's follower, his friend. And all of a sudden it says that he sees a myriad of angelic hosts. He sees a holy army, God's army, the supernatural army.

[12 : 30] People to the regular natural eye standing there. And he says, you don't have to be afraid. Right now we are surrounded by the host of the Lord.

And that means that though Elisha's servant is an Israelite, though he's part of the covenant people of God, he is blind to the supernatural.

He doesn't have the eyes to see what Elisha can see. You see, the man that's been anointed by the Holy Spirit can see something that the man next to him cannot see.

And it's the reality of the supernatural. And right after that, the men of Syria do attack Elisha. They do try to attack the city. And Elisha prays again and he says, Lord, will you strike that army with blindness?

And immediately the army goes blind. And in fact, it goes so far as Elisha says, you're looking for the wrong guy. Let me lead you elsewhere. We'll come back to that in just a second.

[13 : 31] They go blind to. Now look, what's the point? The point is this. The Israelite man, Elisha's follower and servant, he is blind to the things of the Lord.

He can't see. He doesn't have supernatural sight. He doesn't have the vision. He's got spiritual blindness. And then immediately the soldiers of Syria are struck with blindness, very physical, physically struck.

They can't see. And in both these cases, what we have is real history where something physical, physical blindness is pointing in the passage to a spiritual reality.

And this happens all throughout the Bible, that real history, real events in the Old Testament because God is the author of the Old Testament is pointing to spiritual realities that are deeper and greater than the physical.

And when you see blindness on the Israelite side and blindness on the Syrian side, the message is everybody's blind. Everybody's spiritually blind. Nobody can see.

[14 : 34] Nobody can see the supernatural. Nobody can really see what's going on. They're blind. Whether you're an Israelite or you're a Gentile, it's saying you have a problem and that problem is deep spiritual blindness.

Now that's the condition of the human heart. And there are several ways I think this passage pulls out for us our spiritual blindness. One is the young man.

He can't see the army of the Lord all around him. We are modern people. And because we're modern people, every single one of us naturally by conditioning them by culture, we're empiricists. We go out into the world and though even as Christians, we confess that we believe in the supernatural. We actually really struggle to believe in the supernatural. And we can't see with spiritual eyes the reality of the invisible world all around us.

This gives me the opportunity to bring up my favorite missionary biography. When I was in America, I found out when I moved here that I mispronounced his name for years and years.

[15 : 39] John Patton, I always said, and now I know it's John Payton. John Payton, the missionary from Glasgow, Scottish missionary. John Payton, he was sent from Scotland in the 19th century to the New Hebrides.

And you can read his wonderful biography of his journey there. And he was in the South Pacific. And when he got there, he and his family were attacked one night by some of the indigenous peoples in the South Pacific.

And they were inside their home and they were deadly afraid because they knew that there were men outside trying to kill them. And he writes that they feared at least their house being burned to the ground.

And if not more than actually being killed by the sword. Nothing ever happened. They slept that night. They woke up the next day. They were okay. No one was there.

And a year later, Payton writes that the chief of one of the indigenous tribes in the area came to faith in Jesus about a year later. And they sat down and that chief told him, it was me and my men that came for you that night.

[16 : 46] And that night when we came for you, we wanted to kill you. And we were stopped because when we came to your house, we saw all these men and shined, quote, he says, shining garments, carrying swords.

Now as modern people, we read about that and you say, you know, I don't know because we're empiricists. And one of the things this passage tells us is that by our condition, we are blind. We're blind. We're spiritually blind. And that means we're blind to the reality of the supernatural. Do you believe in the invisible realm? It's as real as the visible. It's as real as the natural.

That's what the Bible teaches. The second way I think this passage tells us we're blind is we're blind also to all the things that God is doing in the world at any given time. Right?

So this servant, he just cannot see what God is up to in this moment. And Elisha prays for him and he gets the eyes to see. And because of our condition and because of our finitude, it's important that we all recognize tonight that we are blind and we must be.

[17 : 53] We're just humans. We're blind to all the myriad of ways that God is working at any given moment in any given situation, that there are thousands of ways God is at work.

Billions, billions, trillions, we heard about the galaxies tonight. Billions and trillions of ways that God is at work in every moment that we can never see, that we can never know. You might be going through the darkest time and you don't know.

You don't know all that God's doing. But what we're told here is that God is doing something. He's doing so much. And sometimes it takes years and years and years until you can look back and say,

this was the hardest moment of my life.

But now I look back and say, I can see the traces, the patterns of what God must have been doing in my life. The suffering that came to me, I now see what it did for me.

It changed me forever. God is doing so much and we can't see it, not with our human eyes and our blind eyes. And then the third thing, and this is the most important, the passage I think is really emphasizing more than anything, that because of our moral condition, because we are lost and our sins and trespasses, Ephesians 4, Paul puts it like this, our hearts are darkened.

[19 : 02] We can't see God Himself. Paul says it even stronger. He says we actually don't want to see that that's the condition of the human heart.

One preacher that I heard teach on a passage similar to this once pointed out the blindness of our blindness.

You'll see this in verse 19. In verse 19, Elisha, he strikes the soldiers with blindness and then he tells them, this is not the way.

You've not come to the right city. Follow me. I'll bring you to the guy you were looking for. So Elisha prays and they're struck with blindness and he says, you haven't come to the right place.

You don't have the right guy. Let me show you the other way. And Elisha himself actually leads them to a different city. And so there's a sense in this, the commentators say that they're struck with blindness yet they can see.

[19 : 59] You know, they say, okay, well, we'll follow you. Take us to the right city. In other words, it's not so much that they can't see with their physical eyes. It's that somehow God has blocked them from being able to see that Elisha is the man they've come for.

And so he leads them to the next city. And it's, you see, in other words, it's not saying that we don't think we can see. You know, they all thought, you see, in other words, they all thought they could see.

They thought, yeah, take us to the right place. We can see the right man. We can go to the right place. We'll strike the right city and we'll win. And in the same way Ephesians 4, our hearts are darkened.

It's not as, you see, we're blind to our blindness. We don't actually know it. That's the human condition. When we're born, we don't, we live our life and we can't actually see the blindness that we actually have.

And Martin Luther, following Augustine long before him, he called this being curved in on oneself. It's like you've got a magnifying glass pointed at your own self.

[20 : 57] It's another way of saying pride. You see, what is spiritual blindness? What does it mean to be darkened and hard? And the way the Bible teaches us is it just says it's just to be prideful.

It's to be curved in on yourself. It's to think, what is spiritual blindness? It's just to think, this life is about me. It's about my achievements and my successes. And that's spiritual darkness and spiritual blindness.

Jesus Christ in John chapter nine, he says, for judgment I have come into this world so that the blind might see and those who see might be made blind.

And when he said that, the Pharisees were so angry and they were so upset. Why? Because they knew what he was saying. He was telling us in that moment about the condition that we all need for stepping out of spiritual blindness.

He said, I've come into the world so that the blind might see and that those who see might become blind. What did he mean? He meant that I've come so that everybody would understand that the most important step you can take towards spiritual sight is actually realizing you're blind.

[22 : 08] And he was saying to the Pharisees, you know, your problem is that you think you have spiritual insight, insight, but you're blind. You see, I've come to make those who know they're blind to give them sight.

And I've come to make those who think they have sight realize that they're blind. You see, the condition of the heart, he's saying, to break through, to no longer be spiritually blind, to have sight is not pride, but it's humility.

It's to say before the Lord, I know that I can't see. It's to be aware of our personal blindness before all things spiritual. And secondly, that leads us then to the grace we need.

Now, Elisha leads these guys away from the city that they were trying to attack. He leads them away from himself. And then in verse 19, he takes them to Samaria.

Samaria is where the king of Israel lives at this time. Samaria is where the army of Israel is encamped. And so when Elisha strikes them with blindness, he takes them to the very place where his own army is stationed.

[23 : 14] So when he prays again and he says, Lord, give them sight again, they can now all of a sudden see where they are. And there they are standing before the army of Israel.

Then the king of Israel says, all right, thank you, Elisha, shall I kill them all? And the king of Israel prepares to kill every single one of these Syrians that Elisha has led to the king of Israel.

And what does Elisha do? Elisha says, do not kill them. You see, the king of Israel wants to kill them. And the prophet who's called here, the man of God says, do not kill them.

And he says, you know, would you, if you go into battle, if you go into war and you win and you take all these prisoners of war with you, would you slaughter them? That's what he asked him, would you kill them?

And he says, of course, you shouldn't. That's unjust. So don't kill them. But that's the question he asks the king of Israel. But he takes it farther. So he says, don't kill them.

[24 : 13] They're prisoners of war. And then he says, instead, bring bread and water for them. And once they're nourished and fed, send them back to their own master.

Now look, the king of Israel wants to kill them. The man of God takes these blind men. And he gives them bread and he gives them drink.

And once they're nourished, he sets the prisoner free. That's his response. That's the man of God's response. And you see that the man of God, the prophet, he bestows grace upon blind people.

He comes to give grace to the blind. In Luke 9 and 54, there's this really interesting moment where Jesus Christ goes to Samaria, this very place that Elisha had led the Syrian prisoners, the Syrian army.

He goes to Samaria. And when he gets to Samaria, all the people reject Jesus. They won't welcome him into the city. And his disciples say, shall we call the fire down from heaven upon all these people and kill them?

[25 : 22] And Jesus says, no. And you see, immediately you learn when you are standing before the man of God, a man who has been endowed by the Holy Spirit, that is a person.

The Messiah is so full of grace when human beings aren't. The king of Israel wants to kill them.

Elisha says, no. The disciples want to kill all the people of Samaria. And Jesus says, no.

And Elisha said, give them, give the prisoner, give the blind man instead bread and water and set them free. And Jesus Christ says, I will give you bread and wine and I will make you see and I will set you free.

And you see, Jesus Christ is the new and better Elisha. And that means that what every single person, every single one of us needs tonight is just, is quite simple.

It's an encounter with Jesus Christ. Because he gives sight to the blind. He sets the prisoner free. He gives bread and he gives wine and he sends you on your way.

[26 : 24] And one of the best examples of this, I think, that we can learn from in the New Testament is what happened to Paul, also called Saul. You remember the apostle Paul?

He was murdering Christians. He was blind. And he was on the road to Damascus and the road, by the way, to Syria itself.

And all of a sudden, Jesus encountered him. And what happened when Jesus came to Saul? Saul was riding on a horse and Saul got knocked off his horse. And the text says that it was light that knocked him off the horse.

It was the light of Jesus Christ that entered his life that knocked him off the horse. And immediately when Saul encountered the light, he became blind. Not only spiritually, it's not just that he was spiritually blind.

He literally became physically blind in that moment. And you see, his physical blindness was a testimony to his spiritual blindness. And for days, for several days, he was blind.

[27 : 26] Why? Because he was having to learn his condition. He was having to learn that he was curved in on himself. He was having to learn, in this encounter with Jesus, that he was prideful and that he needed humility and that he needed to give up and that he needed to give his life away to Jesus Christ.

He needed to learn that Jesus Christ is the only one who can give sight to the blind. Now, lastly, that leads us then to the spirit-filled life. Let me just ask a question, how do you get this light in your

life?

How do you move from blindness to light? Maybe for the first time, maybe as a step of growth and Christian maturity in your life. True sight, this whole series, true sight depends on an encounter with Jesus.

It depends on an encounter with the Holy Spirit. You know, it's the Holy Spirit that brought the power to Elijah and Elisha. It's the Holy Spirit that came down upon Jesus Christ and it's the Holy Spirit that Christ sins to give sight to the blind.

That means that every single one of us need to meet the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit to come to us if we're going to see. My previous pastor, my previous minister, David Strain, who some of you know, he's from Glasgow originally.

[28 : 46] Several years ago, he was telling me once about how so many people had said to him, a person had said to him and many people had said to him, something like this, you know, I sat under your preaching and your teaching for so many years and I never really listened and he said, you know, gee, thanks, I appreciate that.

So kind. He said, you know, I sat under your teaching, I sat under your preaching for so many years, I didn't really listen. And then they said, and then one day it was as if I could see something. You know, it was as if I didn't know, for so many years I didn't know my need. And then all of a sudden one day I heard one sermon from you and it was like my life had been changed. It had been transformed.

And you know, what happened? That person had an encounter with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit came to them. And the prophecies, the prophet Elijah and Elijah's story tells us through Jesus that every single one of us needs the Holy Spirit.

We need the Holy Spirit. And what can you do? You say the wind blows where it wishes. What can I do with that? If I need the Holy Spirit, what am I to do today? And the answer is from Ephesians 1. You know, Paul in Ephesians 1 says, I'm going to pray for Ephesus.

[30 : 08] I'm going to pray for the people in Ephesus. And what does he pray? I pray for all of you that the eyes of your heart would be enlightened by the Holy Spirit. You know, Paul actually prayed that the Holy Spirit would come into his life.

And he prayed that the Holy Spirit would come into the lives of the people he cared for. And you today can pray that the Holy Spirit will come to your life. And that the Holy Spirit would either change your life tonight for the first time or grow you up.

That's what Paul's talking about there in Ephesians 1, into spiritual maturity. How do you know if you have that? How do you know if the Spirit's coming into your life? How do you know if that light has struck you?

How do you know if you're growing in spiritual maturity because of the Holy Spirit's work in your life? So let me finish with this story we read right at the beginning about this ax head.

Because that's where the answer is, the ax head. And at the very beginning we read this interesting strange story where we're told about an ax head, a little iron ax head on a stick that falls off into the water.

[31 : 19] What's happening here? Elisha has followers, he has disciples, they're called the sons of the prophets. And we're told that they need a bigger place to live. Their quarters are too tight, too many people are joining alongside him.

And so what happens is they go find a new place next to the Jordan River, they pull logs out of the Jordan River, they start to cut them to build new houses. And in the middle of that one of the young men, he is chopping wood and the ax head literally flies off into the water.

Now all of us as modern people say, so what? You know, why don't you just run down the home base and get a new ax? They've got axes, they're not that expensive.

And the problem is, the text literally says in verse 5 that he's lost his quote iron. So not an ax head but the metal. So it is an ax head but he's specifically talking about the metal.

And the issue is that this is a very rare commodity. Most people do not have axes. Most people do not have sharp things to cut wood in the ancient Near East.

[32 : 28] And it's very expensive and it's rare and it's a big deal. It's a big deal. And it's even more a big deal because he says quote, this ax head has been quote asked for.

The text translates it borrowed. And he's referring there to an issue in Exodus 22. If you borrow according to the law of God, you borrow somebody's property and you lose it, you break it, you

must repay or replace it in full or you enter into a state of debt slavery.

So to our modernize we say why is the story here, what's the big deal? This man is facing what could be a life of debt slavery for something so rare as this ax head.

It would be like borrowing your friend's Tesla and just absolutely crashing it. And you can't pay for it. And he says, well, you're going to have to work it off. That's exactly the situation that this man's facing.

It's a big deal. And the lender has the right to forgive the debt but he also has the right to require debt slavery for as long as it takes to pay off the debt. And the man of God, Elisha, says give me the stick, the stick that it was attached to and he throws it in the water and the ax head comes to the surface and floats.

[33 : 50] The language that's used here is he says quote verse seven, take it up. Take up the ax head. Take up the iron that you've lost. Now where are they? Let's close.

Where are they? They're in the Jordan River when this happens. This is the place that Elisha was anointed. This is the place where the spirit came down. This is the place where one day Jesus Christ will go down into the water and he'll come back up again.

You see, this moment you say, what is this story doing here? We can't see it because we have modern eyes but in ancient eyes, in biblical eyes, the eyes that God gives us spiritual insight.

We see that this is a story about resurrection. You know, that which was lost that will bring a man into slavery for the rest of his life goes down into the water and the man of God says, but I'm going to raise it back up again.

And this is the Jordan River. This is the very place where Jesus Christ went down under the water and came back up again as a sign of his death and his life for us.

[34 : 56] This is a Easter story, this ax head. This is about resurrection. One of the commentators says that the drowning and floating of this iron head is like the sign of Jonah.

You remember in the New Testament, Jesus said, if you want to know what I've come for, look for the sign of Jonah. You see how Jesus was saying, if you want to read the Old Testament rightly, read it in the light of me.

Look for the sign of Jonah. What happened to Jonah? Jonah went down, down, down into the water for three days and he died and he came back up again.

Look for the sign of Jonah. Jesus Christ fulfills it. Look for the sign of the ax head. Jesus Christ fulfills it. If you want to know if the Spirit of God is working in your life, the first thing to say is Lord, give me the light of the resurrection.

Teach me the power of the resurrection. Show it to me. Bring it into my life. That's the sign of Jonah coming into your life. It's resurrection power coming into your life. It's the grace of Jesus Christ removing your spiritual blindness, giving you sight.

[35 : 58] And then lastly, you can just ask this. Is the Spirit of God working in my life to grow me up like Paul says in Ephesians 1, into all maturity, spiritual maturity, that I would have more and more sight over time?

And how do you know? One of the ways you know is you just look at somebody like Elisha and you can see that his entire ministry might be basically just categorized as one thing, one commentator says it like this, that his entire ministry was about reversing tragic plots of loss.

He brings people's children back from the dead. He gives people food when they're hungry. He provides drink when all the water's stale. When a guy's lost his accent and he's going to be in debt slavery, he says I'm going to fix that for you.

How do you know the Spirit's working in your life? Jesus Christ was all about reversing tragic instances of loss. That's what his miraculous deeds were about. And the Christian life actually participates in that.

How do you do that? And it's simple. You simply care about other people in your life.

[37 : 04] You turn from being curved in on self to being outward facing. That's really the ministry of the prophet. Every person he encountered, he wanted to help them. Every person he encountered, he wanted to reverse the tragic plot of their life by giving them grace and then sustenance.

And that might be through the ministry of encouragement. Encouragement. That spirit-empowered ministry when you encourage people, when you lift them up.

It might be through the ministry of even caring about people's property, their acts heads. Saying I don't want that person to go hungry. You see, Jesus Christ, like Elijah, was all about restoring life in

circumstances of death.

And one of the ways you know that the Spirit is at work in your life is you long more and more to participate in that. You say, because Jesus went down into the water and came back up again for me, I want to give my life away to other people like him.

Let's pray together. Lord, we ask that you would give us the empowerment of the Spirit tonight, that we would see the grace of the axed. The grace of the way these prisoners of the Syrian army were treated, and we would know that that's us.

[38 : 26] That's what we need. And from there we ask, Lord, that you would then teach us to love people, to turn away from ourselves and love people like the prophet Elijah did.

That he sought to restore. Lord, help us to be people of restoration, people of grace, people of justice, people of encouragement. And so we pray for that gift, the gifting of the Spirit, and we pray for it in Christ's time.