



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 Kings 2:1-14

Lesson 5 of 6

2020

"We Fly Away"

TRANSCRIPT

Elder, Mark Newman with opening greetings:

Greetings to all of you this morning, our third COVID-19 Ministry of the Word service. We are tweaking it a bit as we go along, but very glad to have you tune in. I want to read this morning from the Heidelberg Catechism from Question 27. "Question. What do you understand by the providence of God? Answer: Providence is the almighty and ever present power of God by which He upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth, and all creatures, leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty. All things, in fact come to us, not by chance, but from His fatherly hand, and so rules them that nothing is by chance. Everything comes to us by our Father's loving and wise hand."

I do want to welcome all of you this Lord's day, trusting you haven't been too vexed by the unusual times of the last weeks. It appears we may have to endure a few more of those weeks. Of course, we don't know how many more, so we are especially thankful to those who have worked to make this time together possible. Our tech team, of course, thanks much for the work that you have put in. Betsy and Elizabeth for the music. Very grateful for that. And, of course, Dan, from whom we will hear in a moment.

Also, we want to welcome those of you who perhaps are being with us here at Believer's Chapel for the very first time and let you know that we look forward to the

time soon when we have a chance to meet you face to face, or as the case may be, six feet away from one another.

But here at Believer's Chapel we have made it our practice over the history of the church to make the Ministry of the Word of God a priority, along with the fellowship of the saints around the Lord's Table, and observing the Lord's Supper. That's a bit of a more challenging task because of the new social distancing restrictions, but we will soon resume our Lord's Supper meeting just as quickly as possible.

I know we have been keeping each other in our prayers, so let us remember to pray for one another. And I want to make sure that all of you have the confidence that if you have a specific need during these difficult days, you may call the church office or one of the elders, and make your need known. We want to bear one another's burdens, especially during this season of separation.

Well, we are so grateful that Dan is here with his ministry, bringing us God's Word in the Kings, with these prophets, and he will come in a moment and read the scripture passage for this morning.

Elder, Pastor-Teacher, Dan Duncan with Scripture reading and Message for today:

Good morning. This morning, as I was driving over, I got a glimpse of the providence of God that Mark reminded us of from the Heidelberg Catechism. You could see this as you look out of your windows: The sun is out, and because of the rain, everything is green; green grass, the trees are in bloom, and there are large swaths of bluebonnets. It's a beautiful sight, and a reminder to me that 'God is on His throne'. We are an anxious nation. But the truth is, and what we need to continue to hold onto and remember, is that God is sovereign. He is still giving life to nature, and He is still giving life to every one of us. He is on His throne.

And that, in part at least, is the message of our text this morning. 2 Kings, chapter 2, verses 1 through 14. Changes were coming for the nation Israel and for the

people of God. And yet, God was still on His throne and He demonstrates that. Let me read our text:

¹ And it came about when the LORD was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind to heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here please, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. ³ Then the sons of the prophets who *were at* Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know; be still."

⁴ Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. The sons of the prophets who *were at* Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be still." Then Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." ⁶ And he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on.

⁷ Now 50 men of the sons of the prophets went and stood opposite *them* at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. ⁸ Elijah took his mantle and folded it together and struck the waters and they were divided here and there, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

⁹ When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." ¹⁰ He said, "You have asked a hard thing. *Nevertheless*, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be *so*." ¹¹ As they were going along and talking, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. ¹² Elisha saw *it*, and cried out, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw Elijah no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. ¹³ He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over.

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of studying it together. Let us bow together in a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank You for this time together. It's so needful for the saints to gather together, not forsake that gathering together, and now this is an unusual way of doing it. We do thank You for the technology that allows us to come together in this way, and to know at least we are together in spirit. And we are gathered around Your Word in this unusual way. But we thank You, Father, for allowing this to occur the way it is, and pray You bless our time together in this hour. We thank You for Your goodness. We do know that You are on Your throne. This is an anxious nation in which we live. And yet we in this nation are to be confident, and rest in the reality that You are on Your throne, You are sovereign, and You are in control of all things, all of the details of life. So we praise You for that, and we are thankful that You have brought us into your family, and we can rest in that and know Your hand is upon us, and You are guiding us. 'We live and move and we exist in You', regardless of the dangers.

LORD, we all have needs, and You know our needs, and we pray that You would bless. And one way that we pray that You would bless is right now, as we turn our attention to this great text of Scripture and this great event in the history of Your people, that You would encourage us with it, and motivate us to be men and women of faith and action. And we commit our time to You. Bless us, we pray in Christ's name.
Amen

In Matthew 5, Jesus told His disciples, "You are the light of the world." (vs14). Interesting, The Light of the World told them they were, "the light of the world." Then He told them, "Let your light shine." That picture of shining is colorful and clear. It has been copied by lots of people of different beliefs and some without any belief. I came across a Russian poem by a poet who was anything but a Christian. Still, his poem ended with what, on the face of it, is a good statement. He called it his motto, "Always to shine, to shine everywhere to the very deeps of the last days." Well, I don't know what

he wanted to shine. It wasn't the gospel, or God's glory. But it has been for many saints throughout the ages. And it applies perfectly to them. To shine everywhere to the very last days.

Think of Paul in a prison cell, with death approaching, telling Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;" (2Ti 4:7). Even in a dark prison, the apostle shone like the sun, to the very end of his days. That was Enoch in Genesis 5. He was a prophet who lived in tough times, some of the most difficult times, if not the most difficult times in history in the days before the flood. Moses wrote, 'he walked with God 300 years.' (Gen 5:22). It was a long time to walk faithfully with the LORD and speak the revelation of God, to shine in the darkness when men were violent and ungodly. But he did it for 300 years, to the very end. Moses wrote, "...and he was not, for God took him," (Gen 5:24), meaning 'translated him to heaven'. What a blessing. What a reward, to escape the sting of death. God said, 'Them that honor Me I will honor.' (1 Sam 2:30).

Dr. Johnson told a nice story about a little girl who returned home from Sunday school. When she did, her mother asked her about the lesson. And she said, "Oh, we had a wonderful story about a man named Enoch. He used to go on long walks with God. And one day they walked so far from home that God said to him, 'Enoch, you're a long way from home. Just come on home with Me.'" The author of Hebrews said, "By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death...he was pleasing to God." (11:5).

Enoch was the member of a very small fraternity. It was a brotherhood of two. Elijah was the other half. And like Enoch and Paul, Elijah shined like the sun to his last days. He was walking and talking with his disciple, Elisha, talking about the things of God, when suddenly, in the middle of their conversation, a chariot of fire arrived and took him up to heaven. What a finish to a faithful life. It's an unusual end to a life of faith, but one that has lessons for us. And one of those lessons is that God honors a life of faith. He is pleased when we shine everywhere, to the very last days. We see that with Elijah.

The historian begins stating that this is about Elijah being taken to heaven in a whirlwind. It had been revealed to Elijah already, and clearly it had been revealed to others, as well. So the chapter begins with what one writer called 'a farewell tour'. He was accompanied by his associate, his disciple, Elisha. He was making his final preparations for his departure.

We have known since chapter 19, that Elisha would succeed Elijah as the leading prophet in Israel. So as he comes to the end, and to his departure, it was natural that Elisha would be with Elijah. And yet, Elijah discouraged him from being with him. He was traveling from Gilgal, from a place down in the Jordan valley, to Bethel, up in the hills, where a school of the prophets was. But before they left, Elijah said to him, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel."

Well, why didn't he want his protegee to be with him? C.F. Keil said that, 'It was due to humility. He knew that he would depart in a blaze of fire and glory, and he didn't want anyone to see it, unless it was God's will.' And that may be true. Elijah was a humble man. He was God's prophet. Maybe, though, he was simply being courteous, thinking, "Elisha, don't trouble yourself. Stay here."

I think it is something else, though. Elijah knew Elisha would succeed him, and he was testing his faithfulness. Much as the Lord did. You remember at the end of John, chapter 6, that long and glorious passage, the Lord does a miracle of feeding the 5000 and more, (because they were also women and children there). And then He taught the next day, to the crowds that had followed so enthusiastically. But after He had finished His teaching, they did not like what they had heard—and they left. So, after this crowd that had enthusiastically followed the Lord turned away, the Lord then turned to the ones that were left, His 12 disciples, and He asked, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" (vs67). (Or, "Would you also go away?"). It was an opportunity for them to join the crowd. The great popularity seemed to be over, and they could leave. That was a test; and they didn't. In fact, Peter answered not only for himself but for them, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life." And here in our text, Elisha also

refused to go. He swore his allegiance to the prophet" "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live," he said, "I will not leave you." (vs2b). So they went down to Bethel.

Elisha knew where Elijah was going, not just to visit the schools of the prophets, but ultimately to the place where he would be taken out of this world. And he would not, he could not, leave Elijah alone. So they went on together to Bethel, then down to Jericho, and from there to the Jordan River. And two more times Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here." But Elisha said with an oath, "I will not leave you." Three times he was tested, three times Elisha refused, showing his faithfulness and loyalty. He was devoted to Elijah. He loved him. That alone made it difficult to leave him.

We, I think, probably have all had experiences like that, where we had to say goodbye to a loved one. When family and friends are leaving to go back home, it's very difficult to do that. We want to prolong things. My wife has a picture in a photo album of her and her family sitting around a table in her apartment, (this happened a couple of years before she and I met). They were all looking pleasant, they were all smiling around the table; but Jeanette told me that she was really putting on a good face. And you can see it in the picture, that she was really very sad, because the family was about to leave for the airport, return to Holland, and she didn't know when she would see them again. So she wanted to prolong it, prolong their stay.

And I'm sure that was involved with this, as well, with Elisha. But he also needed to gain strength from the prophet for the work that lay ahead of him, that would be gained from his teaching, and him being by his side to the very end. Elijah was going to the place of his final departure but taking a circuitous route there by visiting the schools of the prophets. God sent him to these places, sent him to these various schools and he explained to them that his mission was not quite finished. He would be faithful to the end, and Elisha wanted to be part of it.

What Elijah did or said to those schools that he visited isn't recorded, but you can imagine the kind of conversation, the kind of instruction that he might have given. He would have given encouragement to these men, to stand fast and continue to fight the good fight. They were living in dark days. They were the lights, and they were to

continue to shine and let their light shine. He made sure that he left nothing unsaid that needed to be said to his students. And he traveled to each of these schools with some urgency, because he knew that time was short for him.

And it always is. We need to realize that. While we have time today, while we have 'right now', we may not have much of it. We don't know what lies ahead. We don't know what tomorrow may bring. We don't know what the next minute of our life may bring. We need to use the time that we have well. We need to be redeeming the time. And I'm preaching to myself as much as to the two or three people here, and all of you out there.

Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon on this passage titled, *Preparing to Depart*. And that was one of his points, that we need to consider the shortness of our time and use it well. And he recounted, as an illustration, a story from the life of Theodore Beza, who was Calvin's successor in Geneva. At this time, Beza was weak and sick, and he had been translating the Book of John. And he was in such a condition that he needed a scribe, a secretary, to take down his words. As he was translating the book he said, "Write fast, write fast. For I am dying." Then, when he got to the last verse of the book he said, "Now shut the book and leave me alone a minute." And he fell back, and he entered glory.

"Work hard," Spurgeon said. "The candle is nearly burned out, and you have not another candle to light when that one is gone." Now that's true for everyone, for people in business, as well as people in ministry. We need to keep our affairs in order. We may be suddenly gone, and we don't want to leave our business a mess. But here the context is ministry. And as I remind you sometimes, we are all, one way or another, in ministry. We are all lights, and we are all to be letting our light shine. Elijah was telling these young prophets what they needed to hear and know. And I think, by application, that is the lesson for us, as well. Parents need to ensure that their children hear the gospel clearly. Sunday school teachers need to make sure that they have taught well, those in their charge. We always need to be preparing to depart.

Now after visiting the prophets in Jericho, Elijah went to the Jordan River. And 50 prophets followed to watch the events from a distance. Elijah's destination was on the other side of the river, so the Jordan was an obstacle to the completion of his journey. But no obstacle can block God's will. And verse 8 says, "Elijah took his mantle and folded it together and struck the waters, and they were divided here and there, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground."

Now you notice the similarity here with Moses and Joshua. Moses crossed the Red Sea when he stretched out his staff over the water and walked over, leading Israel out of Egypt on dry ground. When Joshua led Israel into the promised land, the Jordan River was at flood stage. It was impassible. No one could pass through it. But it was made to stop, miraculously, so that Joshua and Israel could walk over on dry ground. Here Elijah parted the river and walked over on dry ground. It all indicates that he had the same Spirit of God that Moses had, that Joshua had. And when Elisha does the same thing when he returns, it would prove to those 50 prophets that he had the Spirit of God, too, that he is God's prophet.

But the miracle also signified that wherever the feet of the prophets walked, all the promises of God applied, regardless of where they were, regardless of the land on which they stood. Whether it's the west side of the Jordan or the east side of the Jordan, it was all under God's sovereign authority. And that is true, not only for Israel, it is true for the world. Wherever God's people live and speak in obedience to the Lord, they do it in His power, and in His authority. And nothing can stand against that.

We should have that confidence. We should live with that kind of assurance. And this event must have instilled confidence in the 50 prophets who had come from Jericho and witnessed this miracle. And it would encourage them to proclaim God's word to Israel in a time of widespread unbelief, in the days of Ahab and Jezebel—and to do so with courage.

Now that didn't mean that their message would be received. Jezebel was never converted by the ministry of Elijah and Ahab didn't listen to him. And then later Ahab did not listen to the prophet Micaiah, when he told him and Jehoshaphat that their

battle with Syria was doomed. In fact, Micaiah, perhaps a fellow prophet with those who were there near the Jordan from Jericho, was put in a dungeon as a result of his prophecy and fed only bread and water as a consequence of boldly speaking the truth. But he was faithful. And that is what they were to be. That is what we are to be, regardless of the results. We can't control that. But we are to be faithful to the end.

Now on the other side, and knowing the end was very near, Elijah asked Elisha what he would like from him. " 'Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you.' And Elisha said, 'Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.' " (vs9). Now on the face of it, it may seem that Elisha was asking for twice as much of the Spirit, so that he could accomplish twice as much as the prophet had done, and be twice as great, (which certainly would seem to be inappropriate). Actually, it was the opposite. It indicates Elisha's sense of inadequacy. He recognized that he was so ill-equipped to be Elijah's successor that he needed twice the Spirit. Elisha knew that he was entering into God's work, a work that only God can do. He needed the Holy Spirit to have the courage, to have the resolve, to have the power, to accomplish God's will and shine in the darkness.

David recognized that. He expresses it in Psalm 18, in verse 29. "For by You", he said, "I can run through a troop; And by my God I can leap over a wall." And he did, by the LORD, by His power. He goes on to say of his enemies, 'I beat them fine as dust'. (vs42). And the great example of that is his victory over Goliath. The powerful giant was experienced in the art of war. David was not. Goliath "had been a warrior from his youth", you will remember that is what Saul told him. (1 Sam 17:33). 'You are not fit to go down and fight this giant.' But David had something more than Goliath, and it was more than slingshot. He had the Holy Spirit.

In the previous passage, in 1 Samuel 16, is when Samuel the prophet anointed David, King. And verse 13 says, "...the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward." And as a result, David, the shepherd boy, killed both a lion and a bear, rescuing a sheep. Then he brought down the Philistine with a single stone. Now that was not David. That was God. That was the Holy Spirit.

That is what Elijah had and what explains his greatness. It's not himself. He was a faithful man, and we honor that. But it's not his own spirit, personality, gravitas, whatever, that Elisha wanted, but the Spirit of God that Elijah possessed. And Elijah understood that. He calls the request "a hard thing", because he knew that only God can make a gift of the Holy Spirit. But he said, "If you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so." In other words, he left the matter where it had to be left, with the LORD. So in effect, this was a prayer by Elisha, and it was a big prayer, it was a bold prayer. He wanted a double portion of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, so that he could do God's work faithfully and well.

Now we don't pray for the Holy Spirit. Every believer in Christ has the Spirit of God. Paul wrote in Ephesians 1, verse 13, that we are sealed with the Spirit at the very moment of faith. "...having believed, you were sealed...", he said. Saints, Christians are privileged people. We have the Holy Spirit; we have the third person of the Trinity within us, to minister to us, to guide us and protect us, to keep us until the day of redemption. He provides Christ's life to us. He provides Christ's power to us, moment by moment, every moment of our existence, so that we stay faithful. So we are to be praying boldly, like Elijah did. Not for the Spirit, but certainly for the guidance of the Spirit, for the wisdom and the power of the Spirit, and for us to be sensitive and responsive to it. This is the only way that we can serve the Lord well. And the Lord gives us every indication that if we pray according to His will, He will give—we will receive the things that we pray for.

Do you believe what Jesus said? You are the light of the world. Do you want to do what He said that we are to do, "Let your light shine"? Then pray for it. Pray for knowledge and purity. Pray for power and courage. There have been people in the church who have prayed boldly, as Elisha did here, and are examples to us. Men like August Hermann Francke, who prayed for the means to build orphanages in Germany. Immediately the funds flowed in, as a response to his prayer, not as a response to his appeal to people. He simply prayed and the funds came. And that so inspired George

Müller that he brought that same ministry to England. Praying to the Lord; trusting in Him.

If these men seem to be an anomaly, well maybe it is because we don't look to the LORD very much. Maybe it's because we are not going to Him as we ought, with a clean heart, and in confidence, the confidence that we should have, trusting in Him. Who of us hasn't said, or at least hasn't felt that I have failed so often in my prayer life? I think that is most of us. And it is our loss. Christ said, "Ask and it will be given to you." Certainly, He wants us to shine for Him in this dark age. That is His will. It's what we should want, and that should be our prayer. An effective prayer is a prayer prayed according to God's will. And so we should pray for that, and that should be our desire, and that He should give us that desire if we don't have it, and accompany that with power. And I think, if we do that, He will give. He must.

Now I said, "Elijah shined and gave light to the very end." We see that here in verse 11. While they were in deep conversation, Elijah teaching Elisha, the chariot appeared. It was a chariot of fire and horses of fire that came between the two in the middle of their conversation. Suddenly it took up Elijah in a whirlwind to heaven. It was a departure as spectacular as his life, and appropriately accompanied by fire, which had such a big place in Elijah's ministry. He has been called 'the Prophet of Fire'.

But the fiery chariot may also have been intended to testify to the truth of Elijah's name, and give maybe a final testimony to that. His name means, 'The LORD is God'. And every time his name was said in Israel, that was a proclamation of the truth that the nation needed to hear. 'The LORD is God.' It is not Baal, whose name means, 'lord', Baal was 'lord', and he was called rider of the clouds, the storm god, who sent wind and rain, lightning, fire.

The whirlwind and fire showed that the LORD God, alone, is ruler of the sky and earth. He is the One that rides upon the clouds. He is the One that rules upon the earth. And Elijah was His great prophet. And so Elisha watched Elijah go up in glory. And he gave a eulogy with both sorrow and wonder, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" That was Elijah: The man that Ahab feared, and Elisha loved.

He was Elisha's spiritual father, who counseled him to the end; and was Israel's true army, he was the chariots and the horsemen; he was the great defender of the faith. All of which is in praise of the power of God in a faithful man.

Later Zechariah, the prophet, would write, in Zechariah 4, verses 6 and 7, " '...Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit', says the LORD of hosts." And by the Spirit of God, he says, 'we can move mountains.' Elijah had been God's great warrior, in his fight against false gods and evil monarchs. He had done amazing wonders. He had been stalwart in faith, a man of courage, a great leader. Now what? I'm sure the 50 young prophets watching on the other side of the Jordan wondered that. Our master and mentor is gone. What now? And how often that question has been repeated.

When a messenger arrived in Wittenberg and interrupted Phillip Melanchthon's lecture to his students with the news that Luther had died in Eisleben, he was shocked. All he could do was cry, "Alas, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." The church had lost its Elijah. The room was struck silent and Melanchthon left in tears. God raises up men and gifts them to do a great work. And by faith they do it, and they please God. They carry out His will—but they do it only for a short time; and then they are gone. And the faithful are left behind wondering, what now?

Well, the answer is given in verses 13 and 14. While Elisha was praising the prophet, he saw something falling from the sky. It was Elijah's mantle, God's gift to him, and the answer to his prayer. Picking it up, he struck the Jordan and said, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" The river divided, Elisha walked over, just as Elijah had done, proving that he was the prophet's successor. He took up where his teacher left off.

Elijah was gone to heaven. But God, the God of Elijah, was still at work on earth. Elisha knew that, and knew that while sorrow is right, sorrow must also end, and the work must continue. And that, in fact, is a great solace to sorrow and relief for grief—working for the LORD. And, like his teacher, he would do the ministry, proclaim the truth, and let his light shine to the very end.

This is one of the great lessons of this chapter, maybe the main lesson. Doing what Christ told His disciples to do "Let their light shine." We are the light of the world,

because we reflect the light of the true Light of the World, the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His words and in His deeds. We carry His message of hope. We carry the message of the gospel, the message of forgiveness and life wherever we go. So we should do that to the very end. There's nothing better than finishing well.

I mentioned Spurgeon earlier. He said, "The best way for a Christian to die is in harness." I suppose so, like George Whitefield, who you remember, was called off his sick bed to preach a last sermon. And he did so when he was so weak that he could barely hold the candle that he preached by. He finished the sermon, returned to bed, and died. And I'm sure Spurgeon, who had very high regard for Whitefield, was thinking of that 'harness' as it applies to a preacher. But it applies to all of us. Mothers, fathers, businesspersons ... we want to end our days in useful service.

That's not always possible, of course. The providence of God determines that. Augustine died in bed, shut off from others so that he could meditate on four penitential psalms that were written out and hung on his wall. But that itself is being faithful, preparing for the end. That is what he was doing. And he was doing it by fellowshiping with God through prayer and reflection.

The end is not really in our control. The end comes differently for different people. And for many, it may seem completely inglorious, and completely insignificant after a long slow decline; a last breath is taken, and it's over. Not extraordinary. Very ordinary. But that is as we see it, as we may be standing around the bed. What occurs on the other side is very different. Paul said, 'To be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord.' (2Cor 5:8). Suddenly the saint is transported from a dark hospital room, with only the sound of machines, to the Throne of God and the sound of His words, 'Welcome home. Well done, good and faithful servant!

That, I think, is another lesson here, and an important one. All of us will depart this world someday. It won't be in a chariot of fire, in a whirlwind. It may be in the rapture, when the Lord comes. That will be true for some, for many. It may be, though, the way Elisha departed, and Paul departed, Luther and Calvin and Beza departed, and

all of the saints who have lived depart. We are not a part of that small fraternity of Enoch and Elijah. Death will come for most of us.

That's okay, because either way, as Moses said in Psalm 90:10, "We fly away." And we fly to unimagined glory. It is inevitable, we must depart. So be ready. Be prepared. Shine today in the time that you have. Shine every day. A clear lesson in Elijah's ascent to heaven is that we are immortal. All are immortal, because we are all created in the image of God. But all 'in Christ' have eternal life and heaven because of what He did. And this event on the other side of the Jordan prefigured Christ when He died in our place as a sacrifice to punish our sins and remove our guilt. The proof that God was pleased with His Son and accepted His sacrifice for us is His resurrection and ascension. The lesson from that is, the things we do in time count for eternity. So we are to let our light shine, and 'shine everywhere to the very deeps of the last days'.

The Russian poet who wrote that line and I quoted at the beginning, was Vladimir Mayakovsky, a poet of the Russian revolution who had no faith in God but held what he thought were high ideals. So he said he would shine. But the fact is he didn't. Instead he put a gun to his heart and ended his life. That's the world. It thinks it has light. It thinks it has truth, when it only has darkness. And what it has, ultimately disappoints and fails.

We do have the light. We, as believers in Christ, are the light of the world, because we reflect the true light. And by the Holy Spirit, we have the power to stay true to the end, to shine to our last days, unto death. John Knox said, "Live in Christ, live in Christ, and the flesh need not fear death." Some day we will fly away, and soar to worlds unknown. Are you prepared for that?

The only way to be prepared is through faith in Christ. If you have not put your faith in Him, then put your faith in Him and in His sacrifice. It is sufficient for all. Come to Him. Get the light! And then, by God's grace, shine to the end: Be faithful to the end. May God help all of us to do that.

Father, we give You praise and thanks for Your love for us and for the love of our Redeemer, for it has obtained forgiveness and life for each one of us, and we are secure in Your hand. Help us to hold on to that great truth. May this time of difficulty for this nation, for the world, be a time of reflection for Your people. Help us to spend time in deep thought and meditation in Your Word, thinking about You and who You are, and what is important in life. And may we be men and women who shine wherever we are. We pray that this would be a time of blessing for us in the midst of difficulty. You are on Your throne, and we give You thanks and praise for that. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(End of Audio)