

“EXHIBITING FAITH IN FAITHLESS TIMES”
PART IV

“THE DEMONSTRATION OF FAITH”

I KING 18:1, 17-40

INTRODUCTION

WE ARE NOT LEFT TO GUESS HOW ELIJAH FELT WHEN STANDING ON MT. CARMEL, SURROUNDED BY A HOSTILE COMPANY OF 450 FALSE PROPHETS AND AN UNSUPPORTIVE CROWD OF SPECTATORS.

VERSE 22 INDICATES THAT ELIJAH FELT ALONE, ISOLATED, THE LAST MAN WILLING TO STAND UP FOR GOD. “THEN SAID ELIJAH UNTO THE PEOPLE, I ONLY REMAIN A PROPHET OF THE LORD.”

HAVE YOU EVER FELT THAT YOU ARE THE ONLY PARENT INTERESTED IN BUILDING YOUR HOME ON BIBLICAL PRINCIPALS?

HAVE YOU EVER FELT THAT YOU ARE THE ONLY PERSON ON YOUR JOB THAT CARES ABOUT INTEGRITY?

HAVE YOU EVER THAT YOU WERE THE ONLY TEENAGER WHO IS COMMITTED TO REMAINING PURE UNTIL MARRIAGE?

MANY CHRISTIANS HAVE FELT THE PRESSURE THAT COMES FROM BEING DIFFERENT, FROM LIVING OUT THEIR FAITH IN A FAITHLESS GENERATION.

AND LET’S BE HONEST: STANDING ALONE IS NEVER EASY.

WE FEEL THE PRESSURE TO GIVE IN TO THE MAJORITY – TO ACCEPT THEIR VALUES AND CONFORM TO THEIR BELIEFS.

THIS ACCOUNT REMINDS US THAT WE DARE NOT. IF WE ARE GOING TO MAKE AN IMPACT ON OUR SOCIETY, WE MUST BE DISTINCT FROM IT, NOT IDENTICAL TO IT.

THAT IS ESSENTIALLY WHAT JESUS WAS SAYING IN MATTHEW 5, “YE ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH... YE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.”

- 1. OUR LIVES MUST DISPLAY A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE.**
- 2. OUR FAITH MUST MAKE OTHERS THIRST FOR GOD.**
- 3. OUR CHARACTER MUST SHINE LIKE A BEACON, ATTRACTING THE ATTENTION OF THOSE LIVING IN MORAL DARKNESS.**
- 4. OUR FAITH MUST DEMONSTRATE THAT GOD IS REAL AND RELIABLE, AND THAT EVERYTHING ELSE IS FALSE AND UNDEPENDABLE.**

OTHERS MUST SEE IN US WHAT THEY ARE MISSING WHEN THEY LIVE WITHOUT GOD.

THUS FAR IN THE LIFE OF ELIJAH WE HAVE SEEN THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS FAITH THAT ALLOWED HIM TO MAKE THAT KIND OF IMPACT ON HIS NATION:

- 1. HE HAD AN AUTHENTIC FAITH, FOUNDED ON WHO GOD IS AND WHAT HE CAN DO.**
- 2. HE AD AN APPROVED FAITH, PROVEN THROUGH TESTING.**
- 3. HE HAD AN ACTIVE FAITH, CONVINCING OTHERS THAT GOD IS REAL.**

IN THIS “BATTLE OF THE GODS,” WE ARE GOING TO CONSIDER A FOURTH QUALITY OF ELIJAH’S FAITH: HE HAD AN “AREA” FAITH.

HIS LIFE WAS THE STAGE UPON WHICH GOD PERFORMED TO CONVINC AN UNBELIEVING GENERATION THAT HE WAS REAL AND HIS WORD IS TRUE.

ELIJAH GIVES US FOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF AN “ARENA” FAITH.

- I. AN ARENA FAITH IS WILLING TO BE DISPLAYED PUBLICLY. VS 19**
- A. THIS BATTLE COULD HAVE BEEN FOUGHT IN THE PRIVACY OF AHAB’S PALACE; ELIJAH CHOSE INSTEAD THE SUMMIT OF MT. CARMEL.**
- 1. MT. CARMEL PROVIDED THE IDEAL PLATFORM FOR DEMONSTRATING THE REALITY OF GOD.**
- a. IT RISES 1000 FEET FROM THE SURROUNDING PLAIN, LEVELING OFF TO FORM A PLATEAU VISIBLE FROM 20 MILES AWAY.**
- b. THE PLATEAU EASILY ACCOMMODATED THE 450 PROPHETS AND MANY HUNDREDS OF WITNESSES.**
- c. WHEN THE FIRE FROM HEAVEN STRUCK THE ALTAR, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN VISIBLE FOR MILES IN EVERY DIRECTION. (ABOUT 600 MI.**
- d. LOCATED IN NORTHERN ISRAEL (THE NATION OF GOD) ABOUT 20 MILES FROM THE BORDER OF ZIDON (THE NATION OF BAAL-WORSHIP) ELIJAH COULD NOT HAVE CHOSEN A MORE APPROPRIATE SPOT FOR THIS “BATTLE OF THE GODS.”**
- 2. ELIJAH UNDERSTOOD AN IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE OF FAITH:**
- a. SOME ASPECTS OF OUR FAITH ARE NEVER MEANT FOR DISPLAY (WE ARE INSTRUCTED TO GIVE AND TO FAST IN SECRET).**

3. **CARMEL WAS NOT CHOSEN TO PUT THE SPOTLIGHT ON ELIJAH, BUT ON GOD IN WHOM ELIJAH HAD PUT HIS TRUST.**

II. IT CALLS OTHERS TO A POINT OF DECISION. VS 21 “IF JEHOVAH BE GOD, FOLLOW HIM: BUT IF BAAL, THEN FOLLOW HIM.”

- A. **ELIJAH EMPHASIZES THAT PROBLEM: ISRAEL WAS UNDECIDED ON THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD. “HOW LONG HALT YE BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS?”**
 1. **FAITH WITHOUT CONVICTIONS IS POWERLESS.**

ILLUSTRATION

MARILYN MONROE WAS ONCE ASKED IF SHE ADHERED TO A FAITH. SHE REPLIED, “OH, I BELIEVE IN EVERYTHING – A LITTLE BIT.” THAT KIND OF “FAITH” CHANGES NO ONE.

2. **WITHOUT CONVICTIONS, YOU MAY ATTRACT A CROWD, BUT YOU WILL MAKE NO CONVERTS.**
 - a. **WHY? YOU’VE NOT DEMONSTRATED THAT THERE IS SOMETHING FOR THEM TO BE CONVERTED FROM AND CONVERTED TO.**
 - b. **SMORGASBORD CHRISTIANITY MAY BE POPULAR, BUT IT IS POWERLESS TO CHANGE LIVES.**
- B. **DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT CHRISTIAN LIVES CAUSE PEOPLE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN OUR FAITH AND THEIR PHILOSOPHY.**
 1. **FAITH IS SUPPOSED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WHERE PEOPLE LIVE –**

**HOME, MARRIAGE, WORK
RELATIONSHIPS, ETC.**

2. **WHAT PEOPLE SEE IN OUR LIVES MUST MAKE THEM CHOOSE BETWEEN CONTINUING AS THEY ARE OR COMING TO OUR CHRIST.**

III. AN ARENA FAITH EXPOSES THE EMPTINESS OF A FALSE FAITH. VERSE 24 “THE GOD THAT ANSWERS”

- A. **BAAL WAS GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE THAT HE WAS WORTHY OF FAITH.**
 1. **BAAL WAS THE “FIRE GOD.” TO HIS FOLLOWERS, A FLASH OF LIGHTENING WAS THE SYMBOL OF HIS POWER.**
 2. **THIS TEST WAS CUSTOM MADE OF BAAL. IF THERE IS ANYTHING A FIRE GOD OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO DO, IT’S LIGHT A FIRE.**
- B. **ONE OF THE EASIEST WAYS TO CONVINCING A PERSON OF HIS NEED OF GOD IS TO LET HIM EXPERIENCE THE FAILURE OF HIS OWN WAY.**
 1. **ELIJAH CHALLENGED THE PEOPLE TO EXAMINE THEIR FAITH – WOULD IT LIVE UP TO ITS CLAIMS?**
 2. **WHEN THEY REALLY NEEDED HIM, WOULD THEIR GOD COME THROUGH?**
 3. **WE DON’T HAVE TO CALL DOWN FIRE FROM HEAVEN, BECAUSE WE ARE NOT TRYING TO REACH PEOPLE WHO SERVE A FIRE GOD.**
 4. **IN OUR DAY, PEOPLE ARE WORSHIPPING AT THE ALTARS OF HUMAN PHILOSOPHY.**

5. **WHAT IS NEEDED ARE CHRISTIANS WHO REJECT THOSE PHILOSOPHIES AND BUILD THEIR LIVES ON THE PRINCIPLES OF GOD'S WORD.**
6. **LET PEOPLE SEE THAT THE ETERNAL, UNCHANGING TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD WORKS WHERE EVERYTHING ELSE FAILS.**

IV. AN ARENA FAITH EXHIBITS THE REALITY OF GOD AND THE RELIABILITY OF HIS WORD. VERSES 36-38

- A. **WHEN A MAN SEES THE OBJECT OF HIS FAITH FAIL, HE IS READY TO SEE A DEMONSTRATION OF SOMETHING THAT WORKS.**
 1. **WHEN ELIJAH FIRST ISSUED HIS CHALLENGE THE PEOPLE "ANSWERED HIM NOT A WORD." HOWEVER, AFTER WITNESSING SEVERAL HOURS OF FRENZIED, SINCERE WORSHIP WITHOUT RESULTS, THEY WERE READY TO SEE ELIJAH'S FAITH IN ACTION.**
 2. **THE QUESTION IN EVERY MIND WAS THE SAME; CAN GOD DO THAT WHICH BAAL COULD NOT?**
- B. **TO CHALLENGE PEOPLE WITH THE REALITY OF GOD, THEY MUST SEE THAT OUR FAITH HAS WORKED WHERE THEIR FAITH HAS NOT.**
 1. **PEOPLE ARE NOT IMPRESSED WITH ARGUMENTS ABOUT GOD.**
 2. **THEY WILL NOT BE WON BY TALK ABOUT INTANGIBLE THINGS LIKE PEACE IN YOUR HEART OR A LOVE FOR GOD.**
 3. **THEY ARE NOT MOVED BY YOUR TITHING RECORD, YOUR MISSIONS**

**COMMITMENT, OR YOUR STAND UPON
THE KING JAMES VERSION.**

4. **THEY WANT TO SEE SOMETHING THAT
CONVINCES THEM YOUR FAITH WORKS.**
- C. **LOOK AT VERSE 36. ELIJAH'S PRAYER
CONSISTS OF TWO IMPORTANT REQUESTS:**
1. **LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU ARE GOD.**
 2. **LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU WORD
WORKS.**

CONCLUSION

- A. **EVERYTHING THAT GOD DOES IN OUR LIVES IS
MEANT TO UNDERSCORE THOSE TWO TRUTHS.**
1. **PEOPLE ARE ATTRACTED TO A LIFE THAT
DEMONSTRATES THAT GOD IS REAL AND HIS
WORD WORKS.**
 2. **THEY ARE CRYING OUT FOR SOMETHING THAT
WILL MEET THEIR NEEDS.**
 3. **THEY ARE NOT INTEREST IN GOD BRINGING
DOWN FIRE FROM HEAVEN.**
- B. **THEY WANT TO KNOW THINGS LIKE:**
1. **“CAN GOD SAVE MY MARRIAGE?”**
 2. **“CAN GOD KEEP MY CHILD OFF DRUGS?”**
 3. **“CAN GOD GIVE ME SOMETHING WORTH
LIVING FOR?”**
- C. **THAT'S WHERE THEIR “BAAL-WORSHIP” IS FAILING
THEM.**
1. **IF WE ARE GOING TO CONVINCe THEM THAT
GOD'S WORD CAN ADDRESS THOSE NEEDS**

**THEN WE MUST BE ABLE TO SHOW THEM THAT
GOD HAS DONE SOMETHING FOR US.**

- 2. THAT IS WHAT HAVING AN ARENA FAITH IS
ALL ABOUT.**
 - a. YOU MUST BE WILLING TO BE PUT ON
PUBLIC DISPLAY.**
 - b. YOUR ARENA FAITH MUST CALL OTHERS
TO A POINT OF DECISION.**
 - c. YOUR ARENA FAITH MUST EXPOSE THE
EMPTINESS OF A FALSE FAITH.**
 - d. YOUR ARENA FAITH MUST EXHIBIT THE
REALITY OF GOD AND THE RELIABILITY
OF HIS WORD.**
- D. I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT IT, BUT I
KNOW THAT GOD IS REAL.**

**MY GOD IS REAL
(YES, GOD IS REAL)**

**[1] THERE ARE SOME THINGS I MAY NOT KNOW,
THERE ARE SOME PLACES I, CAN'T GO,
BUT I AM SURE OF THIS ONE THING,
THAT GOD IS REAL, FOR I CAN FEEL
HIM DEEP WITHIN.**

**YES, GOD IS REAL, REAL IN MY SOUL,
YES, GOD IS REAL FOR HE HAS WASHED
AND MADE ME WHOLE;
HIS LOVE FOR ME IS LIKE PURE GOLD,
YES GOD IS REAL FOR I CAN FEEL
HIM IN MY SOUL.**

**[2] SOME FOLK MAY DOUBT, SOME FOLK MAY SCORN,
ALL CAN DESERT AND LEAVE ME ALONE,
BUT AS FOR ME I'LL TAKE GOD'S PART,
FOR GOD IS REAL AND I CAN FEEL
HIM IN MY HEART.**

**YES, GOD IS REAL, REAL IN MY SOUL,
YES, GOD IS REAL FOR HE HAS WASHED
AND MADE ME WHOLE;
HIS LOVE FOR ME IS LIKE PURE GOLD,
YES GOD IS REAL FOR I CAN FEEL
HIM IN MY SOUL.**

**[3] I CANNOT TELL JUST HOW YOU FELT
WHEN JESUS TOOK YOUR SINS AWAY,
BUT SINCE THAT DAY, YES, SINCE THAT HOUR,
GOD HAS BEEN REAL FOR I CAN FEEL
HIS HOLY POW'R.**

**YES, GOD IS REAL, REAL IN MY SOUL,
YES, GOD IS REAL FOR HE HAS WASHED
AND MADE ME WHOLE;
HIS LOVE FOR ME IS LIKE PURE GOLD,
YES GOD IS REAL FOR I CAN FEEL
HIM IN MY SOUL.**

**1. IS THERE ANYBODY HERE WHO
KNOWS THAT GOD IS REAL?**

**E. NOT ONLY DO I KNOW THAT GOD IS
REAL, BUT I KNOW THAT GOD'S WORD IS
RELIABLE.**

**2. IS THERE ANYBODY HERE WHO
KNOWS THAT GOD'S WORD IS
RELIABLE?**

**E "THE GRASS WITHERETH, THE FLOWER
FADES, BUT THE WORD OF GOD SHALL
STAND"**

1. THE WORD BECAME FLESH.

2. THEY TRIED THE WORD.

3. THEY WHIPPED THE WORD.

**4. THEY HUNG THE WORD ON THE
CROSS.**

5. **HE DIED.**
6. **THEY BURIED THE WORD.**
7. **BUT EARLY SUNDAY MORNING THE WORD KEPT HIS WORD. “DESTROY THIS TEMPLE BUT IN THREE DAYS, I’LL RAISE IT UP AGAIN!”**