

The Death of Elisha: Pushing the Limits

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Preacher: Andy Lutz

[0:00] We're glad to welcome Pastor Andy Lutz from Edgewood Baptist Church to come and preach God's Word to us. Before he comes, let's stand together for this reading from God's Word, 2 Kings 13, beginning in verse 10.

In the thirty-seventh year of Joash, king of Judah, Joash, son of Jehoahaz, became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned sixteen years. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to commit.

He continued in them. As for the other events of the reign of Jehoash, all he did and his achievements, including his war against Amaziah, king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?

Jehoash rested with his fathers, and Jeroboam succeeded him on the throne. Jehoash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. Now Elisha was suffering from the illness from which he died. Jehoash, king of Israel, went down to see him and wept over him. My father, my father, he cried, the chariots and horsemen of Israel. Elisha said, get a bow and some arrows.

[1:13] And he did so. Take the bow in your hands, he said to the king of Israel. When he had taken it, Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. Open the east window, he said.

And he opened it. Shoot, Elisha said. And he shot. The Lord's arrow of victory. The arrow of victory over Aram, Elisha declared. You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek.

And he said, take the arrows. And the king took them. Elisha told him, strike the ground. He struck it three times and stopped. The man of God was angry with him and said, you should have struck the ground five or six times.

Then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times. Elisha died and was buried. Now, Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring.

Once, while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders. So they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet.

[2:15] Hazael, king of Aram, oppressed Israel throughout the reign of Jehoahaz. But the Lord was gracious to them and had compassion and showed concern for them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

To this day he has been unwilling to destroy them or banish them from his presence. Hazael, king of Aram, died and Ben-Hadad, his son, succeeded him as king. And Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz, recaptured from Ben-Hadad, son of Hazael, the towns he had taken in battle from his father, Jehoahaz.

Three times Jehoash defeated him and so he recovered the Israelite towns. I again will reiterate what I said this morning.

I bring greetings from Edgewood and from the people there and from my father and mother as well. Breenman is a special place to us. Pastor John, it's good to see you.

I'm glad you've had time away. But your pastor has been a real encouragement to me. Maybe not known to him, but just the notes and the things that he's written. And just his faithfulness here is a great testimony to me as a younger pastor.

[3:28] But I'm thankful for you all and thankful to be here. It's been a few years. So if you have your Bibles open already, you want to look at 2 Kings chapter 13 and verses 10 through 25 that Aaron has read for us.

It's really an exciting story. If you're taking notes and you need sermon titles, that kind of thing, this is the death of Elisha pushing the limits. So that would be the title I would give it.

Not known for my titles. So there you go. The death of Elisha pushing the limits. Hopefully it'll make sense by the end, though. That's what we're shooting for.

And hopefully the Word of God will be clearly seen. This is an intriguing passage. Elisha is an intriguing character. I don't know. He's one that you're probably familiar with. Even the children here, you've studied stories of Elisha.

Elisha is an amazing figure in Scripture. He's representative of the Word of God. That in the Old Testament, you have to remember, they didn't have the Bible the way that we have the Bible now. [4:31] It wasn't closed in the canon so that you have this book. And that's all that there is. There was continuing revelation. And so they had the first five books of the Bible at this point.

But this is new as far as what's going on. And Elisha was the mouthpiece of God. And he was one who followed in the footsteps of Elijah. But Elisha now was representative of the Word of God. So what he spoke was very much like what we do when we read our Bible. That his words were taken with such authority and with such power. And it's neat if you go back and study. But Elisha wasn't that greatly respected among certain people of the day and age. But others flocked to the house where he was. And they would have church services much like what we would have today.

And they would go to the prophet's house wanting to hear the Word of God. And he was that mouthpiece. Now we come to the end of his ministry. And Elisha is also an interesting figure in that he's one of the few biblical figures that we have.

[5:35] That doesn't have a marring story in his life. There's no real account of Elisha where there's this great falling or failing in his life. And so even with King David that we looked at the psalm this morning.

We all know the story of Bathsheba and the incident there. Elisha is one that as we come to the end of his life. Maybe we're expecting great things. Particularly if you went and studied in the context of his mentor and the one he followed with Elijah.

Children, do you know the story of Elijah? How did Elisha die? Or Elijah die? If you're like me, you get the two confused. He didn't, did he? He was at the end of his life taken up in a chariot of fire. Just an amazing story. Something that blows our mind. It's just a picture that's hard to image. But hopefully if you've had that Sunday school lesson, you at least know that. Well, now we come to the end of the man who took his place, Elisha.

And we come to his death. And you're wondering, what's it going to be like? What kind of death is he going to have? And we come to it and we read, Now Elisha had fallen sick with an illness of which he was to die.

[6:42] Pretty big letdown. He got cancer. Toiled with it for a few years. Fought it. Thought maybe he'd fight it off.

Ended up relapsed. Died. Maybe it was pneumonia. Maybe, you know, he'd caught a little bit of pneumonia. Don't know exactly what he died of. But it's pretty much a lot of what the end of our lives will be like, isn't it?

We're going to catch some disease and we're going to die. I read a story this week. We all want the heroic death of some kind, at least to some place.

Maybe guys fantasize it about a little more than ladies do. I don't know. But I read about a 60-some-year-old triathlete this week who was competing in a triathlon. And she evidently is the top in the world at her age.

She's won several this year and died in a biking accident. In that triathlon. Now for us, you know, you think, well, she died doing what she loved.

[7:43] It kind of goes with it. The death seems to match the life. James Dean is one of those that is often looked at. Particularly in this state of Indiana where we drive right by it to come to Bremen it seems.

Or at least on our way to Marion we do. His birthplace that dies in the famous car accident along the side of the road. Flashy life, flashy death. Apostles even.

St. Andrew is one that has a wonderful story. Since my name is Andy, I like it. But St. Andrew hung on a cross supposedly for two days. And while he hung on the cross for two days waiting his death, he preaches the gospel for two days hanging on the cross.

And so you have these different stories of these wonderful deaths. And then you get to this character of Elisha who is this wonderful mouthpiece of God. This wonderful figure. And what do we

get?

But he got sick. And he was going to die being sick. And he ended up dying because he got sick. And that's it. What are the lessons we learn from the death of Elisha and this account that we have before us?

[8:50] First of all, in looking at the limits, we have to understand we like Elisha. This is one of the ways in which we directly connect to him, this man who had this wonderful life, who was this mouthpiece of God.

We find out at the end of his life he was but a mere human. We are limited. We are limited by our humanity. We are limited by being in a fallen world.

From evil kings to the most godly men, we are limited by our humanity. Verse 14. Now when Elisha had fallen sick with the illness of which he was to die.

As if it was no mistake that Elisha should die. Now you say, the most profound thing to come out of your mouth. But it wasn't because Elisha had turned from God that he died.

It wasn't because Elisha had displeased God that he died. It simply was because he was a man living in a fallen world. It's not even a glorious death or not even a glorious exit.

[9:56] He got sick and was going to die. Hebrews 9 verse 27. And just as it is appointed for a man to die once and after that comes judgment. If you are a man or a woman, it is appointed for you a time to die.

If you are a young boy or a young girl, it is appointed for you a time to die. That covers all of us.

In ourselves, we can do all that we can do in a span of 70 years, 30 years, 90 years.

But in the end, it can all be summed up very simply. He slept with his fathers. That's a nice way of saying he died in the Old Testament.

He followed in the same way that his dad did. He died. And his son was going to follow in the same way that his father did. He died. There's a point being made here as they continue in.

[11:06] There's two different points that seem to be within the book of Kings. One, whether they did good or whether they did evil. And two, that they died just like their father died. My wife loves the History Channel.

I watch it with her sometimes. I'm more ESPN. I'm sorry. But I do watch the History Channel with her on a given occasion.

And we watched a bit on the Greek inventors. I do happen to like some of the Greek ideas. They're not necessarily the philosophies and so forth. But just the history of the Greek culture is interesting. And they were doing a study on the life of Archimedes. And I'm not going to try to convince you that I'm an authority on this subject. All right. But anyway, he was one, according to the History Channel and the most other accounts that would agree with the History Channel.

In this case, one of the greatest inventors and mathematicians of his day and in any generation that ever been. Supposedly, he was inventing the likes of computers back in, get me right here, 200 years before Christ was ever born.

[12:13] So, if I've got that part of the history right. 200 years before Christ was born, this man was inventing what would be defined as a computer.

In other words, it didn't have electricity, but input in, data out. All right. That's the simplest definition of a computer that he made through wheels and dials and different things like a clockwork.

Something where you could compute something in. Say, I want to figure out what this is, what day this is going to fall on. And his computer would compute out what day they would have a full moon or something of the like.

So, this man, back 200 years before Christ, had invented this. Some suggested that he invented machines that could lift attacking ships up out of the water and could set the ships on fire with mirrors at the same time.

There are very few details that are fully known about his life and even his inventions, though.

Because most of his writings were destroyed and many of his inventions were lost.

[13:20] He died at the hands of a Roman soldier and his last words are recorded, do not disturb my circles. And his circles were what were his computers.

That man lived an unbelievable life. But he died at the hands of a Roman soldier who didn't have mercy, who didn't have care, who didn't care about his circles.

All of his work was destroyed in the fires of the invasions. When they would invade the country, they destroyed the library where all of his work was contained. No respect, nothing given.

We can do whatever we want to do within the span of our years. Some of us will have greater greatness than others.

But in the end, we'll all sleep with our fathers. You look at the older people around you, those that are young. Life has a strange irony about it.

[14:29] We have men in our church that played for Bear Bryant and you'd never know it. They're old. They can't make it to church a lot because of diseases and aches and pains.

We have another man that pitched semi-pro baseball and was a race car driver. And if I didn't tell my children, they'd never know it by looking at him.

We get old. Some disease infects us. And we're going to die from it. It feels a bit fatalistic, doesn't it? Who invited this guy to come preach at our church?

But it is a foundational reality that we have to set before us and that Kings is constantly setting before us because we can tend to live for all of this world.

And we will by nature. We'll live for our circles. And God is through the writings of Kings and through his prophets and through his words saying, there's something greater.

[15:35] We are limited. In that it is appointed once for man to die and then to face judgment.

Secondly, we put wrong limits and expectations on ourselves. The wrong limits and expectations on ourselves are often that we have wrong ideas of what is important.

That we get the world turned upside down from the way that God wants it. We read this morning in the book of Acts that Jason and his brothers, what was it said of them? These men turned the world upside down.

It should be or could be said they turned it right side up. That we by our fall and by our human nature have flipped the world so that it is not about God and his glory and what he delights in, but rather it is about the here and now and the fruit on the trees.

That which is withering and perishing. Jehoash, as we read in the story, is the connection we have to Elisha's death. But he reigned 16 years and God sums up his entire reign in four verses.

[16:46] He then adds the account of his encounter with Elisha for good reason that we'll look at. But God sums up a man's life of 16 years of reigning over the people of God in a matter of four verses.

And Ridley notes very little about his reign. You read that in verses 10 through 13. There are just those simple four verses. It basically says he lived, he died, and he did some stuff.

But that really doesn't matter. He did what was evil in the sight of God. That's my summary. It would be in effect like saying Andy Lutz was a pastor at Edgewood Baptist Church for 16 years.

He followed his father. You can read more about this somewhere else if you really so desire. He died just like his dad died. They buried him at some cemetery in Anderson. I'm guessing most of us want a little more in the newspaper when we die than that.

I mean, you can stop the flattery and the niceties all anytime you want here, you know. Andy Lutz was a pastor. He lived and he died just like his dad did. They buried him somewhere. If you want more, go find it yourself.

[17:51] And we know that it's in the book of Chronicles. But the thrust here in the book of Kings is thrusting us to a central place. You know, the only thing that I didn't add in here in mind is that he continued in the sins of his fathers and led the people in them.

I didn't want to add that to any hypothetical summary of my ministry. But as you look at the niceries and the flatteries that are put in here, that's about all that's added in there that I left off.

He lived, he died. Oh yeah, he followed in the sins of his father and he led people in the sins of his father. I'm guessing.

And I'm a pretty good guesser on this, that he accomplished more in 16 years than that. And in fact, it hints to us at the end of the text there in verse 13 or in verse 12 that he did more than that.

You want to go read about all that he did and his might and how he fought against Amaziah the king of Judah, go to the book of Chronicles and read it. I'm sure he made some peace treaties with some country that allowed enterprise and free trade between those countries within a 16 year reign.

[19:11] I'm sure that he made some wonderful financial deals that he brought about change in some way in the country. I'm guessing he had some friends, probably some good friends, probably threw a good party or two in the palace, probably had some friends that spoke very highly of them.

Maybe he even graduated valedictorian of his class in Samaria University of whatever, had ribbons hanging around his neck, gold sashes, whatever it may have been.

He might have had a master's degree from Samaria State University. He may have been very good at social diplomatic areas. And I'm sure that he accomplished much within 16 years.

The writer is, in essence, telling us it doesn't matter. The book of Kings is constantly telling us, get it right. Here's what's important.

What did he do in the eyes of God? Did he do right or did he do evil? It's only what is done before the eyes of God that really matters. There's an old saying that says, only one life will soon be passed.

[20 : 19] Only what's done for Christ will last. That, in essence, is the theme of the book of Kings. It is constantly pointing us forward to Christ, saying there's a greater and final king coming.

But then, ultimately, at the same time, saying that there is this great king where all of these other kings fall short. This king will be the perfect king. At the same time, it's saying, look to that king. But also know that only what's done for that king and that kingdom will ultimately ever matter. Only one life will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last.

Four verses sum up his entire life. But there is a detailed, detailed account of one encounter with Elisha.

Why is that? Was this to show us that this king, Jehoash, really liked Elisha? I'm going to suggest to you, for the sake of time, the answer is no.

[21 : 19] He did not have a great respect for Elisha. He could have encountered him any other time up into this 16-year reign. Until this point, he hears that Elisha is dying. And that's not the answer.

Was it just to give Elisha another cameo appearance before his death? No, this is not the way that scripture works. Scripture sets before us God and his majesty and his might. And yes, it does tell us stories of men.

But this wasn't the way that God normally accounts for scripture just to give men cameos. It was an encounter with the man that was the mouthpiece of God. And what it's bringing us to is saying, how did this king, Jehoash, respond to the word of God?

And I'll be it brief. This is one of the greatest sermons ever preached in terms of just the power and the dynamics and the energy.

You've got a dying man on his deathbed that's sick. And a king comes in and he enters into the room. And this is like Newt Rockne. We're all Notre Dame fans here anyway, right? This is close to South Bend.

[22 : 26] All right. Forgive me for that as well. This is like a Newt Rockne pregame speech. And it is just from a presentation standpoint, just a wonderful sermon.

If you just look at it, here is this old dying man who has an energy and the gusto at this point in life to lay his hand upon this hand of this king. And then he comes in looking for some advice from Elisha.

And as Elisha puts his hand upon it, he says, OK, now, young man, open the window. And he opens the right window. And then he says, OK, I want you to take shoot.

This is the Lord's arrow of victory. It's the arrow of victory over Syria. Take and shoot the arrow of victory over Syria. Take the arrow.

Strike the ground. Fire them into the ground. Fire them into the ground. Can you get it? It's much like that kind of pregame speech. Does this not get your blood pumping that here is this dying man with his hand upon the king's hand saying, Come on, man, open the window.

[23 : 29] Shoot the arrows. This is the victory of the Lord for Israel, his people. He's going to fight for you. He's going to give you victory over your enemies.

Fire the arrows into the ground. And here's how pumped up Jehoash got at the word of the Lord. He fired three arrows and stopped.

And the emphasis in the text is on the fact that he stopped. He was satisfied.

He went through the motions. He sang the final hymn. Bowed his head when they prayed. And left. He cared very little.

And let me just because you and I wouldn't understand it. You say, well, maybe he didn't get it. Maybe he didn't know that this was really symbolic of Israel's victory.

[24 : 29] You know, he's kind of going through it thinking, why am I shooting arrows out windows? This guy lost his mental capacity as well as his health. It's not what's going on here that he understood in that day and age.

There was great symbolism. Even God in dealing with his people had great symbolism. When he'd make a covenant, he would have the dead animals. They'd walk between the body parts. This was something that may be foreign to our culture, but it was in their culture.

And they knew it with a preciseness. And this king would have known what was going on. That you don't just go shoot arrows out windows. That this was somewhat customary for kings to go and to shoot arrows out of windows in order to symbolize the victory.

He knew exactly what was going on. He cared very little about what was going on. He went through the motions, but he did not empty his quiver of arrows.

He gave enough that he hoped Elisha was satisfied. Maybe God was satisfied, but he stopped. And the question that's set before us in this account is, how do you respond to the word of God?

[25 : 32] It is so easy to go through the motions. We do it every week. You hear faithfully from the word of God week in, week out.

You hear, thus says the Lord. You're not getting fluff. You're getting substance. And you're being fed from the word of God. The answer, the question is then at that point, how do you respond to the word of God?

Art Monk was inducted into the Hall of Fame for the football NFL this year. He was a red skin wide receiver. I don't use NFL players too often in sermons.

But we happened to catch part of his speech, and it was one of the great speeches that I've ever heard a man give. I don't know if you've read it.

You need to go read it. I know that the NFL Network, I told Heather as we were watching, I would go, this is going to be impossible to get God out of this speech. Let these guys try. There's no way they can do it.

[26 : 31] Somehow the NFL Network successfully took all scripture references and God references out of the speech. It was just unbelievable because I went to try to find it on YouTube. And it's, don't go there.

Go find the written one online somewhere and read his testimony. But it was interesting because here's a man who's waited for seven years to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. He's been overlooked. He's had the statistics.

He's had the numbers. Didn't get in. Didn't get in. Didn't get in. And got, I think, a four or ten minute standing ovation just as he was inducted into the Hall of Fame. And he is one of the great all-time wide receivers to ever play the game.

And on his induction speech, here's what he wanted to say. And his son gave a wonderful introduction that echoed and solidified everything that Art Monk said.

But he says, that's right. Even now as a Hall of Famer, the one thing I want to make very clear is that my identity and my security is found in the Lord. And what defines me and my validation comes in having accepted his son, Jesus Christ, as my personal Savior.

[27 : 36] And what defines me is the Word of God. And it's the Word of God that will continue to shape and mold me into the person that I know he has called me to be. That's a man that responds to the Word of God.

He gets it. He didn't go through the motions. What about you? How do you respond to the Word of God? Where are your treasures? This is the question that's being begged.

What is it that you're living for? When we understand and we respond rightfully for the Word of God, we live for the Word of God. We live for the being of God.

That we find our identity in His Word. We find our identity in the Word of God made flesh. It's the wonderful picture that when we come to Christ and a personal relationship with Christ, what is it that it is about Christ that we need to understand?

That in the beginning, the Word was with God and the Word was God. Who is this Word? The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Do you love Christ?

[28 : 42] Do you know Christ? How do you respond to the Word of God? Is He your all? Are you just going through the motions?

Or do you understand what it is to have victory and life in Jesus Christ? Secondly, we have a wrong idea of what can be accomplished through God's power.

I understand, Joash, I do not believe to be a Christian according to what we find, that he did evil in the sight of the Lord. I think that's clearly spoken. But we, even as Christians, and particularly those as non-Christians, are guilty of this half-heartedness, are we not?

We know the power of God, particularly as Christians. We have the power of God. And we only shoot half our arrows. Here's an ungodly man that angers the prophet of God, particularly because he was the leader of the people of God, rightfully angered the prophet of God.

But here are we, the people of God, who know the power of God, who have tasted the power of God, who have the power of God. And how do we live? I would suggest we are too easily satisfied. [29:55] Where are the William Careys of our day and age? I'm not saying you have to go to the mission field. Not at all. I hope God calls people to the mission field, but shouldn't we all have the same attitude?

Whether you work in a secular employment, whether you go to a public high school, whether you work here vocationally in some ministry.

It doesn't have to be in Spain or Mexico or China. We need people proclaiming the gospel there, but we need people living in the power of God here as well.

And so don't get what I'm saying wrong. I want people to go to the mission field, but when I ask where are the William Careys, it is not just that they have to be on a mission field. William Carey said, and this is a summary of what he said in his great sermon in wanting to go to the mission field, expect great things for God, attempt great things for God.

This six-word catchphrase has a challenge to many in Carey's day and is an ongoing challenge to the present church today. Human strength and human schemes will fail in the expansion of God's kingdom.

[31:01] It must be God's work. Thus, we need to pray and expect great things from him. But to sit blithely by and wait for God to act without us is equally wrong-headed.

We must pray and then, trusting in God completely, get going and attempt great things. And I would suggest, and because you don't know me as well as you know your own pastors, we hold to the same confession of faith, I believe deeply in the sovereignty of God.

I believe it is something that is central to Scripture. But it is possible that we are wrongly allowing a view of the sovereignty of God to cause us to limit our expectations of what He, God, can, will, or what He can and will do through us.

That we wrongly limit our expectations. That we have almost adopted a let-go-and-let-God attitude. But here, within this context of Jehoshaphat, that God knows how many victories He will give, and yet there's a responsibility of Jehoshaphat to fire the arrows into the ground.

We're not going to do anything without His power, but we have His power, so let's attempt great things and expect great things from Him. Here in the text, the sovereignty and responsibility are intertwined.

[32:28] The blame for the limited power and the limited victory, though, you must note, never rests upon God. The limited power and the limited victory, the fact that they defeated Syria three times and annihilated them and had complete victory, rests upon Jehoshaphat.

Spurgeon writes, There stood Jehoshaphat, an unworthy king, and yet in his hands lay measurably the destiny of his people. If he will take those arrows and will shoot five or six times, their great enemy will be broken into pieces.

Do remember that and recollect in what a position of a responsibility you may be placed many a times in your life and how needful it is that the grace of God should be with you to guide you that you may not be an injury to others by what you do not do or what you leave undone.

God saves us in our sin and in our weakness. He saves us as wretches and worms and sinners and those that don't deserve grace, don't deserve mercy.

But he does not intend for us to live that way nor does he leave us that way after he saves us. Do you understand? Romans 8, Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness.

[33:58] We in ourselves are weak for we do not know what to pray as we ought. But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is in the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

And we know that those whom God loves, all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those whom he predestined, he also called. And those whom he called, he also justified. And those whom he justified, he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us,

who can be against us?

He did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all. How will he not also, with him, graciously give us all things? Who can bring any charge against God's elect if it is God who justifies?

Who is it to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died, more than that, who raised, and who is at the right hand of God, who will be indeed interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

[35 : 05] Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, for your sake, we are being killed all day long. We are being regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.

Knowing all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor the things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor heights, nor depths, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

That is the power of a Christian. Although we were saved as wretches, although we were saved as sinners, as though we were saved in our weakness, and in our helplessness, and in our deadness, when he saves us, he does not intend for us to stay that way, nor live that way, but we have the Spirit of God interceding for us.

Alright? And here is this picture that he's giving to us. We have the Spirit of God when we don't know what to say, he is there interceding before us, before God the Father, that he's praying what we don't know how to pray. Not only that, but who is it that has justified you?

It is God that has justified you. How has he done it? How has he made you right? It's through the work of Jesus Christ. And what is he doing? He's at the right hand of God interceding for us. So there's this wonderful picture of the whole Trinity, of the whole Godhead that's interceding on our behalf.

[36 : 23] And at this point, Paul exclaims, if God is for us, who can be against us? We're more than conquerors. We were just in our weakness a second ago, but now we have the Spirit interceding for us, we have Christ interceding for us, and we have God acting on our behalf.

If we know and have the power of God, let us not limit what God can and will do through us. That is not pride. And you notice the thing that he did wasn't that great.

All he had to do was shoot some arrows out the window. It wasn't like he had to mastermize this wonderful plan of victory. And very often it is the same for us. It is just the faithfulness. And again, going back to Jason in the book of Acts, what was it that they did?

Was it turned the world upside down? Was it something so great? Actually, they lived the life of Jesus Christ and they proclaimed Jesus Christ. That's not that great.

Except it comes with the power of God. It's faithful. There's a new book out now.

[37 : 36] I haven't received mine. It's on order. It's called Do Hard Things. I'm not sure if anybody's read it here. It's by Josh Harris' Little Brothers. But just the caption on the back of the book, since I haven't received mine yet, I've read bits and pieces of it online, capsulizes what I want to say.

John Piper writes, adult expectations for youth are too low and these twins are out to raise them. Don't adapt to the low culture's expectations for youth. Set high ones. Youth can become examples for adults.

Think that way. Dream that way. Or as the Harris brothers would say, rebel against low expectations. May God give us a vision for the next generation that glorifies the gospel of Christ and leads thousands of young people to the cross where they find forgiveness of sins and brokenhearted humility and Christ's exalting courage to rebel against low expectations and do hard things.

And I would suggest that is for the teenagers. But that's not just for the teenagers. Within the church of Jesus Christ, we have low expectations. We live apathetic, contented lives with apathy. We are content to do what we have to do to get by in terms of God's kingdom. Expect great things from God.

[38 : 54] Attempt great things for God. Lastly, we must not, must not limit God. There's more to the story in Elisha's death.

He died a very ordinary death. They buried him in a very ordinary way. In a cave. This is what happens here. They buried him in a cave. And so now at the end of the story, you find that they take these bones of this dead man.

As the enemies are coming, they thrust him into the cave. They chuck him into the cave. They throw him in there. And what happens? But the bones, or the body of this dead man happens to hit the bones of Elisha. And the man walks back out of the cave.

That is an unreal story. So much unreal that many skeptics today want to say, well, what is this? Is this witchcraft? What's going on? Is this real? Is this just some fictitious story that men made up? This seems so unreal. For the sake of time, I'll be willing to go through the debate with you at another time. It is real and it is not witchcraft.

[40:00] And in fact, just to help enforce what's going on here, God does this many other times within Scripture. And He even does it within the New Testament that at the death of Christ, what happened?

But dead men came to life. God is in the business of making dead men come to life. Surely He can make the literally dead come to life and He can make the spiritually dead come to life. And He shows us what power He has that while He's appointed once for us to die, God is the one that has power over life and death.

So you better live before Him. What do you do in the eyes of God? It is symbolic of His power. It is symbolic over this victory of a death. And in this case, the symbolic metaphor here is that there is hope for the people of God.

When the original readers got this letter of the book of Kings, they were in captivity. wondering what's going to happen to the people of God. Does God not care about us?

Can God overcome Persia, Babylon? And the story was, Elisha may be dead, but God's power is not removed.

[41:18] And I would encourage you that there may be times when we feel like that. We say, we went to some great retreat and retreat is over.

How can I keep this up? Some of you hopefully feel this way about the Lord's Day when you come in on Sunday and you get stirred by the Word of God and you say, how do I keep this?

How do I hold on to this? How do I make sure that this has an impact in my life? Let me reassure you that some of it is founding yourself in this basic principle and this basic truth that it is God who is the power and if you are His child, you have that power with you, whether in this sanctuary or out of this sanctuary.

You need to come into this place, but you have the power of God present within you. God is not gone. The power of God remains.

What kind of power does He have? Psalm 29 tells us it's like thunder. He's over the waters.

[42:27] We watch as a hurricane embarks. Who can control the winds and the waves? Be still. The voice of the Lord is powerful.

The voice of the Lord is majestic. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, the great trees. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He makes the calves to skip. He flashes forth flames of fire.

The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness. He gives birth to the deer. He strips the forest bare.

And in His temple all cry glory. Brothers and sisters in Christ, we have this power.

power. It is not of ourselves. But God in His grace has given us this power. Let us not live apathetic. Let us not limit expectations for what God can and will do through us. Let us not limit God. The first application, and I'll just make three simple applications. One, be gods.

[43:28] That is the first application that I can set before you and the most important application is that in order to have this power, you must be gods. In order to know the power of the word of God, you must be with the word of God.

That you must be in Christ. You want on the side of this power. It is appointed for all men to die. Who stands judge?

Christ. If God is for us, who can be against us? There's another side to that story. There will be those that are against us. But they will not succeed.

Be on God's side. This is why Christ came. That He might die for sinners. That He might give life and power and give it with abundance.

Go to Christ. Ask for forgiveness of sins. For forgiveness of pride that has kept you from coming to Christ up until this point. For trying to do it on your own. For trying to limit God.

[44:30] For having such expectations of simply going through the motions but not resting in God. Secondly, be faithful. Great power comes in small acts.

And when we try great acts, very often we branch out and do it on our own. Make sure you're being faithful in all of the small areas. The great acts will come. Many of the great acts that we have seen in history have simply been men being faithful to the Word of God.

Martin Luther was faithful to the Word of God. What he did required courage and it required him to rest in God but he was simply stating the Word of God, stating the truth of God and standing for it. And so with that, not only be faithful but be courageous and be strong for God intends for Christians to live victoriously. Don't back down when there's resistance to being faithful.

Expect great things from God. Attempt great things from God. Let's pray. Our Father, give us hearts that desire to respond to your Word.

[45:43] Father, remind us that the Spirit intercedes for us, Christ intercedes for us. Father, help us to live victoriously. Father, sin easily entangles us but Father, you have given us victory over sin in Christ.

Father, the fear of man is so easy within our lives but if God is for us, who can be against us? Help us to be faithful in all areas. Father, that we might have those who would be like the William Careys and the Martin Luthers.

Father, that your Word will be set forth, that your Word will go forth with power. Father, that hearts will be changed, that men and women will be saved. Father, we pray for those present among us that your Spirit would be here with us, stirring hearts.

Father, we all must stand before you. What will be the account? Did we do evil or do we do what was right in the eyes of God? Father, let some run to Christ this morning.

Father, let us go out from this place. Father, may this be the beginning. May this not be the end.

Father, may you do great things among your people.

[47:02] Not for our glory, not for our namesake, not for our place in history, but for your kingdom to come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We pray this in your Son's name. Amen.