

Double Portion

by John McGregor

This sermon emphasizes the importance of pursuing God for our families, highlighting the need to press on despite discouragement, learn God's ways, die to self, and seek a double portion of His grace and power.

Through the story of Elijah and Elisha, the sermon encourages perseverance, obedience, and a deep connection with God to experience His miraculous work in our lives and families.

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Scripture: 2 Kings 2:1, Genesis 32:26, Hebrews 5:8, 2 Kings 13:20, Matthew 7:7, James 1:5, Galatians 5:25, Ephesians 3:20

Topics: "Perseverance in Faith", "Seeking God's Power for Families"

Description

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Transcript

Thank you, Pastor Henry. How are you all doing? Had a good day, had some powerful times of fellowship and fun, and a tremendous environment to be able to just connect. That's an exciting thing to hear about what Pete, how he came to the church, how the Lord has touched him.

I often, especially on international ministry, get to go into prisons, and it's an amazing thing to see actually what the Lord does there. There's a prison in Louisiana called Angola, and if you want to see real revival in North America at the moment, that's where it is. Prisoners are coming to the Lord strongly, just week after week after week.

And Blackaby's been there many times to preach and to share, and so we'll continue to pray for Pete that the Lord will not only bless and protect him, but use him wonderfully in those days. Well, this evening I want to just spend a little bit of time thinking about pursuing God for the family. If I asked you how many of you pray for your family, each one would put your hand up.

That's something that we do. We don't have to have a lot of education. That's something we must do.

It just comes naturally to us, doesn't it? So I want to read from 2 Kings 2, verses 1-14, and just take a few thoughts about pursuing God. In 2 Kings 2, in verse 1 we read, It came about when the Lord was about to

take up Elijah by whirlwind to heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, Stay here, please, for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel.

But Elisha said, As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you. So they went down to Bethel. Then the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, Do you not know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today? And he said, Yes, I know.

Be still. Elijah said to him, Elisha, please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to Jericho. But he said, As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.

So they came to Jericho. The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, Do you know that the Lord will take away your master from over you today? And he answered, Yes, I know. Be still.

Then Elijah said to him, Please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan. And he said, As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you. So the two of them went on.

Now fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood opposite them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. Elijah took his mantle and folded it together and struck the waters. They were divided here and there, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you. And Elisha said, Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me. And he said, You have asked a hard thing.

Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you. But if not, it shall not be so. As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, which separated the two of them.

And Elijah went up by the whirlwind to heaven. Elisha saw it and cried out, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen. And he saw Elijah no more.

Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan. He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah? And when he had also struck the waters, they were divided here and there.

And Elisha crossed over. Father, we are so grateful for your word. And we are so thankful for every opportunity to come together around the word of God and to know the presence of God.

We ask our father this evening that you would just continue to encourage us as we meet as families before you. You know our heart and you know the cry of our hearts for our families. You know the concerns that we have for each one.

So Lord, we would ask that you would just breathe that fresh touch into our hearts and lives and homes and families because we ask it in Jesus name. Amen. I'd like to take just three thoughts out of the text.

And as you think about this, this is a very well-known piece of scripture. Elijah taken home to heaven. Elijah assuming the role of prophet to the nation and so on.

And as you consider it, sometimes we don't think about what's going really on in this. There's a sense of, oh wow, God came and took his servant home. And at the same time, there's something very precious when you think about pursuing God for family, for issues, for life, for any of those kind of things, for revival even, Brian.

And as you just think with me through the text, I'm reminded, oh, I don't know, 150 or more years ago, a young man went to a Bible study one night, led by a man called Charles Varley. Varley said in that study, the world has yet to see what God will do with one person who is fully surrendered and dedicated to him. A young man, 21 years of age, walked out of that meeting saying, Lord, I want to be that man.

His name was Dwight Lyman Moody. And with all the sophistication that we have of science systems and so on, they reckon that Moody preached to millions of people in his day. You see, he captured, I think, the concept that I want to just look at this evening, of pursuing God.

Let's take our first little lesson from the text. It is possible, when we think about pursuing God, for us to stop too soon. And as you look at this text, you see how easily that could have happened.

As I was reading through, I was reminded again four times, Elisha is told, stay here. You know, that's the human voice, the voice of the flesh, that says you've gone far enough. Stay here.

Elijah tells him, stay here. His contemporaries, the sons of the prophets, tell him, stay here. And so on, four times he's told, stay here.

Don't you know? And of course he knew what was going to happen. But there's a driving force in the heart of this man, Elisha. That driving force that says the same as Jacob did in Genesis chapter 32, where he's saying, I will not let you go until you bless me.

And there's that concept here again in the life of Elisha. As you think about it. And it's easy for us, isn't it? To get discouraged.

When you pray for somebody, maybe you pray for a family member, and you just don't see any progress. And there comes a point where we're tempted to say, well, I guess that's where I'll leave it. I guess that's where I'll let it sit.

But you know, there is something that we see here as Elisha presses on. And he doesn't stop, even when he's told, just stay here, just let it go. No, he is pressing on.

Around the Easter time in South Africa every year, we do all over the country a special week of Easter services. A few times that I've been in South Africa at that time, I've had the privilege of preaching through the Easter week. And one of those weeks we were in a place called Kroonstad, a beautiful game lodge, and I was preaching the Easter story, Easter week story, night by night, the journey of Jesus that last week, until he comes to the cross.

And I was preaching one night, and I finished a message and gave an invitation and so on, and played with the people, and I said to myself and to the Lord, thank you Lord, that's it. And the Holy Spirit said, you're not done yet. And I said, oh Lord, what is it? And the word that came to me is, tell them about David.

Now my youngest son is called David, and at that point in time, David was not walking with the Lord. You know, I went back to the podium, and the folk had not left the area where we were meeting, and I said there's something I need to share with you. I have a son, my fourth child, our youngest son, and he's not walking with the Lord this time.

And you know, I've tried to reach him, I've tried to share with him, and to be honest with you, it's not going great. And you know, the devil says to you, if you get real honest, people are going to say, oh my goodness, imagine that, a preacher's son, oh, never listen to him again. Well, the best advice I can give is, never listen to the devil.

He's a liar from the beginning. And when you get honest with God, he gets so strong in just bringing a sense of blessing. And I asked those folk if they would pray for my son David.

And that Thursday night, before Good Friday that year, was one of the longest services that I have ever attended. Because one by one, after I finished at the podium, and left in tears as people were praying, another dad got up and came, and then a mom, then another dad, and then another, and another, and another. And as we shared with each other our burden for the families and so on, it seemed as if the Lord was leading us into a time of corporate prayer.

A time of just really joining our hearts. And someone said, maybe we should make a prayer covenant that we'll pray for each other's children through the next year, until we all meet again here a year from now. And I said, oh, great, good.

And we prayed for quite a while that night. I didn't think I'd be back in South Africa the next year, let alone in Kronstadt, but guess what? I was there. And as I came to speak the first night, one man came over to me and said, would you mind if I shared something before you speak? And I said, please, go ahead.

He said, last year at this meeting, I asked you to pray for my son who was in prison, far away from Christ, far away from the family, far away from the church. And I just wanted a minute to say thanks. My boy is saved, and he's walking with the Lord.

Yes, he's in prison, and he'll fill that role, but oh, dear friends, it is so easy to stop too soon. That was one of the things that Elisha faced here, isn't it? Easy to get discouraged. But you know, when the Lord desires to use us, he teaches us two things.

The first is perseverance. How often the Savior himself teaches about praying with perseverance. And I think about the dear brother who shared Christ with me.

Two years, every day at work, and I would curse at him and spit at him and tell him to get lost, and the next day, Tom Johnson, 6'4", would be back and just say, you know, John, you need Jesus. And I've often reflected on that, I think. Would I have quit? Would I have stopped when somebody was doing that to me? But he didn't.

He continued to just patiently and wonderfully share Christ with me. And as we pursue the Lord in prayer for family and for the issues of family, let's take this little lesson and remember, Elisha did not stop too soon. He kept on going.

The second thing the Lord teaches us as he would use us is obedience, isn't it? It tells us in Hebrews 5, 8, that even Jesus learned obedience through the things that he suffered. Wow, what a verse that is.

Friends, it's easy to stop too soon.

And if I could be bold enough to say, when we think about our communities and you think about those who are so far away from the Lord Jesus, it's easy to stop too soon. It's so easy to be kind sometimes people and just look and say, oh yeah, it's just so-and-so. Let me tell you about a meeting in Belfast many years ago.

After I got saved, we had Sunday night evangelistic services in an old warehouse, old beat-up place, you know. And there were a number of us who'd recently come to the Lord and we didn't know anything about anything, but God gifted one to be able to preach and people were coming and people were being saved and the place was filling up. And then somebody said, you know, we should buy some property and build a building.

And we said, yes. And then somebody else said, well, why don't we rent the Ulster Hall, the biggest auditorium at that time in Belfast. And we said, yes.

And somebody said, you know, we could take up one offering in one night and there's some property out there at Glen Gormley, 50,000 pounds. We could take up one offering in one night at the Ulster Hall and get that money and go on into a building. And we said, yes.

And you know, then the Belfast Daily Telegraph and the media had up on their print and screams and so on. Christians say they'll raise 50,000 pounds in one offering. And we said, yes.

Whoops. I remember that day in the Ulster Hall. I sang in the choir.

That's the only time I've ever sung in a choir. And the guy said, the guy who was leading the choir said, John, it's great to have you here. When you sing, all the good singers have to sing so much louder.

Thankfully, he didn't throw me out. And after the choir practice that Sunday afternoon, we stuck around and were spiritual and we had a prayer meeting. Because rather than go home and try to come back in the evening traffic in the city and so on, why don't we just stay here and pray until the service starts.

And we pray. Dear God, thanks for bringing in the money tonight. Dear Lord, thanks that we could be in this place and thanks that you're going to bring in the money tonight, Lord.

Dear God, it's exciting to see how you're going to bring in the money tonight, Lord. You see what was the subject of all that prayer? Well, one member of the choir wasn't there for the practice. And he came in in the middle of the prayer meeting.

His name was Sammy. And Sammy, in what we would say in Saskatchewan, Sammy wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer. Sammy wasn't a very smart sort of individual, maybe.

Sammy didn't have a car or anything like that. Sammy's one of those people that we'd say, it's just Sammy. So Sammy came into the middle of that prayer meeting in a good Belfast accent.

He said, I'm sorry I missed the choir practice, so I am. I messed up the bus schedule and I missed my connection. Oh, I see you're praying.

That's great. I'm glad to see you're praying. I've been praying, too.

You know, on the bus coming over here, I've been praying. I'm just so excited. And he said this.

I just wonder, how much more is God going to give us than what we've asked him for? And all the hot shots were there praying in unbelief. And if the truth was told, we were probably sitting there thinking, will this work? Maybe we should get out of here. We had the service.

The Ulster Hall was filled. They took up the offering. People came and tossed their offering into a big barrel at the front because somebody read, that's how they fixed the Temple website.

They had them cast in the offering. And at the end of that time, the choir sang and a special singer sang and we waited for a few moments and our pastor walked onto the stage and all the television cameras came up and the media people were all around. And as they were there waiting, our pastor was crying so hard and they must have been thinking this is going to be great for the 6 o'clock or the 10 o'clock news to see these Christians fall on their face.

The pastor stood like this for a bit and the old cameras were rolling. I think because he couldn't get anything else out in all the world, our pastor said, Hallelujah! And every camera went off and every newspaper man just walked away. Why did it happen? Was it because of those who were praying in the back room in unbelief? You see they stopped too soon, including me.

But there's one little man, little son, who broke through to the heart of God and the Lord said, Here it is. And the offering that night was 54,237 pounds. And we weren't even smart enough to know we needed the access to pay the legal fees.

But the Lord knew exactly to the penny. We can stop too soon. But the blessing comes as we press on into the Lord.

Here's a second thought I want to just take on here for a moment. We need to learn his ways. You know, if I walked alongside Pastor Henry for quite a long journey and I just kept tagging along, just on his coat table, you know, he might say, John, go and do something.

You see, when somebody pastors us, our tendency is that eventually we just say, look, whatever it is you want, here it is. Now go and give me some peace, right? Isn't that it? Well, here's Elisha and he's following Elijah. But God doesn't do things the way we do.

We need to learn his ways. Not only can we stop too soon, but we can miss the whole thing of what God wants to do. You look at these names of the places where they're going.

Elijah says to Elisha, I am sent to Gilgal. Now what was Gilgal? What was that about? Well, that's that place where there was the monument stones. You know, when they went through the Jordan and they took the stones from the river and they set them up.

They set them up at Gilgal. And every time people went by, they were told, if your children ask you in years to come, what mean that these stones? You are to say to them, this is where the Lord took us through the Jordan on dry land. The memorial stones, what a place.

And you know, it's here that Elijah says to Elisha, just stay here. And that can be part of our Christian life too, can't it? Oh, this is a place of sweet memories. Look at what the Lord has done.

Brought me through the river Jordan on dry ground, delivered me. Praise God. This is a place I can stop and a place that I can stay.

Gilgal. And then he says, you stay here because I am called on to Bethel. What do we know about Bethel? It's that place where Jacob lay dying and where he saw the ladder that ascended to heaven.

Wow, what a place. Again, so easy to say. That's a place of significance where I met the Lord and the Lord has been doing so much in my life and I can just stay here.

If you notice, Elisha keeps on going. I think in our times, we might be tempted at Bethel to say, this is the place where the ladder ascended to heaven. You write to us and for \$1,000, we'll send you a picture of where the ladder rested.

And you can set it up and know. Or we might be inclined to say, oh, let's put together a great tour so that you can go and stand on the place where the ladder rested. And that's kind of what our society does with spiritual things, isn't it? We turn them into those kind of endeavors.

But Elisha doesn't stay at Bethel, the house of God. And Elisha says to him, I am sent to Jericho. Now what do we know about Jericho? Well, we know that it's the place of judgment. How many of us would go? I can't wait.

I'm going to follow him to the place of judgment. Great. Can't wait for that.

No. That's not a comfortable place at all, is it? Jericho, when it was torn down, the Lord said, don't rebuild that. And then, Elijah says to him, you stay here.

I'm going on to the Jordan. What do we know about the Jordan? Well, we know that the Jordan is often used as a reference to death. If you've ever been baptized in the river there in Israel, you know that the song is true.

The river Jordan is chilly and cold. Chills the body, but not the soul. Here, as you look at the progression of things, dear friends, look at what God is doing.

Elijah doesn't stay with the memory of what God has done in the past. He doesn't even stay at the place where God begins to reveal himself to Jacob and to his people. He doesn't stay at the place of judgment.

He goes on to the place of death and beyond. And it is only then, when he's gone past the Jordan, that Elijah turns to him and says, what can I do for you before I'm taken? What is it that you want? Now, think about this. We often say that Christians need a second trip to the cross.

They need to learn to die to self before we can really live in the victory of Christ Jesus. Isn't that exactly the process that you see in this text, where he is taken past all those places, even through that place of death to self? And then, there's a meeting. There's a holy moment.

There's a time, so recorded for us, where Elijah says to him, okay, if that's what you want, you watch. And if you see me when he takes me, you'll have what you're looking for. How do you think it must have been between those two men at that moment in time? How do you think Elisha looked at Elijah? Well, I'll tell you how I think he looked at him.

I think he looked at him like this. And no matter where he went, he just kept looking at him like this. And he never took his eye off him.

He just kept looking at him. Because, you see, to get the promise, he had to be in that spot. All dear friends, if we want to pursue God for our families, there is a place to go that is far beyond this idea that we have of name it and claim it or whatever.

There is a place to go where we're in that deep spot with God. When our eye is on Jesus and all that he can do. Well, we're probably going to have coffee in a bit, so let me give to you a third thought here.

We need a double portion. And that's what we're told Elisha asked for. A double portion.

Do you know when you look at the life of Elisha, his life shows us exactly twice as many miracles as Elijah. We see that double portion is given. Twice the power.

And I want to just go to 2 Kings 13 verses 20 and 21 for a moment. Here's just a picture of this idea of what happens in the double portion. 2 Kings 13, 20 and 21.

Here's what it says. Elijah died and they buried him. Now the bands of the Moabites would invade the land in the spring of the year.

And as they were burying a man, behold, they saw a marauding band and they cast the man into the grave of Elisha. And when the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood up on his feet. This double portion has to be something so remarkable, doesn't it? Picture yourself as a pallbearer that day and the community as they weep as you walk by with the body.

And you see these guys coming, so you toss the body in where Elisha is buried. And then you put it in B for boogie and you're heading back into time as quick as you can. Ah, but the fellow that you just buried, he comes running past you.

I know I have a good Irish imagination. But I'll tell you what, that's far from the ordinary, isn't it? That's far from those dry and dead old times. That's full of the life of the Spirit of God.

That's that place of the double portion. And oh, friends, when we think about pursuing God for our families, I think maybe it was Jim Simbel one day in one of the conferences who said, I'm shocked at how easily we make a pact with the devil and just leave them to their own ways. We need that double portion as we press into the heart of God, who among us doesn't need a double portion of his grace, a double portion of his discernment, a double portion of his wisdom, a double portion of his courage, a double portion of faith to believe what we cannot see, a double portion of his gentleness, a double portion of power in prayer.

Amen. We need it, don't we? Oh, you see, the lessons that we learn as we look at this little text this evening and thinking about pursuing God, we can stop too soon. We need to learn God's ways.

We die to self. We walk in the spirit. And we need that double portion.

Oh, so much. In many of the conferences where it's been my privilege to share, there's a dear brother from Texas called Sammy Tippett. He's a Baptist fellow, but I've forgiven him for that.

Sammy, one day when we were sort of half running, jogging, or in my case, speed walking in South Africa and was telling me about his dad. He said, John, the Lord has sent me all over the world to preach. I've

had the privilege of preaching his gospel in Somalia, Somalia, Sudan.

He was one of the first Christian evangelists into Romania at the fall of Ceausescu. He said, I see people come to Christ all over the place, but to reach my dad, when I talk to him, he'll visit for a few minutes, and when I turn to spiritual things, he'll just turn me off. Then we were at a conference for HeartCry for Revival done in North Carolina, and Sammy said, my dad is saved.

And I said to him, what happened? He said, John, I went out to the place where I was just pleading with God, just me and the Lord. And I said, Father, I don't know how to reach my dad. Would you show me something, something that you can put into my heart, something that I can reach out to him with? He said, the Lord told me, tell your father, thank you.

I said, Lord, thank you? Yeah, thank you. Sammy said, I called my dad. We visited for a couple of minutes, and my dad said, okay, Sammy, so go ahead and preach at me.

And Sammy said, Dad, I didn't call to preach at you. I just called to say, thank you. For what, he said? Thank you, Dad, that you raised me.

Thank you, Dad, that you loved me. Thank you, Dad, that you provided for me. Thank you, Dad, that you helped me with my education.

Thank you. Sammy said, there's a long, long pause on the phone. And all I know is that my father is weeping.

He said, my dad said, I didn't think that any of you kids noticed. Nobody's ever said, thanks. It was about four months after that, when Sammy Tibbetts' father said to him, sitting across the room from him, son, how do I get to know Jesus? We need double portion.

That's what the Lord gave Sammy in that crying time of meeting with him. So friends, let me just put it all together in a little summary kind of statement this evening. You know, when we think about pursuing God, we can stop too soon.

We need to learn God's ways and we need to come through the Jordan and die to self, be filled with the spirit of God. And we need that double portion. And if ever there was a day when families need the double portion, it's this day.

So could I just ask you, as I close tonight, let's just take some prayer time. Let's just forget about those who are around us for a few moments, just between you and God.

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