

“EXHIBITING FAITH IN FAITHLESS TIMES”

PART III

“THE REPRODUCTION OF FAITH”

I KING 17:8-24

INTRODUCTION

I BELIEVED IN JESUS CHRIST AND TRUSTED HIM AS MY SAVIOR AS A TEENAGER.

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I HEARD THAT GOD LOVED ME.

I HAD NOT KNOWN THAT. I GUESS I HADN'T EVEN SUSPECTED IT.

I'M SURE I BELIEVED THAT THERE WAS A GOD, BUT I HAD NO IDEA THAT HE KNEW ABOUT ME OR CARED THAT I EXISTED.

IN FACT, THERE WERE MANY TIMES WHEN I FELT I COULD HAVE DROPPED OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH AND NO ONE WOULD HAVE EVEN MISSED ME.

THEN I HEARD HOW GOD HAD PROVED HIS LOVE FOR ME MY COMING TO LIVE IN THIS WORLD AS YOU AND I HAVE TO LIVE.

HE BECAME A MAN, JESUS CHRIST.

HE EXPERIENCED HUNGER AND THIRST, DISAPPOINTMENT AND REJECTION.

FINALLY, HE DIED A HORRIBLE, UNDESERVED DEATH. AND HE WENT THROUGH ALL THAT BECAUSE HE LOVED ME.

AND YOU, AND EVERYONE WHO HA EVER LIVED.

HE DIED TO PAY THE PRICE OF MY SIN, AND THE SIN OF THE WHOLE WORLD.

I HAD A HAD TIME ACCEPTING THAT ALL I HAD TO DO TO RECEIVE GOD'S LOVE AND THE FORGIVENESS THAT GOES WITH IT WAS TO BELIEVE THAT JESUS DIED FOR ME, TO TRUST HIM AS MY SAVIOR.

BUT THE BIBLE IS CLEAR. GOD OFFERS SALVATION AS A GIFT TO BE RECEIVED BY FAITH.

FOR BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH, AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES. IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD.

THAT FAITH I HAVE IN JESUS CHRIST IS VERY PRECIOUS TO ME. IT NOT ONLY GAVE ME THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I WILL GO TO HEAVEN ONE DAY.

IT ALSO CHANGED MY LIFE.

IT INTRODUCED ME TO THE GOD WHO LOVES ME, THE GOD WHO WANTS TO TAKE CARE OF ME AND MEET EVERY NEED IN MY LIFE.

AND MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, I WANT OTHERS TO SHARE THIS FAITH I HAVE.

I WANT THEM TO KNOW THAT GOD IS REAL, THAT HE LOVES ME, THE GOD WHO WANTS TO TAKE CARE OF ME AND MEET EVERY NEED IN MY LIFE.

AND MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, I WANT OTHERS TO SHARE THIS FAITH I HAVE.

I WANT THEM TO KNOW THAT GOD IS REAL, THAT HE LOVES THEM, AND THAT HE WILL FORGIVE THEM.

I WANT THEM TO KNOW HIM LIKE I KNOW HIM. I WANT TO REPRODUCE MY FAITH IN OTHERS.

WE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT ELIJAH'S FAITH.

ELIJAH ALSO WAS CONVINCED THAT GOD WAS REAL.

HE KNEW THAT GOD WAS DEPENDABLE.

HE HAD LEARNED THAT FAITH IN GOD WORKED.

NOW IT WAS TIME FOR ELIJAH TO REPRODUCE HIS FAITH IN OTHERS – BEGINNING WITH GENTILE WIDOW WHO WAS ON THE BRINK OF STARVATION.

THE STORY WE HAVE READ THIS MORNING IS TRUE. IT'S ABOUT A YOUNG SINGLE MOTHER, STRUGGLING TO RAISE A SON WHO'S FATHER HAS DIED AND LEFT HER A WIDOW.

IN HER MIND, SHE HAS PLAYED THE GAME OF LIFE AND LOST.

ALL HER DREAMS HAVE BEEN SMASHED.

SHE IS DOWN TO HER LAST MEAL.

AND IT IS PRECISELY AT THAT POINT OF GREATEST NEED THAT ELIJAH WAS SENT TO SHARE HIS FAITH.

HE WENT TO INTRODUCE HER TO THE GOD WHO CARED FOR HER AND COULD MEET THAT NEED IN HER LIFE.

I. FAITH IS MOST OFTEN REPRODUCED THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS.

A. IT IS PASSED ON FROM PERSON TO PERSON.

- 1. IN THE LIFE OF JESUS, WHAT STANDS OUT? NOT HIS MINISTRY TO THE CROWDS, BUT HIS ENCOUNTERS WITH INDIVIDUALS.**
 - a. HIS MEETING BY NIGHT WITH NICODEMUS – ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS OF AN HONEST SEEKER.**
 - b. HIS CONVERSATION WITH AN UP AND-COMING POLITICIAN WHO HAS DISCOVERED THAT MONEY DOESN'T SATISFY.**
 - c. HIS INVITATION TO ZACCAEUS – A MAN ISOLATED BY LONELINESS AND PREJUDICE.**
- 2. JESUS SHOWS US THAT THE BEST WAY TO PASS ON OUR FAITH IS ONE PERSON AT A TIME.**

B. ELIJAH WAS SENT TO DWELL IN ZIDON – TO LIVE ALONGSIDE THE PERSON WHOM GOD HAD TARGETED FOR HIM TO REACH.

- 1. A PRINCIPLE HERE IS THAT – PROXIMITY DETERMINES IMPACT.**

- a. **THE CLOSER YOU GET TO PEOPLE, THE MORE YOU WILL IMPACT THEIR LIVES.**
- b. **JESUS MADE IT A HABIT OF SPENDING TIME WITH THE PEOPLE HE WANTED TO REACH – TALKING TO THEM, EATING WITH THEM, AND MEETING THEIR NEEDS.**

2. **RELATIONSHIPS CAN BE ESTABLISHED IN A VERY SHORT TIME BUT THEY ARE VITAL TO REPRODUCING OUR FAITH.**

- a. **THEY SHOW PEOPLE THAT WE REALLY CARE.**
- b. **IT GIVES THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO WITNESS, FIRSHTHAND THE EFFECT OF OUR FAITH UPON OUR LIVES.**
 - 1. **IS OUR COMPASSION GENUINE?**
 - 2. **ARE OUR LIVES DIFFERENT?**

II. FAITH IS BEST REPRODUCED AS IT IS PRACTICED

A. **IT WAS ELIJAH'S FAITH IN ACTION THAT GAVE HIM THE OPPORTUNITY TO REPRODUCE HIS FAITH IN THE WIDOW.**

- 1. **HE HAD TO LEAVE THE SECURITY AND SECLUSION OF THE BROOK, TO RISK BEING RECOGNIZED AND APPREHENDED. GOD DECIDED THAT ELIJAH HAD BEEN IDLE LONG ENOUGH. IT WAS TIME TO PUT HIM IN A POSITION WHERE HIS FAITH COULD BENEFIT OTHERS.**
 - a. **IT IS EASY TO BECOME TOO COMFORTABLE IN OUR FAITH THAT WE ARE NO LONGER CONCERNED FOR OTHERS.**
 - 1. **OUR NEEDS ARE BEING MET**

2. **OUR FAMILIES ARE DOING WELL**
 3. **OUR LIVES ARE SAFE AND COMFORTABLE, BUT IMPACTING NO ONE**
2. **HE HAD TO LIVE IN A CITY THAT WAS HOSTILE TO HIS FAITH.**
 - a. **ZIDON WAS THE COUNTRY OF JEZEBEL – THE QUEEN WHO BROUGHT IN BAAL.**
 - b. **ZAREPHATH WAS ON THE MAIN ROAD HALFWAY BETWEEN THE TWO LARGEST CITIES OF THAT REGION.**
 1. **THERE WAS A CONSTANT FLOW OF TRAFFIC BETWEEN THE TWO, ALL PASSING THROUGH ZAREPHATH.**
 2. **YOU CAN BE SURE THAT ELIJAH WAS A CONSTANT TOPIC OF DISCUSSION IN THE LOCAL HOLIDAY INN.**
 3. **IT TOOK FAITH FOR ELIJAH TO OBEY GOD AND MAKE THE CITY OF ZAREPHATH HIS NEW PLACE OF REFUGE.**
3. **HE HAD TO LOOK TO AN IMPOVERISHED WIDOW TO FEED HIM.**
 - a. **WHEN THE WIDOW ANNOUNCED HER CONDITION, ELIJAH HAD TWO CHOICES.**
 1. **HE COULD ASK GOD FOR A “PLAN B.”**
 2. **HE COULD ACT ON THE WORD OF GOD, LEAVING THE RESULTS TO GOD.**

- b. **IT WAS AN ACT OF FAITH FOR HIM TO RESPOND AS HE DID IN VERSES 13 – 14.**

[VERSE 13] “AND ELIJAH SAID UNTO HER, FEAR NOT; GO AND DO AS THOU HAS SAID: BUT MAKE ME THEREOF A LITTLE CAKE FIRST, AND BRING IT UNTO ME, AND AFTER, MAKE FOR THEE AND FOR THY SON.

[VERSE 14] FOR THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL, THE BARREL OF MEAL SHALL NOT WASTE, NEITHER SHALL THE CRUSE OF OIL FAIL, UNTIL THE DAY THAT THE LORD SENDETH RAIN UPON THE EARTH.”

B. ELIJAH DEMONSTRATES THE PRINCIPLE OF “FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD.”

1. **IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO SAY WE HAVE FAITH. OUT FAITH MUST BE SEEN.**
2. **JAMES 2:14-17 [VERSE 14] “WHAT DOTH IT PROFIT, MY BRETHREN, THOUGH A MAN SAY HE HATH FAITH, AND HAS NOT WORKS? CAN FAITH SAVE HIM?”**

[VERSE 15] “IF A BROTHER OR SISTER BE NAKED, AND DESTITUTE OF DAILY FOOD,”

[VERSE 16] “AND ONE OF YOU SAY UNTO THEM, DEPART IN PEACE, BE YE WARMED AND FILLED; NOTWITHSTANDING YE GIVE THEM NOT THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NEEDFUL TO THE BODY; WHAT DOTH IT PROFIT?”

[VERSE 17] “EVEN SO FAITH, IT IS HATH NOT WORKS, IS DEAD, BEING ALONE.”

- a. **BASICALLY, JAMES IS ASKING WHAT GOOD CAN COME FROM WORDS THAT ARE NOT BACKED UP BY WORKS.**

- b. **MEN NEED TO SEE HOW FAITH EFFECTS OUR LIVES BEFORE THEY CAN JUDGE IF IT IS GENUINE.**
- 3. **A DEAD FAITH IS ONE THAT IS NOT BEING REPRODUCED IN OTHERS.**
 - a. **IF I ALLOW MY FAITH TO DIE THROUGH INACTIVITY, I WILL NEVER SEE IT REPRODUCED IN OTHERS.**
 - b. **MY FAITH WILL HAVE PROFITED ME, BUT IT HAS BECOME INCAPABLE OF PROFITING ANYONE ELSE.**
- 4. **WHEN ELIJAH LEAVES ZAREPHATH, HE WILL CONFRONT 450 PROPHETS OF BAAL. NOT ONE OF THEM WILL BE CONVERTED. HE WON'T WIN JEZEBEL, OR AHAB, BUT HE WILL HAVE CONVINCED THIS POOR ZIDONIAN WIDOW THAT GOD IS REAL.**

III. NEED OFTEN OPENS THE DOOR TO FAITH.

- A. **GOD OFTEN USES LIFE SITUATIONS TO DEMONSTRATE THE EMPTINESS OF A FALSE FAITH.**
 - 1. **THE WIDOW WOMAN BELIEVED SHE WAS PREPARING HER LAST MEAL.**
 - 2. **IF SHE HAD ANY FAITH AT ALL, IT HAD BEEN EXERCISED AT THE LOCAL TEMPLE OF BAAL.**
 - 3. **HER GOD HAD FAILED HER, HER NEIGHBORS HAD FAILED HER, AND SHE PROBABLY BELIEVED THAT SHE HAD FAILED HERSELF.**
 - 4. **WHEN SHE HAD NO ONE ELSE TO WHOM SHE COULD TURN, GOD OFFERED HIMSELF.**

B. GOD NEEDS PEOPLE OF AN EXERCISED FAITH WHO WILL STEP INTO SUCH SITUATIONS AND SHARE THEIR FAITH.

1. NOTICE THE PROGRESSION AS ELIJAH'S FAITH IS PASSED ON TO THE WIDOW.

a. **[VERSE 12] – “AS THE LORD THY GOD LIVETH...”**

SOMETHING ABOUT ELIJAH COMMUNICATED HIS FAITH TO THIS WOMAN, BUT IT WAS HIS FAITH, HIS GOD.

b. **[VERSE 14] – “THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL...”**

ELIJAH SAYS, “LET ME TELL YOU WHAT MY GOD HAS SAID.”

1. **NOTHING FANCY, JUST THE WORD OF GOD.**

2. **BUT WITH ALL OTHER HOPE GONE, THE WIDOW WAS WILLING TO GIVE IT A CHANCE.**

c. **[VERSE 24] – “NOW BY THIS I KNOW THAT THOU ART A MAN OF GOD, AND THAT THE WORD OF THE LORD IN THY MOUTH IS TRUTH.”**

1. **THIS IS A DECLARATION OF FAITH, WHAT GOD WAS LOOKING FOR.**

2. **SHE SAID, “NOW I KNOW THAT ALL THE THINGS YOU’VE TOLD ME ABOUT GOD ARE TRUE.”**

2. AS THIS WOMAN WITNESSED ELIJAH'S FAITH, SHE BECAME A BELIEVER, TOO.

CONCLUSION

A. WE NEED AN AUTHENTIC FAITH, ANCHORED IN THE REALITY OF GOD.

- 1.) I KNOW GOD IS REAL.
- 2.) ANYBODY HERE KNOW THAT GOD IS REAL?

B. WE NEED AN APPROVED FAITH, ONE THAT HAS BEEN PROVEN THROUGH TESTING.

- 1.) ABRAHAM WAS PUT TO THE TEST AND HE PROVED TO BE FAITHFUL.
- 2.) MOSES WAS PUT TO THE TEST AND HE PROVED TO BE FAITHFUL.
- 3.) DAVID WAS PUT TO THE TEST AND HE PROVED TO BE FAITHFUL.
- 4.) JOB WAS PUT TO THE TEST AND HE PROVED TO BE FAITHFUL.
- 5.) THE THREE HEBREW BOYS WERE PUT TO THE TEST AND THEY PROVED TO BE FAITHFUL.
- 6.) DANIEL WAS PUT TO THE TEST AND HE PROVED TO BE FAITHFUL.
- 7.) PAUL AND SILAS WERE PUT TO THE TEST AND THEY PROVED TO BE FAITHFUL.
- 8.) JESUS WAS PUT TO THE TEST AND HE PROVED TO BE FAITHFUL.
 - a.) HE WAS FAITHFUL TO HIS CALLING; HE HEALED THE SICK AND RAISED THE DEAD.
 - b.) HE WAS FAITHFUL TO HIS DESTINY; HE DIED ON THE CROSS.
 - c.) HE WAS FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISE; EARLY SUNDAY MORNING, HE ROSE WITH ALL POWER IN HIS HAND.

C. WE NEED AN ACTIVE FAITH; ONE THAT WILL CONVINC *OTHERS* THAT GOD IS REAL, LEADING THEM TO TRUST HIM, TOO.

1. HAVE YOU CONVINCED ANYBODY ELSE THAT GOD IS REAL?