The Issue of Influence: "He being dead still speaks" (Heb. 11:4)

2 Kings 13:20-21

We long that while we are alive our lives will count effectively for God. In order for this to be so, we need to learn the secret of how to influence others powerfully and permanently. This story teaches us that the secret of effective influence depends on the miraculous power of God.

One of the great values of reading the stories of Robert Murray McCheyne, Martin Luther, Praying Hyde and a host of others is that in so reading we 'touch their bones' and find new life surging through us, sparking faith and confidence where there was none before.

It isn't the ability to imitate them – their lives and circumstances are very different from ours. But 'being dead they still speak'. Elisha died, his leadership finished. He had fought a good fight, finished the course and kept the faith. Very soon people forgot the witness and triumphs of Elisha and they forgot the Lord. But God was not dead.

The Occasion of the Miracle

1. Defeat (sustained)

Moabites (Jordanians raiding) – ruthless and relentless. Nothing much changes! The People of God were living in constant dread of their approach and assaults.

2. Defencelessness (recognised)

There was no defence against attack. Although repeatedly attacked, they were unchallenged and unopposed. They couldn't even bury their dead in peace. They had no resources with which to defeat the enemy.

3. Death

People were dying of various causes. So the People of God were sustaining death and hopelessness.

The Origin/source of the Miracle

1. Not Elisha.

His bones had no power. The source of effective influence is never in ourselves. This is the day when psychological techniques in people-manipulation are taught to leaders – the power of 'personality'. This type of influence never survives and never produces spiritual change.

2. God!

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts".

It was this power that did all Elisha's miracles that so enormously influenced God's People:

- The dividing of the Jordan River (2 Kings 2:14)
- The healing of the water of Jericho (2:22)
- Supplying water for three armies that were very thirsty (3:20)
- Multiplying the oil in the widow's flask (4:8)
- Raising the Shunammite's son from death (4:34)
- Taking poison out of the pot (4:41)

- Multiplying food for the multitude (4:44)
- Cleansing the leper (5:14)
- Restoring the cutting-edge (6:6)
- Causing the spiritually blind to see (6:17)
- Seeing plenty in the midst of a famine (7:1)
- Warning the woman of Shunem to flee (8:1)
- Diagnosing the king's 'heart trouble' (7-15)
- Appointing Jehu as King (9:3)
- Rebuking the King (13:19)

Are we operating in the power of God? If we are depending on our position as a leader, on the power of our personality or on our ability and acumen, we will never effectively influence others. If we trust in the Living God, then we will see effectiveness in our ability to influence others.

The Object of the Miracle

1. To demonstrate: God is <u>alive</u>

The leader is dead, but God is very much alive. They had trusted in their human leader. When he was gone, they suffered defeat at the hands of their enemies.

2. To demonstrate: God is <u>active</u>

God is still active in regard to His People. No one expected the dead man to live – neither the Israelites nor the Moabites. Yet when the bones of Elisha were touched the man came alive and stood on his feet! I would have loved to see this on video. It must have been very comical! Who was the most surprised and scared?

3. To demonstrate: God is <u>almighty</u>

Raising the man to life irrefutably proved that God is Sovereign over life and death. If we trust Him, He will give us victory. God lives today. His power is not diminished. He intervenes in the lives of His people bringing victory and liberty.

The lesson to learn

If we are to influence others, we need to know God's power in our lives (Eph. 1:19-20).
Are we spiritually effective? One of the great dangers of 'official' leadership is personal obtrusiveness in our leadership and fleshly indulgence in 'controlling others'. This is what renders so much of our influence null and void.

God will use those who are willing to hide themselves in death (including death to positions of leadership) that Jesus may be magnified. '**Life out of death'** is the great lesson we need to learn if we are serious about being a profound and positive influence others.

"For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake so that His life may be revealed in our mortal bodies. So then death is at work in us, but life is at work in you."

"All this is for your benefit so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God."
(2 Cor. 4:11-12 and 15)