Breakthrough - Part One

# I Want It Back

## (2 Kings 6:1-7)

We are starting a brand-new message series today called “Breakthrough” and I’m excited by what God wants to do in all of our lives. In this series we’re going to look at stories of radical change and I believe God’s goal is to have us experience him in new and exciting ways. You see, “breakthrough” happens when we encounter the Holy Spirit, because when we are in the presence of the Living God our lives experience radical change.

We can see this in Acts chapter 4, after the healing of the lame man, when Peter and John were arrested and put in jail. The next day the rulers and elders and teachers of the law brought Peter and John before them and began to question them. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and boldly began to preach the gospel. The Bible says,

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished, and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

And so, here’s Peter who boasted that he would never deny Jesus, just hours before he did in fact deny him three different times. But now it’s like a switch flipped inside of him, he was back on mission, he was filled with purpose, he was bold and courageous, he was on fire and believing God for big things. The difference, the cause for this radical change, was the power of the Holy Spirit resting on him.

We’re talking about Breakthrough, looking at stories of radical change and we’re going to look at the life of the prophet Elisha, because just like God transformed Peter’s life, we discover that God loves to take ordinary people and give them extraordinary courage.

However, before we look at Elisha’s story of radical change, I wonder how many of you by a show of hands find it extremely frustrating when you misplace something? How many of you are like me and it drives you absolutely crazy when you have something, but then you lose it?

Jesus talked about a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. He said,

“Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it (Luke 15:8)?

And the thing that frustrates me most about losing something is that often it’s not really lost, it’s just been misplaced. And so, let’s say I’m looking for the car keys and I left them in the car or maybe in my coat pocket. Or I’m looking for my glasses and I left them in the bedroom where I got dressed. Or even more frustrating, I’m looking for my phone or my wallet and it’s in my pocket.

But, what I want to talk to you about today is losing something else, something of utmost importance, because there’s a good chance if you’ve been following Jesus for very long, that you may have lost your passion for the things of God. And so, you used to have this deep-rooted contentment and great joy in the presence of God, but somehow, somewhere along the way, you’re not sure where, but you lost it.

Maybe at one time you had great faith, you prayed and believed God for big things, because you know that he has plans for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11).

And yet today, you don’t know what happened, but you’re not believing God for much of anything anymore, you had something very important, something meaningful, but you lost it along the way.

As we come to the story of the life of Elisha, he was the successor of the prophet Elijah. Many people get confused because their names are so similar, but Elisha was a student of Elijah’s, he studied under Elijah, he wanted to be like Elijah, and he was bold enough to ask God for a double portion of Elijah’s anointing. God heard his prayer and honored his faith and Elisha actually has double the recorded miracles of Elijah. In fact, Elisha has more miracles recorded in the Bible than anyone other than Jesus Christ. Now, that’s a pretty good position to be in, second only to Jesus Christ, but I want you to know that Elisha didn’t start out that way.

In fact, Elisha was just an ordinary guy working on his family’s farm, and so he lived at home with his parents, and day after day he took care of the daily responsibilities of the farm. That is until one day, when God sent Elijah to call him into ministry and interrupt his routine.

The Bible says Elijah found Elisha working on the farm, plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him (1 Kings 19:19).

Now, I want you to notice what happens, because Elisha is out in the field plowing, he is doing the same thing that he did yesterday, and the same thing that he’s expecting to do tomorrow. He’s just plowing the field like many of you do, doing the same thing day after day, going to the same classes, doing the same job, working with the same people, changing the same diapers, and feeding the same hungry kids. And so, that was Elisha’s life, but as he responds to the call of God everything is about to shift.

Elisha didn’t know all the details, but God had called him, and he was about to experience a radical change in his life. He didn’t know where he was going, he didn’t even know what he was going to do, but he didn’t need to know all the details, because he believed God. And so, when Elijah threw his cloak around Elisha, he trusted God and the Bible says,

“He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant” (1 Kings 19:21).

Elisha’s life was about to change because he believed and was obedient to the Lord.

His response was completely opposite to that of the prophet Jonah. If you remember Jonah, the Word of the Lord came to him, telling him to go preach in the city of Nineveh. And the Bible says,

“But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish” (Jonah 1:1-3).

And so, instead of responding with obedience, Jonah went the opposite direction, much like I did in my own personal life 40 years ago. But Elisha doesn’t do that, he embraced his calling, he celebrated with his family and neighbors. He burned the plowing equipment, very literally burning the bridges behind him. In other words, there was no going back, Elisha wasn’t leaving room for plan B. As far as he was concerned, there was only plan A, and that was to obey God.

Elisha’s life was a story of radical change. For those of you here, especially our graduates, here’s the question I have for you today. When God says something that seems ridiculous, something that challenges you, maybe something like:

"Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor… Then come, follow me" (Mark 10:21).

How are you going to respond?

I believe God is speaking to some of you here today, and he’s going to give you the kind of faith that will burn your plow. He’s going to give you a crazy ridiculous faith, where you’re going to be willing to do whatever it takes to follow God. Like Jesus said to all the people in Luke chapter 9,

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

And so, maybe for you, burning your plow is a career choice, turning down a business opportunity, going against the expectation of others, or leaving behind whatever it is that keeps you from completely surrendering to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This morning, can we get serious about becoming the men and women that God has called us to be? Willing to step out with a plow burning faith, willing to leave what’s familiar, what you have known, leaving where you are, and going where God wants you to go? Jesus said,

“Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).

Elisha responded to the invitation of God by burning the plow equipment, sacrificing the oxen, and giving up his inheritance to follow after God.

In second Kings we discover that God used Elisha to perform many significant miracles. In other words, not miracles like when your favorite sports team comes from behind to win the championship with a last-minute goal. Not even miracles like the birth of a baby, but what I’m talking about is when God intervenes in the regular course of nature, interrupting the natural with the supernatural, disrupting the ordinary to bring about something extraordinary.

That was the story of the prophet Elisha’s life and he left a legacy of miracles in the Scriptures. Very little is recorded of what he said, but God used him in a powerful way. He purified Jericho’s polluted waters, multiplied a widow’s oil, raised her son from the dead, multiplied loaves of bread, healed a man of leprosy, rescued the armies of Israel several times, and even after he died, a dead man was raised to life when he was laid on top of Elisha’s bones. Though this is not an exhaustive list, each one of these miraculous events defied natural explanation because they were supernatural acts of divine power.

Elisha did all of these and many more significant miracles, but today the one I want to share with you has got to be one of the strangest miracles recorded in the Bible. This one miracle seems so trivial compared to all the others, but the one thing that it shows us very clearly is that God cares even about the little details of our lives. This can be very comforting to know that no matter what you are going through, whether you’ve got a flat tire, a headache, or a presentation at work, God cares even about the little things.

The miracle I want to share with you today is found in second Kings, chapter six, where the prophet Elisha is now much older. In fact, at this point he is now mentoring the next generation of young prophets and has built a school to train up these prophets, but the Bible says that there were so many that they outgrew the school. That’s where we pick up the story in verse one,

“The company of the prophets said to Elisha, "Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to live." And he said, "Go" (2 Kings 6:1-2).

“Then one of them said, "Won't you please come with your servants?" "I will," Elisha replied. And he went with them. They went to the Jordan and began to cut down trees. As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axe head fell into the water. "Oh, my lord," he cried out, "it was borrowed!" (2 Kings 6:3-5).

“The man of God asked, "Where did it fall?" When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float. "Lift it out," he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it” (2 Kings 6:6-7).

Today, I want you to know that God knows how to help you find what you have lost. And for those of you who somewhere along the way have lost your joy, your passion, or your hunger for the things of God, I want to remind you that we serve a God who knows how to help you find what you lost.

In fact, it’s my guess that there are many of you that would say there was a time in your life when you were more passionate about the things of God than you are today. There was a time when you spent more time studying the word of God, there was a time when you served and were used by God, and there was a time when you used to get up early and prayed for so many people, but the truth is that you have not prayed in a significant way in a very long time. And so, now you’re wondering how you got way over here, but you started cutting corners, taking shortcuts, and you’ve lost your hunger and your passion for the things of God. And honestly, it can happen to anyone of us, because we have a very real spiritual enemy whose mission is to steal, kill, and destroy everything that matters to the heart of God.

In fact, I am very careful to stay on track, to stay disciplined in my spiritual habits, because there have been times when I have drifted before. Times when I found myself studying the Bible to preach or teach, but not having personal devotions, not spending time alone in prayer, and it was just like I had become a part time follower of Jesus. And maybe some of you can relate, you’ve become a full-time parent, business owner, employee, or student, and only a part time follower of Jesus. It’s just like the prophet Isaiah said,

“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6).

And you didn’t mean to stop praying, to wander back into your old patterns of living, to drift from the intimacy you had with God, but you did. You didn’t mean to become so consumed by your pursuit of worldly things, but that’s exactly what you did. You didn’t mean to become a part time follower of Jesus, but that’s what happened, and so how do we get it back?

Well, the Lord gives us the answer in verse six as we look at the story of this young prophet, Elisha asked him,

“Where did it fall?" (2 Kings 6:6).

And today, I would ask you the same question, “Where did you lose your focus, your discipline, and your passion for the things of God?” You know, when you used to spend time searching for God in his Word, when you were generous with your giving, and worshiping God but then you just stopped. “Where did it fall? Where did you lose it?” You used to be involved in the church, serving in ministry, participating in prayer, but then you stopped. And so, you need to be honest with yourself about where you lost it.

The young prophet showed Elisha the place and the Bible says,

“Elisha cut a stick and threw it there and made the iron float. "Lift it out," he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it” (2 Kings 6:6-7).

It was an amazing miracle as God demonstrates not only his ability, but his willingness to help you find what you didn’t mean to lose. And so, he makes the ax head float, he brings it within your reach, but you’re going to have to lift it out, you’re going to have to grab what you lost.

Today, it’s not too late to be the person that you could have been, or to get back what you thought you would never have again, because he’s going to bring it within your reach, but you’ve got to grab it, you’re going to have to take hold of it. Listen to what Jesus said to a church full of people who are like many of us today. He said,

“You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first” (Revelation 2:4-5).

In other words, he says, remember what you had, remember where you left it, and repent. Turn back from your sin, turn from your laziness and complacency, and do the things you did at first. If you want what you once had, you’ve got to do what you once did. When God causes it to float, you’ve got to reach out and take it, you’ve got to do what you did at first.

And so, today, if you want your passion and your hunger for the things of God back, do the things you did at first. Put yourself in a place where God can build your faith, where you can hear God’s word, stirring up your faith, because faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

Go after God again because when you seek him, you will find him. And so, make the choice to pray and worship, and when God brings it to the surface, you reach out and take back what you lost. When God brings it within your reach, recognize that he is a God of restoration. In fact, he said,

“I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten” (Joel 2:25, NKJV).

And so, he is helping you, doing what you can’t do, helping you get back what you lost.

He says, I will restore what you lost, and I don’t know where you are right now spiritually, but it doesn’t matter how far you have drifted, because God wants you to know that you haven’t gone too far. You can still be the person you were meant to be, because the call of God is a revocable, and he specializes in helping people find what they lost.

In fact, the Bible says this in Deuteronomy chapter 30,

“The Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers” (Deuteronomy 30:3-5).

God is here, help is here, and so when he makes the axe head rise to the top, would you reach out, take it in your hand and lift it out?

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