



LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

From ELISHA

DOUBLE ANOINTING

R.T. KENDALL

BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF *TOTAL FORGIVENESS*

DOUBLE ANOINTING

R. T. KENDALL



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DOUBLE ANOINTING by R. T. Kendall

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FOREWORD

ELIJAH. HE STANDS alone among the Old Testament prophets. Power over nature. Fire falling from Heaven in response to his intercession. Departing earth without physical death. Years later his appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses affirms his unique stature. Yet there was another who both asked for and received a double portion of Elijah's anointing, a man who performed twice the number of Elijah's miracles. This man was Elisha.

He is often an enigma. Like Elijah, he appeared from nowhere. Instructed by God to anoint him as his successor, Elijah found Elisha in obscurity, occupied in his plowing and labor. He did not come from one of the prophetic schools. He had no peers or prophetic heritage prior to his call. He left no disciple of note. Following years of service, Elisha prevailed upon his relationship with Elijah with an ambitious request: "Give me a double portion of your anointing." Who asks such a thing of a prophet like Elijah?

Remarkable in the ministry of Elisha are the miracles that reflected those of his mentor yet also foreshadowed those of Jesus. Elisha: the feeding of the hundred and the multiplication of bread (2 Kings 4:42–44). Jesus: the multiplication of the loaves and fishes (Matt. 14:13–21). Elisha: the miracle of the oil being multiplied (2 Kings 4:4–7). Jesus: the turning of water into wine at Cana (John 2:1–11).

Elisha: the resurrection of the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4:18–36). Jesus: the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11).

From audiences with kings to meeting the practical needs of a widow, we find in Elisha a human, compassionate dimension that it seemed his mentor often lacked. Quite different from the life of Elijah, who neither experienced illness nor tasted death, Elisha suffered from a very human illness and died a very human death. Yet even after his death a residual anointing was found in his bones that would raise the dead.

There are numerous books about Elijah, including an excellent one by R. T. Kendall. Yet few works exist devoted to Elisha, and so this book is much needed. The illumination and insight that Dr. Kendall brings to both the man and ministry of Elisha are profound. This is much more than staid exegesis. The principles and application that he draws from the well of Elisha's life are critical to this hour of opportunity for the church.

I have long been fascinated with Elisha. I have also long admired Dr. Kendall. It is a great honor to put the words of this foreword alongside his. Thank you, Dr. Kendall, for this privilege, and thank you also for yet another great book, one that is essential to Spirit-empowered ministry in our age.

—JIM CRITCHER
SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM, GRACE COVENANT CHURCH
CHANTILLY, VIRGINIA

PREFACE

I FIRST PREACHED THROUGH the life of Elisha at London's Kensington Temple (KT). Pastor Colin Dye kindly asked us to spend six months a year in London, and it was during one of those six-month eras that I chose to speak on Elisha. I had preached on Elijah at Westminster Chapel, this being one of my last sermon series there. That series became a book called *These Are the Days of Elijah*. Having decided to make my next teaching series at The Cove in the summer of 2020, it made sense to turn these studies on Elisha into a book as well. Each of the chapters in this book should be treated as a standalone text that examines the scriptural story of Elisha chronologically, as we encounter it in the book of 2 Kings.

I want to thank Steve and Joy Strang of Charisma House for publishing this book. My thanks especially to Debbie Marrie, my editor, for being so easy and pleasant to work with. Most of all I thank my wife, Louise—my best friend and critic—for her wisdom and encouragement.

I thank Pastor Jim Critcher, part of the senior leadership team at Grace Covenant Church of Chantilly, Virginia, for writing the foreword to this book. He himself has been a student of 2 Kings generally and the life of Elisha especially and has been an encouragement to me.

I dedicate this book to our beloved friends, Colin and Amanda Dye, now in retirement after an incredible thirty-year ministry at Kensington Temple. Their legacy stands

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alongside the previous great men of God—historic stalwarts in Elim—who made KT a world-class church.

—R. T. KENDALL

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, SEPTEMBER 2021

INTRODUCTION

ELISHA, ELIJAH'S SUCCESSOR, made the cheekiest, most audacious, and most ambitious request of any found in the entire Bible. He asked for a "double portion" of Elijah's anointing (2 Kings 2:9).

He had already received Elijah's mantle—and what a gift it was! But he was not content with that; he wanted more. Indeed he wanted *double* the anointing of Elijah.

And yet can you blame him? How do you suppose you would have felt had you personally witnessed this request? Would you have resented Elisha for this? Would you have been a bit irked that Elisha thought of this? On the other hand, "Ye have not, because ye ask not," according to James 4:2 (KJV). Bold and astonishing though this request may have been, what harm was there in asking? And what, lo and behold, if such a request was granted?

It was. Many of us would welcome such a gift—if offered. It would be hard to believe such was on offer, too good to be true! So don't resent Elisha for this request (if this thought crosses your mind), but rather admire him for his crude audacity. The first British missionary, William Carey (1761–1834), was known for saying this: "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God."¹ God uses ambitious people. Martin Luther (1483–1546) is often quoted as saying, "God uses sex to drive a man to marriage, ambition to drive a man to service, fear to drive a man to faith."²

In any case, God granted Elisha's request.

The anointing is the power of the Holy Spirit that enables one's gift to function with ease. The anointing is what comes easy. If you go outside your anointing, you struggle. Stay within it, and you are at ease.

What Elisha asked for was a double portion of Elijah's "spirit." I take this to mean a double measure of the Holy Spirit given to Elijah, not meaning his natural gift. Elisha did not ask to be a clone of Elijah and have twice his talent or success. But one cannot be sure exactly what Elisha was asking for. According to Romans 12:3, each child of God has a measure of faith. This means a limit. No one has perfect faith—the faith of God that Jesus had (John 3:34). We are given a limit. Elijah had a limit, a measure of the Holy Spirit. You could say he had a very high level of the Spirit. Yes. And Elisha, Elijah's chosen successor, asked for twice the measure Elijah had!

If you are annoyed that someone would ask for twice the anointing of an Elijah, so too was Elijah himself. Elijah was not thrilled with this request. "You have asked a hard thing," he said (2 Kings 2:10). Was Elijah a bit jealous that Elisha might have double his success? Some think that Elijah did not have a fatherly spirit, that he resented Elisha's request. That said, Elijah agreed to Elisha's request on the condition that Elisha personally witness the actual, literal moment that Elijah was transferred to Heaven. Here is what Elijah said to Elisha:

You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so.

—2 KINGS 2:10

The Bible says that as they went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them.

And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.
And Elisha saw it and he cried, 'My father, my
father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!'
And he saw him [Elijah] no more.

—2 KINGS 2:11-12

What a glorious end to the life and ministry of Elijah.
What a promising beginning to the ministry of Elisha.

It would seem that Elisha's double anointing was calculated in terms of quantity rather than quality. For example, Elijah had around seven miracles, depending on how you judge him and his situation. Elisha had perhaps fourteen miracles, thus confirming how he experienced a double measure of the Spirit. However, once Elisha died, he was largely forgotten. Elisha died a natural death (2 Kings 13:20). People still spoke of Elijah. Malachi prophesied that Elijah, who did not have a natural death, would appear later (Mal. 4:5-6). This was fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist (Luke 1:13-20). It was Elijah who appeared with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3).

These things said, some of Elisha's miracles were quite different from Elijah's. Indeed some of them were breathtakingly astounding. How wonderful it would be if God raised up an Elisha in our day! James speaks of how Elijah was just like us in his human nature (James 5:17). The same could be said of Elisha. There was nothing supernatural about him. He was very ordinary. Yet we are about to discover, through the life of the prophet Elisha, how God can take the ordinary and do something extraordinary.

CHAPTER 1

THE CALLING OF ELISHA

So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him. And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him.

—1 KINGS 19:19–21

Only one life, t'will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.

—C. T. STUDD (1860–1931)

ONE OF THE mysteries of both the Old Testament and church history is why some great leaders had successors and others did not. For example, God chose Moses' successor but chose no successor to

Joshua. After Joshua died everyone did what was right “in their own eyes” (Judg. 21:25). It seems reasonable to assume that a successor to Joshua could have led Israel to avoid that unspeakably bad era.

Likewise, God raised up Elijah. He came in from out of the blue. God chose Elijah’s successor—Elisha—but there was no successor to Elisha.

Elisha was God’s idea. For reasons one cannot understand, God was thinking of Israel’s immediate future when he told Elijah to give his mantle to Elisha. But why not a successor to Elisha?

Most unusual leaders are not succeeded by great men. There was no successor to Paul. Or to Augustine. Or Luther. Or Jonathan Edwards.

The question therefore may be asked: Why did God grant a successor to Moses in the first place? Or to Elijah?

We have no idea how Elijah was called, but we know how Elisha was called. It was God’s idea from the beginning.

When we use the word *call* or *calling* to refer to one’s ministry, specialty, or career, it is good to remember that someone initiated such a call. Moses did not call himself. Elisha did not call himself. Jeremiah did not appoint himself but says that God “appointed” him to be a “prophet to the nations” (Jer. 1:5).

Likewise, when Paul refers to the “called” in Romans 1:6 and Romans 8:30, God is the initial “cause.” Although Paul became aware of his being called on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:6–16), he said he was actually called before he was born (Gal. 1:15).

So with all of us. We cannot answer a call until we have been consciously called. If we take a few moments

to contemplate this kind of thinking, we will almost certainly come to the same conclusion Charles Spurgeon (1834–1892) came to. He saw that God was “at the bottom of it all.” We can take no credit for this. It is because God first loved us (1 John 4:19) that Jesus chose us (John 15:16).

Elisha could take no credit that he was called to be Elijah’s successor. He did nothing to deserve it. He was in the field with oxen. God found him. What were Elisha’s qualifications? You tell me! What are your qualifications? What are mine? God sees in all of us what people do not see. People look on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). Spurgeon was rejected by Regent’s Park College! G. Campbell Morgan (1863–1945) was rejected by the Methodist church because he did not have the makings of a preacher!

It did not take long for Elisha to develop an ambition to want double Elijah’s anointing. He had not been in the battle that long. Perhaps it was ambition in Elisha that God saw?

What is fascinating is that Elisha showed a dogged ambition to get Elijah’s anointing before he was given a choice about it. Knowing somehow that Elijah would be taken away at any moment, Elisha stayed in Elijah’s face sixty seconds a minute all day long. It was as if he had already been told that he must literally *see* Elijah’s ascension to Heaven. For example, Elijah began saying to Elisha, “Please stay here,” pretending to go to Bethel, Jericho, or Jordan. But Elisha responded in a second, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you” (2 Kings 2:2–6).

When God calls a person to ministry, either He has pre-gifted such a person or, in any case, ensures that such

a man or woman has the appropriate talent to do what He has in mind for them. Spurgeon said that if God calls a man to preach he will give that man a pair of lungs. It was more than a willing heart that George Beverly Shea (1909–2013) needed to be Billy Graham’s (1918–2018) beloved Gospel singer. He had a voice that comes perhaps once in a generation.

But whatever was it in Elisha? Only God knew. Moreover, God knew that Elisha would stay next to Elijah nonstop all day long in order not to miss the challenge of his life.

Would you like to have a double anointing? What if it depended on how hard you tried to get it? Frankly, if I personally thought that it depended on me and my earnestness, I would mimic Elisha! Yes, I would do what he did. I would pray more, read my Bible more, study more, get to know more, get people to lay their hands on me who had any bit of power—or whatever I thought it would take. Because I identify with Elisha.

We only have one life to live for Christ. Only what is done for Him will last, said C. T. Studd. I would rather face the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ knowing I did all I could possibly think of than wait for the sovereignty of God (which I believe in with all my heart) to make things happen.

I don’t have a prophetic gift that I know of. I wish I did. I am a Bible teacher. That’s it. But because Paul said we should covet earnestly the best gifts, I will tell you now that I pray daily (and have done for a good while) for the gifts of wisdom, prophecy, discerning of spirits, miracles, and healing. On top of that I ask all the time—daily, to be transparently honest—for double the anointing I now

have. I don't understand the Bible nearly as well as I want to. Whether God will grant this, even in part, in my lifetime, only He knows. And since both gifts and calling are without repentance (that means no amount of godliness or zeal can bring on these gifts—Romans 11:29), all I can do is ask.

Would you like a double anointing? What would that be like in your life? What if it were double what you have now? What if it were double of what another person has? Elisha wanted double what Elijah had. After all, there had never been a prophet like Elijah.

Anointing, such as we see in 1 John 2:20-27, comes from the Greek *chrío*: to smear as with an ointment¹; we get *Christ* from the root word. Christ means Anointed One, Messiah.

As I said, Jesus had the Spirit without measure or limit (John 3:34). You and I have a measure of the Spirit, a measure of faith (Rom. 12:3). Jesus had all of the Holy Spirit that there is. You and I have a little bit of the Holy Spirit. Even if we are "filled" with the Spirit, we are filled with a little bit of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was filled with the Spirit and had all there is of the Holy Spirit.

How do you discover your anointing? Anointing can also be one's gifting. You begin at the natural level: What are you already good at? What comes easy? Chances are your anointing by the Spirit will be an extension of what you are by common grace (God's special grace in nature). The hardest and most humbling thing to do is to discover the limits of your anointing.

Nobody can do everything. Be honest: What is it you simply are unable to do—and what are you good at? For example, are you a computer genius, brilliant in physics,

good at public speaking, skilled at nursing? God never promotes us to the level of our incompetence. Laurence J. Peter (1919–1990) wrote *The Peter Principle*, the idea being that everyone is promoted to the level of their incompetence. This is often true, but God never promotes us to the level of our incompetence.

There are three references I know of that refer to what I would call a double anointing:

Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion; instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot; therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion; they shall have everlasting joy.

—ISAIAH 61:7

Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.

—ZECHARIAH 9:12

Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.

—2 KINGS 2:9

And yet I am not sure what double anointing means! It is hard to imagine a greater miracle than the fire that came down at Mount Carmel. Elisha saw nothing of this.

I have asked for a double anointing for years—that is, double what I now have. I have assumed this to refer to quality, that is, to grasp the meaning of certain biblical verses I do not understand. I could write a book titled *Verses in the Bible I Don't Understand*.

I would love to have the gift of healing. I have seen a few people healed in my ministry, but not a lot. I would

enjoy having a “word” for people—call it prophetic or a word of knowledge. My gifting, it seems to me, is teaching the Bible. A double anointing in my case, I think, would mean that *I would find understanding the Bible twice as easy, twice as quick—that I would have double the ability to see the hidden meaning of Scripture.*

What do you suppose a double anointing means in your case? Be true to yourself; come to terms with your natural gift—what already comes easy for you. For example, is it understanding electronics, medicine, law, politics, or poetry?

Your gift could be insignificant (as far as you are concerned), but consider Joseph’s gift of having dreams and interpreting them. There is something you can do that nobody else can do as well.

What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.

—1 CORINTHIANS 2:9 (SEE ALSO ISAIAH 64:4)

These verses provide a vague encouragement to have more of God than one has at the moment. Paul invited us to explore unlimited possibilities when he said for us to desire earnestly the “higher” gifts (1 Cor. 12:31).

Why not a double anointing? Chances are most of us would love double of what we now have. But hopefully with this condition we would thereby glorify God twice as much! This would not be to enhance our ego. It would be solely for the honor and glory of God. If not, *away with such foolish ambition!*

Elisha was an anticipated man. That means we are not

surprised to see him emerge later. Unlike Elijah, who showed up out of the blue with no background or credentials that we know of, Elisha is found by Elijah.

We may assume Elisha would be Elijah's successor. As I observed, sometimes God gives a great person a successor: Joshua was a successor to Moses. Solomon was a worthy successor to King David.

Elisha was an average man. He was common, ordinary. As Elijah was just like us "with a nature like ours" (James 5:17), so too Elisha. It is so encouraging to know that the Elijahs and Elishas of this world are chosen from common, ordinary stock.

Not so Moses; of the tribe of Levi, he was unusual from birth (Exod. 2:2)—a fine child, fair. So too Saul of Tarsus was groomed for greatness. He had a very high IQ and the very best education, sitting at the feet of Gamaliel the Jewish scholar (Acts 22:3).

Our man Elisha was ordinary, typical, average. He asked Elijah permission to say goodbye to his parents. Nothing spectacular about Elisha. Does that encourage you? It encourages me.

Most believers are chosen from what is "average":

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to

bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

—1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-29

God determined that the Christian faith would bring Him glory because it could never be said that the more intelligent chose Jesus. Some may wish it were like that! But the Einsteins of this world miss the greatest glory imaginable. Why are some saved and others not? There is no rhyme or reason save this: the sovereign work of the Spirit (John 6:44).

Lady Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon (1707–1791), the benefactor of George Whitefield (1714–1770), rejoiced that she was saved by the letter “M.” This is because Paul said that not *many* were of noble birth. He did not say not *any*!

The Christian faith is so designed that God gets all the glory. It is not offered to the rich or famous, nor to those who have talent or will make the church look good. It is offered to ordinary people—like you and me.

There have been exceptions in history. Sometimes God saves a St. Augustine (AD 354–430), a Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), a St. Anselm (1033–1109), a Martin Luther, a John Calvin (1509–1564), a Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758). When people like these are converted, the world is deeply influenced. Why not more? You tell me! Probably so no one can say that Christianity is for the most intelligent.

In any case, both Elijah and Elisha were ordinary people.

Elisha was, as we saw, an ambitious man. He turned out to be extremely ambitious; not sure where that came from unless God was behind it. Ambition is connected to

one's motivation, drive, and desire to succeed. Like it or not, it is ambitious people who get things done.

Moses was ambitious. Why ever would he leave the palace of Pharaoh for the sake of the "reproach of Christ"? The answer is simple: he was looking ahead to his "reward" (Heb. 11:24–26). He was no fool! Caleb was an ambitious man; at age eighty-five he aspired to more than what he had ("Give me this mountain"—Joshua 14:12, KJV).

I was an ambitious vacuum cleaner salesman in our early marriage. I would leave the office early and start knocking on doors and return before noon with a sale while the other salesmen were still drinking coffee. One sense of ambition is by common grace, what God gives by creation (which is quite apart from saving grace).

Thank God for your ambition. Channel that ambition into wanting the full honor and glory of God. Paul in his old age had this ambition to know Christ (Phil. 3:8–9). We should all have this ambition. Ask God to give you a double anointing to want a greater knowledge of Christ.

Elisha was an ambitious man. But there was more. He was an answered man. He asked. God answered Elisha's prayer. James said that we have not because we ask not (Jas. 4:2).

Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage.
—PSALM 2:8

Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.
—MATTHEW 7:7–8

I sought the LORD, and he answered me.

—PSALM 34:4, NIV

What have you asked of the Lord?

As for ambition, do not forget that you could gain the whole world and lose your soul (Mark 8:36). So don't be a fool! Be *ambitious for your own soul*.

Only one life, t'will soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN ORDINARY PERSON ASKS GOD FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY DESTINY?

Next to Moses, Elijah was the greatest prophet of the Old Testament. He called down fire from heaven and never tasted death. And when it was time for him to choose a successor, Elijah selected an unknown person—Elisha—with no obvious qualifications to take up his mantle.

Not only did this unknown prophet succeed Elijah, but he had the audacity to ask God for a double portion of the anointing on Elijah's life—and God granted his request! But what did that mean? What does this request teach us about the person of Elisha? Why would God allow this unqualified person to perform double the number of Elijah's miracles? Maybe it all points to what God wants to do in our lives.


With wisdom and practical application, respected author R. T. Kendall examines the triumphs and failings of the prophet Elisha, showing us what happened to the man who dared to ask God for more—and what

**GOD CAN DO THROUGH ANY ORDINARY
PERSON WHO ALLOWS THE SPIRIT
OF GOD TO MAKE HIM GREAT.**



R. T. KENDALL was the pastor of Westminster Chapel in London for twenty-five years. Born in Ashland, Kentucky, he was educated at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div.) and Oxford University (D.Phil.). Kendall is the author of numerous books, including *Total Forgiveness*, *More of God, Word and Spirit*, and *We've Never Been This Way Before*.

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