

HOW TO RECOVER THE CUTTING EDGE 2 KINGS 6

Text: 2 Kings 6:5

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⁵But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed.

Introduction:

The school of the prophets had grown to the point that they needed to provide new facilities. As they are in the process of cutting down trees to build their new home, one of the prophets loses his axe head in the Jordan River.

He becomes distraught because the axe head was borrowed. He cries out to Elisha and the great prophet performs a miracle and the axe head floats to the surface and the man puts out his hand and picks it up.

Now, lest we be too harsh on this poor man who lost the axe head, let us remember that he is engaged in a great work. He is busy! Yet, if there is a flaw in his activity, it is found in this: he was working, but he was not watching! As a consequence, he lost the axe head

and was unable to continue his work. He had lost the cutting edge.

We may look at this story and wonder if there is anything here for the modern church. I believe there is plenty here for us to learn.

You see, the axe head represents the power to get the job done! No man can chop down trees by flailing at them with an axe handle! It takes the sharp, cutting power of the axe head to cut through the wood and fell the tree.

In the church, we need to realize that without our cutting edge, that is the power of the Holy Spirit, we will never be able to serve the Lord properly, nor will we be able to make a dent in this world. We need God and His power to get the job done for His glory!

Sadly, the modern church has become so tied to its traditions and its programs that, for the most part, the cutting edge has been lost. As a result, there is no power in the church, in the lives of the saints, or in anything we do. We have lost the cutting edge!

Most of what we do in the church can be done without the agency or the power of the Holy Spirit! We are so good at what we do that we can operate in the power of the flesh and no one notices the absence of God! However, while we may be able to operate our

churches, our programs and our lives apart from the power of God, we will never make inroads into the world apart from the power of God. We will never be able to serve the Lord in an effective manner until we perform that service in His power alone!

As we take a few minutes to look at how this situation was handled that day, we can learn some valuable lessons about how the church should handle the situation in which she finds herself today. God help us to recover the cutting edge. This passage tells us how!

Notice the steps involved in recovering the cutting edge.

1. IT INVOLVES CONCERN

A. As soon as this man feels the axe head fly off, he cries out in despair. He knows that he cannot continue what he is doing until he recovers the axe head.

B. The first step in recovering the power of the Spirit is coming to the place where we know we do not have it.

I am convinced that many people walk through this life thinking they are filled with the Spirit, when they have lost His power and do not even know it.

They are trying to live for God and to do His work in power of the flesh and do not even realize that He is nowhere around.

This condition of many modern churches, and modern church people, rivals that of ancient Laodicea, Rev. 3:14-20.

C. I wonder whether we care enough to search our hearts, our lives and the life of our church and discover whether or not what we are doing is of man or of the Spirit.

Are we concerned about the presence and power of God being in the midst of His church?

We are always congratulating ourselves on the fact that “where two or three are gathered together, He is in the midst.”

The Spirit of the Lord is in us. When we show up at church, He shows up at church! I am not talking about His mere presence. I am talking about His manifest presence. Where God not only shows up, but when He also shows out!

D. May the Lord help us to settle for nothing less than the best God can give us!

2. IT INVOLVES CONFESSION

A. When this man realized the axe head was gone, he immediately told Elisha what had happened.

He confessed the fact that he had lost the cutting edge. By admitting that the axe head was gone, he was also admitting to the fact that it had become loose and he had not bothered to tighten it.

B. After we discover that we are lacking something, we must come to the place where we can admit that lack to the Lord. This is a hard pill to swallow, but it is necessary to recovering the cutting edge.

I think one of the hardest things for any of us to do is to admit lack. We want everyone to think that we are on the top of the heap; that we need nothing; and that we are in control.

Where are the honest hearts that will cry out and say, "I just don't have the fire I used to have! I am not as close to the Lord as I used to be! I need the power of God operating through me to get the job done!"

What we need are honest hearts that will tell the truth about our condition. We just need to come clean and tell the Lord the truth about where we are! He already knows, but He wants us to know as well. We need to relearn the path to the altar.

We need His and His power in our midst, but there is a price to pay. Part of that price is confessing our lack of power.

C. Before we will ever recover the cutting edge as individuals and as a church, we must first come to the place where we can honestly admit that we can't do it, but God can!

We must find that place of total and absolute dependence upon God and His power! When we do, we will see souls saved. We will see the manifest power of God.

3. IT INVOLVES COMPREHENSION

A. One of the reasons this man is so upset is because the axe head didn't even belong to him.

He had borrowed it from someone in order to be able to help build the building. Now, losing an axe head may not seem that big of a deal to you and me.

We can ride to the store and buy them by the dozen if we wish. However, in that day tools and other things made of iron were very scarce and in short supply.

This is illustrated by a story from 1 Sam. 13:22. Plus the fact that it was a borrowed tool would require this man to replace the axe head, which he obviously could not do since he had to borrow it in the first place.

The fact that a person would lend this man a tool of such value was a sign that the owner of the axe head trusted the young prophet. He did not want to violate that trust!

B. I think the lesson for the church is crystal clear. When we are working for the Lord, as we should, we are operating with borrowed power!

The power to serve the Lord does not come from within our own human nature, but it comes from the Lord above, Acts 1:8.

Therefore, we need to be especially careful with the power entrusted to us. May we never take it for granted!

May we never come to the place where we act as though nothing can take our power away.

God help us to never violate His trust! Just as surely as the Lord gives His power, He can take it back.

C. If we are going to serve the Lord and see eternal results from our service, we must accept the fact that we are unable to do the work within ourselves.

We need power from above. We need borrowed power!

Yet, let us also understand that the same God Who so freely saves the sinner, will also freely give His power to those who seek it and are qualified to receive it.

4. IT INVOLVES COMING BACK

A. As soon as Elisha heard about the problem, he called the prophet back to the place where the axe head was lost.

Before it could be recovered, they had to go to the place where it had been lost.

B. It is in the same in the spiritual arena as well. Before we can recover the power of God in our lives and in our church, we must return to that place where we lost the power. That is, we must

uncover the reason why the power has been forfeited.

Is it because of some sin that has been committed?

Is it because our priorities have become misplaced?

Is it because we are guilty of trusting the arm of the flesh instead of the power of the Spirit?

Where did we lose the power?

C. If we were honest this evening, we could all pinpoint areas of our lives that stand between us and our having the glorious power of God on our lives.

What we need to do is to backtrack and discover where we wandered off course. We need to go back to that point and make a course correction.

When we do, we can prepare for the glory to be returned.

5. IT INVOLVES CONFRONTATION

A. Elisha's response to the situation is to cut down a tree and cast it into the river. When he does, the axe head floats to the surface.

A miracle occurs when human means are abandoned and divine help is sought.

B. When we come to the place where we acknowledge the loss of the cutting edge, there is only one way to get it back. There must be a confrontation with the divine!

First, there must be a tree involved. The tree I am referring to is the cross of Jesus. When we get serious about dealing with our sins and shortcomings, the Lord will respond with forgiveness and restoration, 1 John 1:9.

Then, there must be a total abandonment of all human agency and power. Trusting a stick to make an axe head float sounds crazy, but it worked!

For us to stop trying to do the work of the Lord, to just step back, place it all in His hands and trust Him completely is difficult. However, it is the only solution.

C. One of the primary steps in recovering the cutting edge of power in the church is a return to God's altar.

When the church deals with her sins, and the way between us and the Lord is cleared of all obstructions, we can count on the return of His power and glory in the house of God.

6. IT INVOLVES COMMITMENT

A. The last thing this young man did was to reach down and take the axe head in his hand. He committed to receiving by faith that which the Lord had done.

This may be the end of the story as far as the biblical record is concerned, but we can be sure of what happened next.

This young man firmly reattached the axe head to the handle and went back to work chopping down trees. He had recovered the cutting edge and was able to do what needed to be done.

B. God has power available for those who will pay the price for it and who will reach out and take it by faith.

When we come to the place where we are tired of the same old same old and are willing to admit our loss of the cutting edge, God will give us back the power to do His work His way. However, it is not for the faint-hearted! It is for the faith-hearted, alone!

C. How committed are we to the idea of experiencing God's manifest presence and power in the church?

Our level of commitment will be revealed by what we are willing to do to see it become a reality!

Close:

Where is the cutting edge this evening? For most of us, it is at the bottom of the river, totally beyond our reach and beyond our ability to recover. Can we get it back? Yes! If we will take the steps we have been given this evening. Are you willing? That is the first step. The second is in getting before the Lord and dealing with the problem His way!