

**“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).**

- b. THERE IS ALSO A TIME FOR TAKING OUR FAITH OUT OF THE CLOSET AND INTO THE ARENA OF LIFE.**
  
- B. GOD IS LOOKING FOR THOSE WHO WILL ALLOW THEIR LIVES TO BE THE “STAGE” ON WHICH HE REVEALS HIMSELF TO OTHERS.**
  - 1. IN 1 CORINTHIANS 4:9 PAUL WROTE THAT HE HAD BEEN MADE A “SPECTACLE” UNTO THE WORLD. THE WORD IS “THEATRON,” FROM WHICH WE GET OUR WORD THEATER.**
    - a. PAUL COMPARES HIS LIFE TO THE ANCIENT ARENAS WHICH ATHLETIC ABILITY WAS PUT ON DISPLAY BEFORE OTHERS.**
    - b. IT BECAME THE PLATFORM UPON WHICH OTHERS COULD SEE A PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION OF FAITH.**
  
  - 2. GOD WANTS TO USE OUR LIVES: AS THE ARENA THAT ALLOW OTHERS TO SEE HOW HE WORKS WHERE ALL ELSE FAILS.**
    - a. SO THAT HE CAN MEET OUR NEEDS**
    - b. SO THAT HE CAN HEAL OUR HURTS**
    - c. SP THAT HE CAN DELIVER US FROM ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR AND DESTRUCTIVE HABITS.**
    - d. SP THAT HE CAN CHANGE OUR LIVES, IMPRESSING OTHERS OF THE REALITY OF HIS POWER.**

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 CONVINCEN 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 CONVINCING 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!”**