

Generational Blessings and Our Spiritual Inheritance

By Ahreum Kim

2 Kings 2:1–2, 6–14 (NRSVUE)

Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, 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.

Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on. ⁷ Fifty men of the company of prophets also went and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. ⁸ Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and the two of them crossed on dry ground.

⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I may do for you before I am taken from you.” Elisha said, “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.” ¹⁰ He responded, “You have asked a hard thing, yet if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.” ¹¹ As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. ¹² Elisha kept watching and crying out, “Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water. He said, “Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah? Where is he?” He struck the water again, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha crossed over.

Good morning everyone! For those who don't know me, I'm Ahreum (sounds like “autumn”) Kim, Pastor Joe and Christine's daughter. Thanks to many of you who supported and prayed for me, I recently finished my New Testament PhD at the University of Cambridge, and I'll be going back to England this

week to change my visa and seek full-time work there. I hope you don't mind that I'm speaking this morning out of an Old Testament passage from the church lectionary. I did study the Old Testament for a few years during my Master of Divinity degree in Korea so I know a bit about that too!

Elijah and Elisha

One of the things God's been teaching me is the way in which He works through generational blessings and spiritual inheritance, and today's passage is one of the many places in the Bible where we can that (see also Gen 12:1–3; Deut 34:9; Psalm 78:4; Psalm 145:4–7; Eph 1:11–18; Heb 11:8; Heb 12:1). Second Kings chapter two is centered around two prophets: Elijah and his protégée Elisha. We know from First Kings that Elijah was one of those seriously powerful prophets who participated in a lot of miracles including calling fire down from heaven (1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 1:12), going up against an evil queen who was known for killing prophets (1 Kings 18:4; 19:2), and even resurrecting a child (17:17–24). Elisha knew how powerful his mentor was, and he stuck by Elijah even when he was nearing the end of his life. Elisha refused to leave even when Elijah said that he would go off on his own and be away from the group of prophets. You see, Elisha understood the weight of generational blessings and spiritual inheritance. He may not have been Elijah's literal son, but he was a spiritual son, and he was eager to inherit whatever blessings and anointings that his mentor carried. In fact, he believed that he could inherit double!

Generational Blessings

Over the past few years, I've realized the generational blessings and spiritual inheritance in my lineage. I'm one of the few Koreans in the world who is at least fourth generation Christian on both sides of the family. Even rarer, one of my uncles (my dad's younger brother) discovered a few years ago that my paternal great-grandfather was a minister too! So not only am I a fourth-generation Christian but a fourth-generation minister as well! Some might say that I just took on the family business, but honestly, it's kind of a miracle because Christianity didn't really take off in Korea until around the late 1880s, less than 150 years ago, when people like Henry Appenzeller, a 27-year-old Methodist missionary from Pennsylvania, was one of the few foreigners allowed into Korea. Even though he probably wasn't the person who directly evangelized to my great-grandfather, it is because of people like Appenzeller that Christianity began to trickle into the nation. So I recognize the gift of being one of the few fourth-generation Korean Christians in the world, and the blessings of prayers, faithfulness, and graces that come with that.

But generational blessings aren't limited to genetics. Remember that Elisha wasn't Elijah's biological son. Many of us know that we can pass on our abilities, talents, and gifts to our literal children. But maybe some of you are thinking, *I don't really have any talents or gifts*. Completely untrue! Think about it—there is no one like you in all of history! God doesn't make accidents, and He didn't put us on this planet to be a rock and sit here (even rocks have value—think of the rocks that made this building!). Every single person who has ever graced this planet has the capacity to give and receive generational blessings through their talents and gifts. God has placed talents and gifts in each one of us (Rom 12:6). Some of the talents might be obvious. For example, I didn't really get the gift of drawing and painting, but some people obviously did and can paint lifelike images without taking a single class. Maybe you're organized and administratively gifted, or an empathetic and relational person, or someone who God's gifted to demonstrate His sense of hospitality. Maybe you are on this planet to demonstrate God's strength through your athletic abilities, or God's craftsmanship with your ability to build things, or you show everyone a piece of His intellect through your ability with numbers and math.

We already know that these gifts and talents can be passed on through our genes. But what we learn from Elijah and Elisha is that we can also pass on our spiritual blessings. We carry a spiritual inheritance that we can pass on not only to our literal children but also to our spiritual children. But notice one important detail, Elisha *pursues* his spiritual inheritance. Just like a financial inheritance that can just sit in a bank and never get picked up, spiritual blessings from previous generations can just lie dormant.

Elisha is a great example for us because he didn't just complacently receive, saying "Yeah, okay, I'll take those blessings I guess." Elisha refused to leave his mentor's side, and when God took Elijah, Elisha picked up his mantle, or what's sometimes translated as "cloak," that piece of cloth that represented Elijah's power and authority from God. Elisha was relentless and had even asked for a double share of what Elijah carried! Elijah had responded to this request by saying, "You have asked a hard thing." We don't know exactly why he said that. But I think in asking for double, Elijah wisely knew that a double inheritance means a double expectation to do more with it. Just like the story in the Gospel of Matthew about the five talents (25:14–30). If we get five talents, we ought to make five more. Elisha didn't let his inheritance

go to waste, and he did indeed perform even more miracles than his predecessor.

Just like a financial inheritance is meant to benefit the next generation, a spiritual inheritance is meant to help us too. Each succeeding generation shouldn't have to start at the same level as the previous one. The next generation should be able to take the baton from where the previous generation left off. We should be on a higher rung so that we can take it that much further. We can do more of God's work because we have the blessings of multiple generations.

Swift Memorial

Swift Memorial has roots that go back about 200 years (swiftmemorial.org/history.html), older than the history of Methodists in Korea. There are generations of Christians who have worshipped, prayed, fasted, and invested in this land. And we, myself included, are the beneficiaries of those generations of blessings. We are the fruit of those prayers, and if we really pray and say, "Yes Lord, I want to receive the full spiritual inheritance of the previous generations," we can pick it up just like Elisha picked up that cloak, and run with what God has passed on to us. And it doesn't matter how old we are, whether you're younger or older, we can receive now and be a blessing not only to the current generation but also in blessing and praying for the generations ahead.

So if you're feeling like Elisha and eager to receive your full spiritual inheritance and be an ever greater blessing to current and future generations, then let's pray:

Lord, thank you that you desire each of your children to be a blessing in this world. Thank you that you grant each of us talents and gifts so that we can be a blessing to others and show your love to one another. May we be like Elisha, eager to receive all that you have to give so that we can run further and do more for your kingdom. So if we feel ready to be like Elisha, we can hold out our hands and say to ourselves, "I receive my full spiritual inheritance," and soak it all up like a sponge, or imagine picking up that mantle, that cloak, and putting it on. God, may you inspire us each day, each moment, to use this inheritance well and build up your kingdom on earth to be like your kingdom in heaven. In Jesus' name, amen.