

The Double Portion
or
Filled with the Spirit.



by
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The Double Portion

or Filled with the Spirit.

Read 2 Kings ii ; John iv. 10-16 ; John xiv. 15-23 ;
Eph. v. 14-18.

—:o:—

That journey taken by Elijah and Elisha, commencing at Gilgal, and which did not terminate until they had passed over Jordan, as recorded in 2 Kings, chap. ii., is brim full of instruction, even to us who live to-day. All stands related to the deepest experience of the Christian life, and to the supreme blessing that is ours in Christ.

When the question at length is asked by Elijah : " What shall I do for thee ? " the answer is : " I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." He asked for the utmost, and he received it. In its character—and regarded typically—it is not unlike the blessing that Christ offers to us. " If thou knewest the gift of God," He says to the woman, " and *Who* it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, *thou wouldst have asked of Him*, and He would have given thee living water " (John iv. 10). Similarly we have only to *ask* and we shall receive ; to *seek* and we shall find ; to *knock* and it shall be opened to us. Next to the Cross, the supreme thing said of Christ by John the Baptist was : " This is He that baptiseth with the Holy Ghost."

But this blessing in all its fulness does not come to us as a matter of course, or automatically ; we must distinguish between the objective and the subjective. All is ours as in Christ before God, and in answer to faith, when we truly believe—forgiveness, justification, eternal life become ours as God's free gift to us. But all is not ours as regards the work of the Holy Spirit within us. Our own individual experience, our conscious blessing, is another thing. These come to us only through prayer and spiritual exercise.

Thus the apostle in his petitions for believers, recorded in Eph. iii, does not ask that they may be forgiven, or be assured of their place in Christ, but he does ask that they may be strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the *inner man*, and also that as a consequence of this, Christ may dwell in their hearts, and they may come to know the love of the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, in their immeasurable extent.

Moreover, he does not take for granted (although writing to such advanced Christians as those at Ephesus and elsewhere), they are filled with the Spirit. In a further passage we find he rather introduces the subject by way of exhortation : " Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess ; but be filled with the Spirit ; " and shows that this is dependent upon other conditions he mentions.

Bearing all this in mind, let us now turn to the second chapter of the Second Book of Kings, and to the story related therein, and see that Elisha had to pass through a certain process, and undergo some very definite tests, before the concluding stage was reached, and the final blessing became his. The narrative records an experience and progress of unexampled interest. Only when Elisha reaches a certain point does the full blessing become his.

Where did the journey begin ? We read :

" It came to pass when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal."

It began at Gilgal. Gilgal is the place of circumcision. The account given us in Joshua v. of the circumcising of the children of those who had fallen in the wilderness and who had not been circumcised by the way—contains an important lesson. If we compare Joshua v. 9 with Col. ii. 11-12, we shall better be able to discern what that lesson is.

Let us place the two passages side by side.

Joshua v. 9 :—

“ And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal (rolling) unto this day.”

Colossians ii. 11-12 :—

“ In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh, (not the sins of), by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye also are risen with Him, through the faith of the operation of God, Who hath raised Him from the dead.”

Circumcision, therefore, is the putting off the body of the flesh. Which does not mean the physical body, but flesh, as Scripture often speaks of it—man's sinful *condition* in regard to what he is as a moral and responsible creature. Man and his world, as such, are ended. When Christ appeared, there was no response but hatred. The flesh cannot please God, or produce anything for God. That life is brought to an end before God in the death of Christ. God has rolled away the reproach of Egypt.

In baptism we acknowledge this: “ Buried with Him by baptism unto death.” We have died with Christ, and have no life for the world. Our life now is connected with another sphere. So the apostle asks at the close of the same chapter in Colossians: “ Why as though living in the world? ”; which means, of course, that a Christian, as such, does not find his life in the things of this world—and then declares at the beginning of the next chapter: “ Your life is hid with Christ in God.” Christ is now our life, and all is in relation to another sphere, we are to seek “ those things which are above.”

At Gilgal the children of Israel entered the land, and the twelve stones taken out of Jordan were carried over and pitched there. This is where they were circumcised, and this explains the meaning of circumcision—identification with Christ in death and resurrection.

Having regard to this truth so vital to the Christian, how important to notice that the journey which was to be fraught with such glory to Elijah and blessing to Elisha commences from Gilgal.

There cannot be progress in the Christian life until this new start is made by the definite recognition of this fact. The flesh cannot be improved; nor can it yield anything for God. Neither philosophy, on the one hand, nor ritualism, on the other (which people follow according to their natural bent), is of any assistance here; the eye must be upon Christ alone, even as Elisha's gaze was upon Elijah. As we follow the narrative we shall see that this was the crux of the whole matter, until at last everything depended upon that one thing: "If ye *see* me."

TESTING.

There is no progress apart from testing. In the path of spiritual advancement, difficulties are sure to confront us. Obstacles must be surmounted. This is true in every department of life; how much more should we expect this law to obtain in the highest realm of all? The "double portion" will never be ours, unless we are willing to pay the price.

So Elisha found. Three times is the test applied. At Gilgal, at Bethel, at Jericho. Would he remain at any of these places? Each had become famous in the national history. Would Gilgal tempt him to remain? Would he, for the sake of its associations allow Elijah to proceed alone? As we have seen, its associations dated back to the time of Joshua and were intimately bound up with the conquest of Canaan; and it had been prominent ever since. In the time of Samuel, Gilgal is mentioned as one of the three places in his yearly circuit. But Elisha cannot be tempted to remain even at

Gilgal. Has Bethel sufficient attraction? There Jacob had seen the angels in his dream, and the ladder set up on earth with the top reaching to Heaven, "And, behold, the Lord stood above it." Jacob could never forget that scene or the gracious words then spoken to him. On his dying bed he remembers it. "God Almighty," he says, "appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, *and blessed me.*" He calls it "the House of God," and worships. Again the challenge comes: "Tarry here, I pray thee." But Elijah's company is preferred; and they proceed to Jericho. The children of Israel were never likely to forget what had occurred here. Such a manifestation of God's power was never likely to fade from their memories. Will Elisha remain here? The challenge comes, but the reply is the same.

Here is the test; can we mistake its significance? An untold blessing awaits Elisha, but he must be proved *worthy*. Will he stand the test? And it is of all importance to observe that the nature of the test is: How much is Elijah to him? Will anything be preferred? He passes from Gilgal to Bethel, and from Bethel to Jericho. At each place the challenge is the same: "Tarry here, I pray thee." And it is Elijah who says it, not someone else who says it, but on each occasion the reply is precisely in the same identical words: "As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, *I will not leave thee.*" Elijah's company is paramount.

And notice, too, there is no waste of words—not even a variation of words. There are times—times of travail, times of crisis—when we do well not to trust ourselves even to vary our language. Elisha would not trust himself to do so, and the fact that he adhered word for word to the same reply on each occasion proved that he placed the utmost importance upon the issue, and realised how much depended upon his answer. Yes, our answer to a challenge, and the very words in which our reply is couched, may mean victory or defeat. This solemn asseveration was felt by Elisha to be the only one befitting the circumstances: "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, *I will not leave thee.*" And from this language he would not deviate.

THE SONS OF THE PROPHETS—

A CONTRAST.

This chapter not only affords us an example but a *warning*. The sons of the prophets are also mentioned three times, and we may learn a lesson from them, though of a different character. They represent a class which is to be met with at all times, and which exists to-day; people who are not without information and some measure of intelligence; and who are not uninterested. Moreover, in this particular instance they are “*sons of the prophets*”; they have an official position; and are of some importance; but they are not prepared to commit themselves to anything which they consider extreme, as we shall see; with the consequence that, while retaining their position and reputation, they never attain to the “*double portion.*” No vision of an ascending Elijah is for them.

These “*sons of the prophets*” manifest an interest in Elijah’s journey and its effect upon Elisha. They came forth and said to him: “*Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?*” This statement was perfectly accurate but it told nothing of what the loss of his master might mean to him, or of the untold blessing that awaited him. Of the real meaning of Elijah’s departure they knew nothing. And Elisha meets it as it deserves: “*Hold ye your peace.*” At Jericho we meet them again with the same question. It receives the same answer.

But as the two men, Elijah and Elisha, proceed, the interest in them seems to deepen; and we read in verse 7 that “*fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood to view afar off; and they two stood by Jordan.*”

Are we content with this, standing to “*view afar off?*” Are we content to be almost within sight of the blessing? Can we be satisfied even to *see* it and not to *share* it? How easily possible this is! What a vast number are content to view “*afar off,*” who never enter the promised land!

In Elisha we see just the opposite of this. As the journey proceeds, we see him walking with firmer tread, and more determined air. He is set for the end of the journey. "I will not leave *thee*," he has repeated three times, and he adheres to it. But for this utter going on—this entire surrender of himself to *one* thing—the blessing never would have been his.

Moreover, as we follow the narrative we see the intimacy between the two men deepens and the contact becomes closer. At first when they left Gilgal, it states: "So they went down to Bethel." Next: "So they came to Jericho" (verse 4). But when Jordan is about to be reached—that which must either divide them or make them one—we read: "And they two went on." "They two," as if so far as that journey was concerned, there were no others in all the world beside. Again: "They two stood by Jordan." "They two went over on dry ground." Until at last it says: "As they still went on and *talked*." No record remains of that last conversation; and we cannot attempt to imagine it. But the journey's end is reached, the separation from the master is about to take place; the mantle is about to fall, and the "double portion" be given. Every test has been met, and the course has been run to its close.

It is well to notice, for an important lesson attaches to it, that only when the last stage has been reached, and Jordan crossed, does Elijah say: "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken from thee." That was not said at the commencement of the journey. No mention was made of it at Gilgal, Bethel or Jericho. There was no proposal of any sort on Elijah's part just to persuade Elisha to accompany him. He did not say: "Come with me and see what I will do for you." The whole point—that upon which everything depended—was this simple one (but it meant everything)—how much was Elijah to Elisha?

It is when Jordan is reached the crisis arrives. Is Elisha prepared even to leave the land? Yes, Elijah is even more than the land.

"They two stood by Jordan, and Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they

were divided hither and thither, so that *they two* went over on dry ground."

And now—but only now—the opportunity has come, and all can be given. "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken from thee." Had Elisha not accompanied the prophet thus far, had the inducement to remain at one of the favoured places mentioned been too strong for him; had he faltered on the brink of Jordan, all would have been in vain. Let us take note, and deeply ponder the fact, that only when he reached a certain point—only when everything else is behind, and Elijah there alone—only when Elisha's fidelity and attachment are proved—the proposal is made: "Ask what I shall do for thee."

Nor is it otherwise with ourselves. God has to bring us to a point before He can propose the full blessing He intends. We must be proved, and we must be prepared; for God does not bestow His choicest gifts anyhow or upon any one. Have we taken the journey? Have we gone the whole road? Can no obstacle hinder us, or idol enthral us, or object beguile us? Has Christ become everything and all in all?

And what will Elisha ask? What would we ask if the same opportunity were given us? We can recall another occasion of a similar kind, when God said to Solomon soon after he became king: "Ask what shall I give thee." Solomon asked for an understanding heart, and God was pleased, and not only granted his request, but gave him both riches and honour in addition.

Our Lord says to the woman of Samaria:—

"If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have *asked* of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

Here is an important lesson. As we have already intimated, there are certain blessings God offers us for our acceptance, such as forgiveness of sins, justification and eternal life, where it is a question of taking God at His word. But other blessings only become ours as we desire them, and are prepared to receive them; and in response to our request. "Ask and

ye shall receive ; seek and ye shall find ; ” and unless we ask, we do not obtain.

There is a reason for this. The nature of our request determines the state of our hearts and our spiritual condition. What I want reveals what I am. It did so in Solomon’s case. Nothing will reveal more clearly where our heart is, and upon what it is set, than the request we make to God. And now this test comes to Elisha. Upon what is his heart set ? For what will he ask ?

We have noticed that the offer on Elijah’s part, “ Ask what I shall do for thee,” is not made until a definite moment had arrived. “ They two stood by Jordan ; ” “ they two went over on dry ground.” They have become practically one. Nothing can separate them. We read, “ He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit ” (1 Cor. vi. 17). Elijah and Elisha are one spirit. This prepares us for the response that Elisha will make : “ I pray thee let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.” Just as if he had said, “ What can I ask, but for more of yourself ? After you are gone, be closer than ever. More *to* me. More *with* me. Let it be your life lived over again *in* me.”

And now, again, another condition is imposed. Elisha had asked a hard thing. He had asked the *utmost*. Yet the answer can be granted, but on one condition only : “ If *thou see me* when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee ; but if not, it shall not be so.” In other words, “ It depends upon yourself. If you are prepared for the blessing it will be yours. If you are occupied with me, and have the spiritual vision to see me, it shall be as you desire.”

“ And it came to pass, as they still went on and talked, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder ; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

“ And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more ; and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

“ He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan ; and he

took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and he smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? And when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither, and Elisha went over."

THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH RESTED ON ELISHA.

Our Lord said to His disciples in the upper room :

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and *greater works* than these shall he do ; because I go unto My Father."

(John xiv. 12).

This was said in view of Christ's departure to the right hand of God ; and also in view of the coming of the Holy Ghost.

Do we not see how these tremendous facts are illustrated in the story of Elijah and Elisha we have been endeavouring to follow ?

Yet even that story, entrancing as it is, cannot be placed on the same footing as that which pertains to the Lord and His followers, any more than Elijah can be placed in the same category as the Lord Jesus Christ. We can easily understand how the one man had been impressed with the greatness of the other—the presence and power of God had been felt. Elisha might well feel that the very nation of Israel and its prospects were bound up with Elijah. The attachment of the one for the other can easily be accounted for. Yet Elijah was not Christ. The One we listen to as He speaks to us from that last meeting with His disciples before His death is greater in every way. He has done for us what Elijah could not do, and He is something far above what the prophet ever could aspire to be. Yet it is His Spirit we may possess. Impossible as it may seem, we may be one with Him. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."

And so with this story we have been looking at in our minds, let us look into this deeper matter which so vitally concerns ourselves. We have simply to follow Elisha, and this *double portion* will become ours also.

There is this similarity to begin with, which gives point to the whole, that at the beginning of the second chapter of Second Kings we are told that the Lord was about to take up Elijah into heaven ; so in John xiv., what the Lord has to say is from the point of view of His departure. While the supreme message, running all through the discourse, is that they would receive His own Spirit, and would be really better off in consequence. Though absent in body He would be present with them in a higher way ; He would be *within* them instead of beside them, His presence more realised, His power more felt.

There is this difference to note, that while Elijah says to Elisha, " Ask what I shall do for thee," no such words are addressed to the disciples. Our Lord does not leave the choice to them. The matter is far too great for that. He decides what is the very best for them, as well as most consonant with the glory of God, and necessary in view of the work God had to do in the world. He declares that He will ask: " I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."

But notice the condition. " If ye love Me." Have we taken sufficient notice of the fact that when the Lord is about to speak of this supreme gift, He changes the word from " believe " to " love " ? Up to verse 14 we find the Lord speaks over and over again of *believing*, but now He speaks of *loving*.

Are we not on the same lines here as in the narrative we have been considering ? Have we not seen that the blessing Elisha sought was of a similar character—a double portion of Elijah's spirit—and that everything depended upon his attachment to Elijah, and whether he was willing to follow him to the end. " They two " is repeated again and again, as if they were one and all in all to each other.

Do we see that if we are to realise the full blessing our Lord speaks of—if the " double portion " is to be ours—the same must be true as between us and Christ ? The condition in Elisha's case was, " If thou *see* me," so our Lord says : " Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more, but ye

see Me ; because I live, ye shall live also." Do we realise that our life is bound up with His ? This is what love means. If you love a person, your own life becomes more or less bound up with theirs. Their interests are yours ; their objects are yours ; instead of being divided over matters, you are united. You become inseparable. There are some words in Solomon's Song which describe it :—

" I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me. Come, my beloved, let *us* go forth into the field ; let *us* lodge in the villages. Let *us* get up early to the vineyards ; let *us* see if the vine flourish ; whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth ; there will I give thee my loves " (ch. vii. 10-12).

Love desires the company of its object, as was said of Elijah and Elisha : " They two went on," " They two stood by Jordan," " They two went over on dry ground." And, lastly, " They still went on and talked." Does that describe our fellowship with Christ ? If so, then the " double portion"—the full blessing of the Comforter's indwelling, will be ours.

What does that involve ? Our Lord says : " I will not leave you comfortless (orphans) ; I will come to you " (verse 18). Think of what that meant to His disciples gathered together behind closed doors, for fear of the Jews. Christ comes, and all is changed. " Then were the disciples *glad* when they saw the Lord." That is what His presence meant to them, and that is what it will mean to us. They no longer felt like orphans ; their fears were dismissed, and peace took possession of their hearts. His words and His company changed everything. " He showed unto them His hands and His side." What a tale they declared of conflict, and victory, and deathless love. The doors were shut, but nothing can exclude Him, but cold hearts. Where there are hearts that need Him and want Him, no barriers can shut Him out, or circumstances deprive us of His presence. He says : " Ye see Me ; because I live, ye shall live also." " If ye see me," said Elijah, " it shall be so." " Ye see Me," says our Lord. Everything depends upon Him. " Because I live, ye shall live also." And since these words were spoken, He has triumphed over death and the grave, and been received up through an open

heaven. In possessing His Spirit, we possess Him and all that is His.

That this is true is proved by the next words in the chapter. "At that day (the day when the Holy Spirit would come) ye shall know that I am in My Father and ye in Me, and I in you." Meaning, that just as there is no difference between Me and My Father; I am in Him, one with Him, so you are in Me, one with Me. One in the place and portion that belong to Me. All that the Father has given Me as Redeemer and Lord is for you. We can sing:—

"All that Thou hast, Thou hast for me,
All my fresh springs are hid in Thee:
In Thee I live while I confess
I nothing am, yet all possess."

And our Lord adds: "I in you." He Himself is in us by His Spirit. He is with us in the closest, most intimate relationship—Himself our life, our power, our all.

But there is more. We may be daily and hourly conscious of His *love*. The disciples could not have been in His company for three and a half years without being sensible that He loved them. Those words are on record: "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." And again: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister and Lazarus." After His departure and the coming of the other Comforter, that love became even more real to them. If that is so, then we are just as well off as they were, and that love, though He is unknown to sight and sense, may be a reality to us. Each believer should be able to say as Paul did (not as merely repeating words, but in reality): "He loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Yet here again all depends on our love to Him. While it is quite true, "We love Him because He first loved us," yet the question needs to be asked and applied to ourselves with unsparing candour and honesty, Do we love Him? Our Lord does not complain that the Church of Ephesus had ceased to believe in Him. The solemn charge is, "Thou hast left thy first love." The one test of love is obedience. "He that

hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me," our Lord declares (verse 21) ; and then adds, " He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father ; and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him."

But it may be asked : Does not our Lord love all His own ? Yes, but only those who love Him are conscious of it. A disobedient child, doing the very thing the mother has forbidden, is not at that moment in the enjoyment of the mother's love. Yet the love of the mother may be as great as ever. The child must love the mother and manifest it in obedience to *enjoy* the mother's love. And it is in this sense that the Lord says : " He that *loveth* Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." If we do love Him, what can we desire more than that He should manifest Himself ? Naturally what we desire most is that those who love us would manifest it. Only those who love Him will obtain this manifestation our Lord mentions, for He does not manifest Himself to the world. Alas ! that many Christians are little better off than the world. They do not love Christ as they ought, though they may believe in Him. In reply to Judas (not Iscariot), our Lord says : " If a man love Me he will keep My word ; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him."

If we are as attached to Christ as Elisha was to Elijah, or as Ruth to Naomi (Ruth i. 14-17), then this highest of all blessings—the " double portion"—(the company of the Father and the Son) will be ours. What a double portion is indeed within our reach. " Loved of My Father, and I will love him ; We will come unto him and make Our abode with him."

The difference has been pointed out between Orpah and Ruth. " Orpah *kissed* her mother-in-law ; but Ruth *clave* unto her." The one was outward, the other was inward. The one a formal recognition, the other expressed a heart condition. If the double portion is to be ours, we must cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart.

We believe God is offering a supreme blessing to His people in these last days. It was not otherwise in the history of His ancient people, as we discover in the last book of the Old Testament, the prophet Malachi. First of all, God declares: "This whole nation is cursed with a curse." And yet immediately this offer is made: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Here is God's offer. He asks to be proved: "Prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord." Will you put Him to the proof? The blessing in those days was that the fruits of the field should be blessed and preserved. All nations would call them blessed.

What does God offer to-day? Not less, but more; not lower but higher; not material but spiritual. He offers us nothing less than the fulness of the Spirit. In other words, HIMSELF. If we love Him, *all* is ours. This is an *all* so vast that its only measure is God. "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him."

But the condition God laid down in former days is the condition still: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house." The tithe to-day is *love*. But love gives everything. Love holds nothing back. Love is the meat God asks for. Reader, He asks for your love. Have you given it to Him? Nothing else can take its place. Nothing else can obtain the blessing.

And so the Lord says in His message to Laodicea—a period in the Church's history similar to the period in Malachi—"Buy of Me," "Bring the tithes." All that would make anything of ourselves—our place, our popularity—the good opinion of others—all that is gain to us—and count it all loss that we may have Christ for our gain. The gold, the white raiment, the eye salve are Himself, for it is only as we see Him that we can see anything clearly in its true character and proportion.

To such an one Christ gives Himself, and there is not room to contain the blessing.

“ I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.”

And again :—

“ My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.”

“ Love brings the glorious fulness in.” Is it any wonder our Lord should lay down a condition when He was about to pray the Father to give another Comforter—a condition upon which all would depend if the full blessing was to be realised : “ If ye love Me.” For if they did not love Him, the very mission of the Holy Spirit would be frustrated. That mission above everything else was to bring Christ to them. But how would He do this except to hearts where love to Christ was found ?

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