

“EXHIBITING FAITH IN FAITHLESS TIMES”

PART I

“THE SUBSTANCE OF FAITH”

I KING 17:1

INTRODUCTION

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS AN EXPERIENCE OF FAITH.

- **IT COMMENCES IN FAITH WHEN A PERSON BELIEVES IN JESUS CHRIST AS THEIR PERSONAL SAVIOR.**
- **IT CONTINUES BY FAITH AS THE CHRISTIAN ESTABLISHES A HABIT OF YIELDING HIS LIFE TO GOD’S PLAN, AND BUILDING HIS LIFE ON THE PRINCIPLES OF GOD’S WORD.**
- **IT SHOULD CONCLUDE WITH A FAITH GROWN STRONG AND UNSHAKABLE THROUGH TESTING IN WHICH GOD HAS PROVEN HIMSELF TO BE THE ALMIGHTY GOD OF THE BIBLE.**

BUT WHAT IS FAITH? HOW DO YOU DEFINE IT? WHEN DO YOU KNOW YOU HAVE IT? WHAT IS IT SUPPOSED TO DO YOU?

THESE ARE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS THAT MANY CHRISTIANS FIND DIFFICULT TO ANSWER.

SOME PEOPLE HAVE THE IDEA EXPRESSED BY THE LITTLE BOY IN SUNDAY SCHOOL, WHO, WHEN ASKED TO TELL WHAT FAITH IS, SAID, “IT’S BELIEVING REAL HARD IN SOMETHING YOU KNOW ISN’T TRUE.”

THEN THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD SAY THAT FAITH IS BELIEVING IN SOMETHING THAT CAN’T BE PROVEN TRUE.

THOSE ARE DEFINITIONS OF FOOLISHNESS, NOT FAITH.

FAITH IS CONFIDENCE IN SOMEONE OR SOMETHING THAT HAS BEEN PROVEN RELIABLE.

“PISTIS” FIRM PERSUASION, A CONVICTION BASED UPON HEARING; IN THE NEW TESTAMENT IT IS ALWAYS SPEAKING OF FAITH IN GOD OR JESUS CHRIST.

THE MORE YOU KNOW ABOUT A PERSON’S CHARACTER, THE MORE RELIABLE THEY HAVE BEEN, THE MORE YOU WILL TRUST THEM.

WHEN MY SON JERMAINE BEGAN DRIVING, I LIMITED WHERE HE COULD GO AND WHO COULD RIDE WITH HIM.

I REQUIRED HIM TO CALL HOME BEFORE LEAVING WORK TO DRIVE THE MILE TO OUR HOUSE THROUGH MOSTLY DESERTED STREETS.

BUT OVER TIME, HE PROVED TO BE A CAPABLE DRIVER, AND I TRUSTED HIM MORE.

MY FAITH IN HIS ABILITY AS A DRIVER HAS INCREASED.

FAITH IS NOT “BLIND.” IT IS CONFIDENCE GROUNDED IN REALITY.

FAITH IN GOD IS NO DIFFERENT. IT RESTS UPON THE PROVEN CHARACTER AND PERFORMANCE OF GOD.

IT RESTS UPON HIS WORD, PROVEN OVER TIME TO BE INFALLIBLE.

GOD IS REAL. HE IS RELIABLE. THAT IS WHY WE TRUST HIM.

TODAY, WE BEGIN AN INTENSE LOOK AT THE WALK OF FAITH AS IT IS DISPLAYED IN THE LIFE OF ELIJAH.

THE BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNTS OF MEN AND WOMEN OF BIBLE ARE PRESERVED IN SCRIPTURE FOR A REASON.

THEY GIVE US ROLE MODELS WHOM WE CAN ADMIRE, WHO CREATE IN US A DESIRE TO KNOW GOD AS THEY KNEW HIM.

- **THEY DEMONSTRATE THE POSSIBILITIES AND POTENTIAL OF FAITH.**
- **AT THE SAME TIME, THEY LEAVE US WITHOUT EXCUSE.**
 1. **SOME SAY “OUR SOCIETY IS TOO SECULAR. IT’S IMPOSSIBLE TO DO ANYTHING GREAT FOR GOD.”**
 - a.) **BUT MOSES WAS RAISED IN PHARAOH’S PALACE AND INDOCTRINATED IN PAGAN PHILOSOPHIES, AND HE DIDN’T DO SO BADLY.**
 2. **SOME SAY “I’M NOT TALENTED ENOUGH FOR GOD TO USE ME.”**
 - a.) **REALLY? HAVE YOU READ THE STORY OF GIDEON?**
 3. **SOME SAY “I’VE ALREADY BLOWN IT. THERE’S NO WAY GOD COULD USE ME.”**
 - a.) **HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF A FELLOW CALLED DAVID, OR MAN NAMED JONAH?**

IF GOD WAS ABLE TO PERFORM GREAT WORKS IN THEIR LIVES, THEN HE CAN PERFORM GREAT WORKS IN MY LIFE AND YOURS.

SO LET’S MEET ELIJAH. HE APPEARS SUDDENLY ON THE PAGES OF SCRIPTURE, STEPPING OUT OF OBSCURITY IN A BIG WAY TO CONFRONT THE KING OF ISRAEL WITH HIS SIN.

WHERE DID HE GET THE COURAGE TO DO WHAT HE DID?

AND BELIEVE ME, IT TOOK COURAGE,

LET’S TAKE A MOMENT TO GET A LITTLE BACKGROUND.

IDOLATRY WAS ALREADY WELL ESTABLISHED IN ISRAEL WHEN AHAB TOOK THE THRONE. BUT, BEFORE AHAB, IT WAS THE IDOLATRY OF TRYING TO WORSHIP THE REAL GOD IN THE WRONG WAY.

AHAB TOOK IT A STEP FURTHER. HE TOOK GOD OUT OF THE PICTURE AND REPLACED HIM WITH THE FALSE GOD, BAAL.

IT WAS TOO MUCH FOR ELIJAH TO ENDURE. HE WALKED INTO THE PALACE AND DELIVERED HIS CHALLENGE.

WHAT ELIJAH DID WAS AN ACT OF FAITH.

THIS MORNING, I WANT US TO EXAMINE THE SUBSTANCE OF ELIJAH'S FAITH.

REMEMBER THAT FAITH IS CONFIDENCE IN SOMEONE OR SOMETHING.

LET'S SEE WHAT ELIJAH WAS PUTTING HIS CONFIDENCE IN.

I. HE WAS CONVINCED THAT GOD WAS REAL – “AS THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL LIVETH.”

A. LIKE AHAB, MEN ARE CONSTANTLY TRYING TO REMOVE GOD FROM THE SCENE OF HUMAN HISTORY.

1. AS WE APPROACH THE 21ST CENTURY, THREE SIGNIFICANT PHILOSOPHIES THAT DO AWAY WITH GOD HAVE TAKEN HOLD IN OUR SOCIETY.

a.) ATHEISM – THERE IS NO GOD

b.) EVOLUTION – YOU CAN HAVE LIFE WITHOUT GOD

c.) HUMANISM – MAN IS GOD

B. THE WORLD NEEDS TO SEE EVIDENCE OF GOD'S REALITY IN OUR LIVES.

1. THE WORLD IS NOT CONVINCED BY OUR CLAIMS THAT GOD IS REAL, BUT THEY

WILL TAKE NOTICE IF THEY CAN SEE EVIDENCE OF HIS REALITY IN OUR LIVES.

- 2. WE MUST LET GOD CHANGE US, AND THEN LET THE WORLD EVALUATE THE CHANGE.**
 - a. PEOPLE TAKE NOTICE WHEN LIVES ARE CHANGED, HURTS ARE HEALED, AND HOPE IS RENEWED.**
 - b. THEY ARE NOT INTERESTED IN ARGUMENTS. THEY ARE LOOKING FOR PROOF.**

- 3. WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN YOUR LIFE SINCE YOU WERE SAVED THAT CAN ONLY BE EXPLAINED IN TERMS OF SOMETHING SUPERNATURAL? IS THERE VISIBLE EVIDENCE THAT THE LIVING GOD IS NOW A PART OF YOUR LIFE?**
 - a.) I SAY I BELIEVE IN GOD. BIG DEAL! SO DOES 95% OF EVERYONE LIVING IN AMERICA. THAT DOESN'T PROVE ANYTHING.**
 - b.) WHAT PEOPLE REALLY WANT TO SEE IS DEEP, LASTING CHANGE IN OUR CHARACTER AND MANNER OF LIFE.**
 - c.) I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT "MIRACLES." MOST PEOPLE DON'T NEED TO SEE WATER TURNED TO WINE TO BELIEVE THAT GOD IS REAL.**
 - d.) DO WE FORGIVE LIKE JESUS FORGAVE?**
 - e.) DO WE LOVE LIKE JESUS LOVED?**

- f.) **HAS GOD TAMED OUR TEMPER AND CUT OFF A GOSSIPING TONGUE?**

ILLUSTRATION

IN AN EFFORT TO WIN HIS FAMILY TO THE LORD, A MAN POINTED TO ALL THE “CHANGES” IN HIS LIFE – HIS CHURCH ATTENDANCE, TITHING RECORD, AND INVOLVEMENT IN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES.”

ONE OF HIS FAMILY MEMBERS REPLIED, YOU HAVE NOT CHANGED. YOU’RE JUST LIKE YOU’VE ALWAYS BEEN – ONLY NOW YOU’RE RELIGIOUS.

- 4. IF WE WANT TO CONVINCe OTHERS THAT GOD IS ALIVE, THEY MUST SEE MORE THAN SUPERFICIAL CHANGES IN OUR HABITS.**

- a. THEY NEED TO SEE CHANGE WHERE IT COUNTS – IN RELATIONSHIPS, VALUES, AND CHARACTER.**

I. NOT ONLY WAS HE CONVINCED THAT GOD WAS REAL BUT:

II. HE WAS CONVINCED THAT HE WOULD GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE TO GOD – “BEFORE WHOM I STAND”

A. LIKE ELIJAH, THE TEST FORCES US TO LOOK AT OUR ACCOUNTABILITY.

- 1. ELIJAH HAD A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY. ELIJAH KNEW THAT HE STOOD BEFORE GOD AND HE WOULD HAVE TO ANSWER FOR HOW HE RESPONDED TO THE PRO-BAL MOVEMENT IN HIS CULTURE.**

- a. HE COULD NOT BE A “SILENT PROTESTER.”**

LIVES AND “PUT US ON” ANYTIME HE CHOOSES.

- b. **THERE IS NO GREATER ABILITY THAN AVAILABILITY.**

I. **NOT ONLY WAS HE CONVINCED THAT GOD WAS REAL:**

II. **NOT ONLY WAS HE CONVINCED THAT HE WOULD GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE TO GOD:**

III. **HE WAS CONVINCED THAT THE RESOURCES GOD HAD PROVIDED HIM WERE ADEQUATE – JAMES 5:17 OFFERS THIS COMMENTARY ON ELIJAH, “ELIJAH WAS MAN SUBJECT TO LIKE PASSIONS AS WE ARE, AND HE PRAYED EARNESTLY THAT IT MIGHT NOT RAIN: AND IT RAINED NOT ON THE EARTH BY THE SPACE OF THREE YEARS AND SIX MONTHS.”**

A. **ELIJAH WAS A MAN SUBJECT TO LIKE PASSIONS.**

1. **THIS TELLS US THAT THERE WAS NOTHING SPECIAL ABOUT THE PERSON OF ELIJAH**
2. **WHAT SET ELIJAH APART WERE HIS PRAYERS.**

B. **ELIJAH WAS A MAN OF PRAYER**

1. **ELIJAH’S COURAGE TO CONFRONT AHAB WAS THE BY-PRODUCT OF HIS PRAYER LIFE.**
2. **HIS CONFIDENCE TO PRAY AS HE DID CAME FROM THE WORD OF GOD.**
 - a. **DEUTERONOMY 11:16-17 WARNS, “TAKE HEED TO YOUR SELVES THAT YOUR HEART BE NOT DECEIVED, AND YE TURN ASIDE,**

**AND SERVE OTHER GODS, AND
WORSHIP THEM; AND THEN THE
LORD'S WRATH BE KINDLED
AGAINST YOU, AND HE SHUT UP THE
HEAVEN, THAT THERE BE NO RAIN.**

- 3. ELIJAH KNEW WHAT GOD HAD SAID. HE BELIEVED THAT GOD WOULD DO WHAT HE SAID, SO HE CONFRONTED AHAB WITH THE WARNING OF THE WORD OF GOD.**

CONCLUSION

A. ELIJAH DIDN'T HAVE ONE THING AVAILABLE TO HIM THAT IS NOT COMPLETELY AVAILABLE TO US TODAY.

- 1. HE HAD THE WORD OF GOD.**
- 2. HE HAD PRAYER.**
- 3. HE HAD THE FAITH TO BELIEVE GOD WOULD DO WHAT HE SAID.**
- 4. HE WAS CONVINCED THAT GOD WAS REAL.**
- 5. HE WAS CONVINCED THAT HE WOULD GIVE AN ACCOUNT TO GOD FOR HIS LIFE.**
- 6. HE WAS CONVINCED THAT THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO HIM WERE ADEQUATE.**

THAT WAS THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS FAITH.

B. WE STAND BY FAITH. [HEBREWS 11:1-3]

- 1. THE MEANING OF FAITH; [VERSE 1]
"NOW FAITH IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS
HOPE FOR, THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT
SEEN."**
- 2. THE REWARD OF FAITH; [VERSE 2]
"FOR BY IT THE ELDERS OBTAINED A GOOD
REPORT."**

3. **THE POWER OF FAITH; [VERSE 3]**
***“THROUGH FAITH, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE
WORLDS WERE FRAMED BY THE WORD OF GOD,
SO THAT THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN WERE NOT
MADE OF THINGS WHICH DO APPEAR.”***