Message for posting

**Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant**

**1 Kings 19:19-21**

**Key Verse 21**

**“21 So Elisha left him and went back. 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 servant.”**

Have you heard “all in” or “put all your eggs in one basket”? “All in” in gambling is a negative term because poker player or gambler bets all of his or her chips on a single hand out of frustration. “Put all your eggs in one basket” is a concept of investment. People say, “don’t put all your eggs in one basket” because that is too risky.

This negative idea was favored by Elisha when he was called by God. When he went back to kiss his father and mother goodbye, he did not need to slaughter his oxen or burn his plowing equipment. But he did. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant.

God calls all Christians. Many of us were all called by the Lord. Some will be called by the Lord later. And God’s calling is not just a one-time event. It needs to be renewed as many times as needed. In our renewal of God’s calling the Lord wants us to learn from Elisha about how we should respond to his calling.

Look at verse 19a.

**So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat.** The hometown of Elisha was Abel Meholah according to verse 16. Abel is about 23 miles South of the Sea of Galilee and it is about 10 miles South of Jezreel. It is located right near the Jordan River. (show the map)

**19 So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair.**

When Elijah found Elisha, he was working. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. As we see in the map of his hometown it was right by the Jordan River. So, it must be the best part of farming land in Israel because of plenty of water. But during 3.5 years of complete drought the Jordan River must have been almost dried out if not completely. Now the heavy rain came down, and it was such a joyful occasion for farmers, and they were working hard, plowing fields to plant and sowi. And Elisha was one of them. And God’s calling came to him in such a busy and important time of farming.

Elisha was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. It means his family or he was rich, owning 24 oxen. In those days, people were very poor, and to have twelve pairs of oxen could be equal to having twelve tractors. Although he was rich or a son of a rich family he did not idle. He worked hard. He himself was driving the twelfth pair together with other workers.

Elisha’s call from God came when Elisha worked hard. God wants his people to be faithful in their jobs and given situations. He wants his people to be diligent, discharging their obligation faithfully in the given situation. It is because those who are faithful in little things will be faithful to greater things.

**Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him.**

“Cloak” was the symbol of the ministry of prophets. Throwing cloak around Elisha meant the Lord was calling Elisha as a successor of Elijah as a prophet.

God’s calling comes in many ways. But generally, the Lord calls people through other people. Although no one is perfect, the Lord uses his people to call others. The Lord used Elijah to call Elisha.

**20 Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah.**

Elisha knew the meaning of receiving Elijah’s cloak. We do not know whether he knew Elijah personally or not. But at least he must have heard about him. So when Elijah threw his cloak around him, he left his oxen and ran after Elijah. He did not want to lose Elijah. So he ran after Elijah. Elijah threw his cloak around Elisha and must have left him, and that was why Elisha should have run after him not to lose him. Then Elisha said to Elijah.

**“Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye,” “and then I will come with you.”** This sounds like hesitation. But that is not the case because he wanted to say his parents goodbye not to hesitate but to seal his calling. **“Go back,” Elijah replied. “What have I done to you?”**

“What have I done to you?” probably means “I didn’t do anything to stop you. Go back and do as you want.”

**21 So Elisha left him and went back. 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 servant.**

So probably Elijah told Elisah where he could find him after going back to kiss his father and mother goodbye. But what Elisha did was more than kissing his parents.

Here we can learn three things from Elisha when he was called by the Lord.

**First, Elisha chose to live poorly by walking away from his wealth.**

**Second, Elisha burned his bridges behind him by slaughtering his oxen and burned his plowing equipment and followed Elijah.**

**Third, Elisha became Elijah’s servant.**

**First, Elisha chose to live poorly by walking away from his wealth.**

He was a son of a rich family. He might be the heir of his whole family who were rich. But he gave up his wealth and decided to live poorly. We know how challenging it is to live poorly. We all know it is easy to move from a two bedroom house to a three-bedroom house. But it is very challenging to move from a three-bedroom house to a two-bedroom house.

Elijah was the most wanted man in his country. To follow Elijah means the life of poverty. But Elisha chose to live poorly. His decision reminds me of our Lord.

**2 Corinthians 8:9**

**9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ became poor for our sake although he was rich. He became poor so that we might become rich through his poverty. He gave all he had for us, and that was how he made us rich and he became poor.

There is one man whom I respect. His name is John Robbins. Do you know him? He was known as the man who walked away from Baskin-Robbins.

He was the heir of Baskin-Robbins, the ice cream chain. When John Robbins was going to inherit such wealth he refused. Instead he became an author of books where he promoted health diet like vegan diet. Basically, he was working against the ice-cream industry. I respect him deeply because he walked away from such huge money and decided to do what he thought was right.

You know, Jesus said, money is the sole competitor of God when he said, “You cannot serve both Money and God.” John Robbins is a great American, and I truly respect him because he could walk away from such wealth and decide what was right in his opinion.

The bible shows how challenging it is to walk away from such wealth. Jesus said about one rich young ruler, “It would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

Apostle Paul learned such great faith when he said, “I can do all this through him who gives me strength”. He learned from how he could live in plenty and how he could live in poverty because the Lord gave him strength.

Elisha, a son of a rich family, chose to be poor in order to accept God’s calling for his life.

**Second, Elisha burned his bridges behind him by slaughtering his oxen and burned his plowing equipment and followed Elijah.**

Elisha did not need to slaughter his oxen and burn his plowing equipment. But he did. In this way he burned his bridges behind him. It was the expression of his commitment to follow the Lord. We don’t know how many times he could see his parents or relatives or friends. But he made such a commit to follow Elijah as if it was the last time he could meet them.

That commitment was taught by Jesus.

But Jesus said in **Matthew 13:44**

**“44 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”**

There is no way for the man to have both the field and all he had. He had to choose just one because he knew the value of the hidden treasure. So, he sold all he had and bought that field.

Elisha knew the value of his calling, and therefore he burned his bridges behind and all he had and bought the calling.

I know one Korean missionary who came to America. He thought he should never visit Korea at all and bury his bones in American soil. So, after marriage in Korea in two months, the first time he visited Korea was 21 years later. He remembered how he felt when I stepped on the Korean soil for the first time after 21 years. He remembered how he felt when he sang a hymn in Korean after 21 years. At that time, he realized the reason why the Lord Jesus spoke the local language when he preached the gospel. And he was humiliated by one of his former church members because he was trying to speak English instead of Korean.

**Third, Elisha became Elijah’s servant.**

God’s call for Elisha was to become a prophet. But the first thing Elisha did was to become Elijah’s servant. Do you think it is easy to become Elijah’s servant? No, not at all. As you know Elijah was not a perfect man although he was such a great prophet. Although Obadiah told him he did 100 prophets in a cave he kept saying and believing he was the only prophets left.

So, to become Elijah’s servant was not easy. But the Lord wanted to mold Elisha to become a prophet through becoming Elijah’s servant.

What do you think the Lord wanted Elisha to learn by becoming Elijah’s servant? Servant has the meaning of a slave, a voluntary slave. The answer is “humility.”

Recently I had a conversation with a great servant of God. He was a great man of God, but he was criticized and condemned by his own disciples so much. He went through unbearable accusations from them. And I wanted to learn from him about how he could overcome such criticism and despair. So, I asked him, “How did you overcome such severe accusations from your own disciples?”

Then he told me, “I learned humility comes from humiliation. Throughout my life people always spoke well of me. No one humiliated me because I was a top performer all the time in my life. But when I was criticized by my own disciples, I learned what it means to be humble. I believe humility comes from humiliation. So, when I was humiliated I accepted it as the will of God for me to learn humility.”

The Lord’s prophet should be humble. Humility is probably one of the most important virtues for all Christians to learn. It is because it is the very mindset of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Philippians 2:5-8**

**5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:**

**6 Who, being in very nature God,**

**did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;**

**7 rather, he made himself nothing**

**by taking the very natureof a servant,**

**being made in human likeness.**

**8 And being found in appearance as a man,**

**he humbled himself**

**by becoming obedient to death—**

**even death on a cross!**

Although Jesus was equal to God being in very nature of God, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross.

If we apply this to us this is what it means. We are all equal as humans. No one is better or worse than others, and we are completely equal as humans. Now can we make ourselves nothing before another man and become his servant? Probably not. But what was what Jesus did.

I believe humility is one of the most important qualities of Christians who receive God’s calling because our calling is to follow Jesus and Jesus made himself nothing.

How can we learn humility? Through being humiliated. On the cross, Jesus was naked and was humiliated. People insulted him and said, “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross and we will believe you.” “He who saved himself cannot save him.”

We don’t know how proud we are until we are humiliated. But the Lord wants his people to have his mindset which is humility.

Now many of us receive God’s calling in the past. But today’s passage is applicable for all of us because God’s calling should be renewed as many times as needed.

**2 Peter 1:10 “Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For it you do these things, you will never stumble.”**

Those who have received God’s calling should make every effort to confirm his calling and election. What if they do not? They will stumble. They may not lose their salvation or their position before the Lord. But they will stumble. They may even stumble periodically.

In sum, today we learn how Elisha responded to God’s calling through Elijah. First, he walked away from his wealth and chose to live poorly. Second, he burned his bridges behind him by slaughtering his oxen and burning his plowing equipment in order to follow Elijah. Third, he became Elijah’s servant and learned humility. Jesus Christ our Lord chose to be poor to make us rich. He committed himself to his Father’s will completely when he became flesh. He learned humility through humiliation. And we all need to make every effort to confirm our calling. Otherwise we will stumble.

One word: **Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant**