

“EXHIBITING FAITH IN FAITHLESS TIMES”**PART II****“THE TEST OF FAITH”****I KING 17:2-7****ILLUSTRATION**

THE STORY IS TOLD THAT SEVERAL YEARS AGO A CIRCUS PERFORMER STRETCHED A WIRE ACROSS NIAGARA FALLS.

AN EXPECTANT CROWD GATHERED TO WITNESS THE MAN’S DEATH-DEFYING WALK OVER THE ROARING FALLS.

BEFORE CROSSING, THE ACROBAT FANNED THE FLAMES OF EXPECTANCY IN THE CROWD BY ASKING HOW MANY BELIEVED HE COULD SUCCESSFULLY WALK THE WIRE ACROSS THE FALLS AND BACK AGAIN.

THE CROWD ROARED THEIR APPROVAL, THEN WATCHED IN SILENCE AS THE MAN MADE THE ATTEMPT.

CHEERING, WHISTLES, AND THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE GREETED HIM WHEN HE COMPLETE THE CROSSING AND LEAPED TO THE GROUND.

BUT THE PERFORMER WASN’T FINISHED. THIS TIME HE TAUNTED THE CROWD BY SUGGESTING THAT HE COULD WALK ACROSS THE WIRE BLINDFOLDED.

“HOW MANY OF YOU BELIEVE I CAN CROSS THE FALLS AND SAFELY RETURN BLINDFOLDED?” HE CALLED OUT.

AGAIN, THE CROWD ENCOURAGED HIM WITH THEIR SHOUTS AND APPLAUSE.

BLINDFOLDED, THE MAN SLOWLY WALKED STEP-BY-CAREFUL-STEP ACROSS THE FALLS AND BACK AGAIN.

WHEN HE LEAPED TO THE GROUND IN SAFETY AND WHIPPED OFF THE BLINDFOLD, HE WAS REWARDED WITH ANOTHER DEAFENING ROUND OF SHOUTS AND APPLAUSE.

HOLDING UP HIS HANDS FOR SILENCE, HE INDICATED TO THE CROWD THAT HE WAS NOT YET FINISHED.

“HOW MANY OF YOU BELIEVE,” HE ASKED WITH A DRAMATIC PAUSE, “THAT I CAN CROSS THE WIRE AND

RETURN, BLINDFOLDED AND..." AGAIN HE PAUSED BEFORE CONTINUING.

THEN HE SAID, "...BLINDFOLDED, AND CARRYING A MAN UPON MY SHOULDERS!"

FOR THE THIRD TIME, THE CROWD ANSWERED HIS QUESTION WITH APPLAUSE AND SHOUTS OF APPROVAL.

THE CIRCUS PERFORMER AGAIN HELD UP HIS HANDS FOR SILENCE. "YOU ALL BELIEVE THAT I CAN CROSS THE WIRE AND RETURN, BLINDFOLDED AND CARRYING A MAN ON MY SHOULDERS?" THEN, BEFORE THE CROWD COULD RESPOND, THE MAN ASKED, "THEN WHO WILL VOLUNTEER TO SIT ON MY SHOULDERS?"

THE ACROBAT SCANNED THE UNCOMFORTABLE CROWD, PEERING INTO EACH FACE. NO ONE VOLUNTEERED.

INTRODUCTION

IT IS ONE THING TO SAY THAT YOU BELIEVE SOMETHING, AND THAT YOU HAVE CONFIDENCE IN ANOTHER'S ABILITY, BUT FAITH REMAINS UNPROVED UNTIL IT IS TESTED.

IT'S EASY TO SAY THAT YOU BELIEVE GOD WILL PROVIDE ALL YOUR NEEDS WHEN THE MONEY IS COMING IN AND THE BILLS ARE BEING PAID.

BUT, CAN YOU PROVE YOUR FAITH AND GIVE YOUR TITHE AND FAITH PROMISE WHEN THE MONEY IS TIGHT, AND THE CAR NEEDS REPAIR, AND YOU CAN'T SEE HOW YOU WILL EVER GET ENDS TO MEET?

AS SOMEONE HAS SAID, "FAITH ON A FULL STOMACH MAY SIMPLY BE CONTENTMENT, BUT IF YOU HAVE IT WHEN YOU'RE HUNGRY, THEN IT IS REAL."
LAST WEEK, WE EXAMINED THE SUBSTANCE OF ELIJAH'S FAITH.

WE SAW THAT ELIJAH HAD CONFIDENCE THAT GOD WAS REAL, AND THAT HIS RESOURCES WERE ADEQUATE.

ELIJAH WAS ABLE TO STAND AGAINST HIS SOCIETY'S MOVE AWAY FROM GOD BECAUSE HIS FAITH WAS ANCHORED IN REALITY.

GOD IS REAL. HE DOES WANT TO USE OUR LIVES TO REVEAL HIMSELF, HIS PROMISES ARE RELIABLE.

THIS MORNING, WE ARE GOING TO SEE HOW ELIJAH'S FAITH WAS PUT TO THE TEST.

FEW THINGS ARE MORE HARMFUL TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST THAN A SPIRITUAL PHONY.

AT THE SAME TIME, I KNOW OF NOTHING MORE CONVINCING THAN A FAITH THAT PASSES THE TEST OF ADVERSITY.

AN AUTHENTIC FAITH THAT PASSES THROUGH THE FIRES OF TESTING SHINES LIKE PUREST GOLD.

- **OUR TRUST IN GOD DEEPENS;**
- **WE SEE THE FUTILITY OF PUTTING OUR FAITH IN ANYTHING ELSE, AND**
- **THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD BECOMES EVIDENT, BOTH TO OURSELVES AND TO OTHERS.**

IN THESE VERSES, WE SEE ELIJAH TESTED. THERE ARE FOUR ELEMENTS INVOLVED IN THIS TEST:

1. **AN UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS;**
2. **A PROMISE OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS;**
3. **ELIJAH'S RESPONSE; AND**
4. **A DEEPENING OF THE TEST.**

I. AN UNEXPECTED CIRCUMSTANCE. "GO...HIDE THYSELF" – [VERSE 2-3] WHY?

1. **FOR ELIJAH'S PERSONAL SAFETY.**
 - a. **HE WOULD SOON BE ON ISRAEL'S "MOST WANTED" LIST.**
2. **FOR ISRAEL TO SEE THE FUTILITY OF TRADING GOD FOR BAAL.**
 - a. **ELIJAH'S DISAPPEARANCE FORCED THEM TO PUT THEIR TRUST IN THEIR NEW GOD, BAAL, AND FIND THAT FAITH TO BE IN VAIN.**
3. **TO PROVE ELIJAH'S FAITH.**

- a. **GOD KNEW THAT ELIJAH'S FAITH WAS GENUINE.**
- b. **HE WANTED ELIJAH TO KNOW THAT HIS FAITH WAS GENUINE – THAT IT WAS NOT MISGUIDED OR BASED ON FALSEHOODS.**

B. THE THINGS THAT TEST OUR FAITH ARE SELDOM ANNOUNCED IN ADVANCE.

- 1. **THEY TEND TO HIT US FROM THE BLIND SIDE LIKE A BLITZING LINEBACKER.**
- 2. **THEY ALWAYS SEEM TO COME AT THE MOST INOPPORTUNE TIMES.**
- 3. **IF WE WERE GOING TO SCHEDULE A CAR BREAKDOWN, WE WOULD PICK A TIME WHEN THERE WAS PLENTY OF MONEY IN THE BANK.**
- 4. **IF WE WERE GOING TO SCHEDULE A BOUT WITH THE FLU, IT WOULD BE WHEN OUR WORK WAS CAUGHT UP AND THE CALENDAR WAS CLEAR.**

C. BUT IF WE HAD OUR WAY, OUR FAITH WOULD NEVER BE TESTED... AND GOD WOULD NEVER HAVE THE CHANCE TO PROVE THAT FAITH WORKED.

- 1. **OUR DECLARATIONS OF FAITH WOULD RING HOLLOW.**
- 2. **WE WOULD SIMPLY BE ECHOING EMPTY RELIGIOUS CLICHÉS LEARNED IN CHURCH AND SUNDAY SCHOOL.**
- 3. **AND NO SKEPTIC IS EVER CONVINCED OR WON OVER BY THAT KIND OF FAITH.**

**II. A PROMISE OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS, [VERSE 4]
"THOU SHALL DRINK OF THE BROOK; AND I HAVE COMMANDED THE RAVENS TO FEED THEE THERE."**

A. GOD NEVER TESTS A MAN WITHOUT PROVIDING HIM THE RESOURCES TO PASS THE TEST.

B. ELIJAH WAS SENT TO A PLACE OF LONELINESS, SILENCE AND INACTIVITY, BUT GOD PROMISED TO SUSTAIN HIM FOR THE DURATION OF THAT PERIOD.

1. THE PROMISE ACCOMPANIED THE COMMAND.

[VERSE 3] - "GET THEE HENCE, AND TURN THEE EASTWARD, AND HIDE THYSELF BY THE BROOK CHE'RITH, THAT IS BEFORE JORDAN."

[VERSE 4] - "AND IT SHALL BE, THAT THOU SHALL DRINK OF THE BROOK; AND I HAVE COMMANDED THE RAVENS TO FEED THEE THERE."

a. GOD DID NOT INTEND THAT EACH DAY FOR ELIJAH BE A STRUGGLE TO HAVE HIS NEEDS MET.

1. FINDING EDIBLE ROOTS

2. ROASTING DESERT RATS

b. NOR DID GOD INTEND THAT ELIJAH WOULD HAVE TO SPEND TODAY BEGGING HIM TO MEET THE NEEDS FO TOMORROW.

2. ELIJAH WAS ONLY REQUIRED TO ACT ON GOD'S PROMISE WITH A GRATEFUL EXPECTATION OF THE PROMISED SUPPLY.

C. OUR PROMISED RESOURCES ARE EXPLAINED IN GOD'S WORD.

1. "THE WORD OF THE LORD" (VERSE 2) ALWAYS ACCOMPANIES THE WILL OF THE LORD.

a. THE BIBLE REVEALS WHO GOD IS AND WHAT WE CAN EXPECT HIM TO DO.

2. GOD NEVER COMMANDS US TO DO ANYTHING WITHOUT TELLING US WHAT

**RESOURCES HE IS PROVIDING TO
SUSTAIN US IN THE DOING OF IT.**

**[MATTHEW 28:19] “GO YE THEREFORE,
AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING
THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND
OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST:”**

- a. **GOD CAREFULLY AND EXPLICITLY
TOLD ELIJAH THE MANNER IN
WHICH HIS NEEDS WOULD BE
SUPPLIED.**
- b. **IN THIS I SEE TWO IMPORTANT
ELEMENTS:**
 - 1. **GOD WANTED ELIJAH TO
KNOW WHAT WAS TO BE HIS
– BREAD AND FLESH FROM
THE RAVENS.**
 - 2. **HE WAS TO RECEIVE IT
ACCORDING TO HIS DAILY
NEED.**

**D. ONE OF THE QUICKEST WAYS I KNOW TO
DISCOURAGE A BELIEVER IS TO WEIGH HIM
DOWN WITH THE COMMANDS OF CHRIST
WITHOUT TELLING HIM OF THE RESOURCES
GOD HAS PROVIDED TO FULFILL THEM.**

**[I PETER 1:2-4;] [2] “ELECT ACCORDING TO THE
FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD THE FATHER,
THROUGH SANCTIFICATION OF THE SPIRIT,
UNTO OBEDIENCE AND SPRINKLING OF THE
BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST: GRACE UNTO YOU, AND
PEACE, BE MULTIPLIED.”**

**[3] “BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHICH ACCORDING TO HIS
ABUNDANT MERCY HATH BEGOTTEN US AGAIN
UNTO A LIVELY HOPE BY THE RESURRECTION OF
JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD,”**

**[4] “TO AN INHERITANCE INCORRUPTIBLE, AND
UNDEFILED, AND THAT FADETH NOT AWAY,
RESERVED IN HEAVEN FOR YOU,”**

1. **IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS DIVINE POWER, GOD HAS GIVEN US EVERYTHING WE NEED FOR LIFE AND GODLINESS.**
 - a. **LIFE – EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE AND SITUATION YOU MAY ENCOUNTER – TEMPTATION, PRESSURE, NEED, EVERYTHING.**
 - b. **GODLINESS – THE ABILITY TO DISPLAY THE CHARACTER AND REALITY OF GOD.**
2. **HE HAS ALSO GIVEN US PROMISES IN WHICH WE CAN PUT OUR CONFIDENCE.**
 - a. **GOD’S PROMISES ARE OUR ASSURANCE THAT GOD WILL MEET EVERY DEMAND OF LIFE – THE EXPECTED AND THE UNEXPECTED.**

III. ELIJAH’S RESPONSE. VERSE 5

A. ELIJAH ILLUSTRATES WHAT IT MEANS TO WALK BY FAITH.

1. **SO HE WENT AND DID ACCORDING UNTO THE WORD OF THE LORD; FOR HE WENT AND DWELT BY THE BROOK CHE’RITH THAT IS BEFORE JORDAN.**
2. **HE ACTED AS IF THE RAVENS WERE ALREADY ON THEIR WAY.**
 - a. **THAT’S WHAT FAITH IS ALL ABOUT, ACTING ON THE PROMISE OF GOD.**
 - b. **“FAITH” WHICH IS NOT BASED UPON “THE WORD OF THE LORD” IS NOTHING MORE THAN SUPERSTITION, SPECULATION, OR STUPIDITY.**

B. WHEN WE ACT ON THAT WHICH GOD HAS SAID, THEN WE ARE WALKING BY FAITH.

IV. A DEEPENING OF THE TEST. “THE BROOK DRIED UP.” – VERSE 7

ELIJAH SAT AND WATCHED THE BROOK DRY UP UNTIL GOD TOLD HIM TO MOVE.

DR. HOWARD HENDRICKS WRITES, “I WOULDN’T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SIT THERE AND WATCH THE BROOK DRY UP. I WOULD HAVE GOTTEN OUT MY ROAD MAP AND BEEN LOOKING FOR EVERY WATER HOLE IN THE AREA. MY MOTTO WOULD BE ‘DON’T SIT THERE. DO SOMETHING.’”

A. ELIJAH ILLUSTRATES WHAT IT MEANS TO WALK BY FAITH AND NOT BY SIGHT.

- 1. GOD IS MORE CONCERNED THAT WE HAVE THE RIGHT METHOD THAN THAT WE SEE THE EXPECTED RESULTS.**
 - a. OUR JOB IS TO ACT IN FAITH; GOD’S JOB IS TO KEEP HIS WORD.**
 - b. SOMETIMES, WHAT LOOKS LIKE FAILURE IS ACTUALLY GOD’S WAY OF INSURING THAT WE ARE WALKING BY FAITH AND NOT BY SIGHT.**
- 2. BY ALLOWING THE BROOK TO DRY UP, GOD WAS ASKING ELIJAH, “IS YOUR FAITH IN ME, OR IN THE WATER HOLE I PROVIDED?”**

B. WHEN WE ARE ACTING UPON THE PROMISES OF GOD AND TESTING COMES, WE MUST FOCUS ON THE TRUTH.

- 1. OUR CIRCUMSTANCES ARE IN GOD’S HANDS. HE KNOWS WHAT’S GOING ON.**
- 2. NOTHING COMES OUR WAY OF WHICH HE DOES NOT FIRST APPROVE.**
- 3. NO TRIAL IS APPROVED UNLESS GOD KNOWS IT TO BE A NECESSARY PART IN DEVELOPING OUR FAITH OR CONVINCING AN UNBELIEVING SPECTATOR.**

CONCLUSION

YOU CAN NOT PROVE FAITH IN A SERMON. IT CAN ONLY BE PROVEN WHEN IT IS TESTED IN THE LABORATORY OF LIFE.

WE MUST TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD AND ACT AS IF WE BELIEVE WHAT HE SAID IS TRUE.

THAT IS THE WAY WE FIRST MEET GOD.

MY DECISION TODAY:

- **TO TRUST JESUS CHRIST AS MY PERSONAL SAVIOR**
- **TO GIVE GOD PERMISSION TO TEST MY FAITH THAT OTHERS MAY SEE THAT HE IS REAL.**

I DON'T ABOUT YOU, BUT I BELIEVE THAT GOD WILL KEEP HIS WORD, BECAUSE HE HAS ALWAYS KEPT HIS WORD.

HE KEPT HIS WORD TO SATAN;

[GENESIS 3:15] “AND I WILL PUT ENMITY BETWEEN THEE AND THE WOMAN, AND BETWEEN THY SEED AND HER SEED; IT SHALL BRUISE THY HEAD, AND THOU SHALT BRUISE HIS HEEL.”

[GALATIANS 4:4] “BUT WHEN THE FULLNESS OF TIME WAS COME, GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON, MADE OF A WOMAN, MADE UNDER THE LAW”

HIS WORD WAS KEPT ABOUT HIS PLACE OF BIRTH;

[MICAH 5:2] “BUT THOU BETHLEHEM EPH'RA-TAH, THOUGH THOU BE LITTLE AMONG THE THOUSANDS OF JUDAH, YET OUT OF THEE SHALL HE COME FORTH UNTO ME THAT IS TO BE RULER IN ISRAEL; WHOSE GOINGS FORTH HAVE BEEN FROM OF OLD, FROM EVERLASTING.”

[MATTHEW 2:1] “NOW WHEN JESUS WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM OF JUDEA IN THE DAYS OF HEROD THE KING, BEHOLD, THERE CAME WISE MEN FROM THE EAST TO JERUSALEM.”

BORN OF A VIRGIN;

[ISAIAH 7:14] “THEREFORE THE LORD HIMSELF SHALL GIVE YOU A SIGN; BEHOLD A VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE, AND BEAR A SON, AND SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL.”

HIS TRIUMPHAL ENTRY;

[ZECHARIAH 9:9] “REJOICE GREATLY, O DAUGHTER OF ZION; SHOUT, O DAUGHTER OF JERUSALEM: BEHOLD, THY KING COMETH UNTO THEE: HE IS JUST, AND HAVING SALVATION; LOWLY, AND RIDING UPON AN ASS, AND UPON A COLT THE FOAL OF AN ASS.”

[JOHN 12: 13-15] [VERSE 13] “TOOK BRANCHES OF PALM TREES, AND WENT FORTH TO MEET HIM, AND CRIED, HOSANNA: BLESSED IS THE KING OF ISRAEL THAT COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.”

[VERSE 14] “AND JESUS, WHEN HE HAD FOUND A YOUNG ASS, SAT THEREON; AS IT IS WRITTEN, “

[VERSE 15] “FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF SI’ON: BEHOLD, THY KING COMETH, SITTING ON AN ASS’S COLT.”

[MATTHEW 21:9] “AND THE MULTITUDES THAT WENT BEFORE, AND THAT FOLLOWED, CRIED, SAYING, HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID: BLESSED IS HE THAT COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST.”

BETRAYED BY A FRIEND;

[PSALM 41:9] “YEA, MINE OWN FAMILIAR FRIEND, IN WHOM I TRUSTED, WHICH DID EAT OF MY BREAD, HATH LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.”

[MARK 14:10] “AND JUDAS ISCARIOT, ONE OF THE TWELVE, WENT UNTO THE CHIEF PRIESTS, TO BETRAY HIM UNTO THEM.”

SOLD FOR 30 PIECES OF SILVER;

[ZECHARIAH 11:12] “AND I SAID UNTO THEM, IF YE THINK GOOD, GIVE ME MY PRICE; IF NOT FORBEAR. SO THEY WEIGHED FOR MY PRICE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER.”

[MATTHEW 26:15] “AND SAID UNTO THEM, WHAT WILL YOU GIVE ME, AND I WILL DELIVER HIM UNTO YOU? AND THEY COVENANTED WITH HIM FOR THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER.”

CRUCIFIED WITH SINNERS;

[ISAIAH 53:12] “THEREFORE WILL I DIVIDE HIM A PORTION WITH THE GREAT, AND HE SHALL DIVIDE THE SPOIL WITH THE STRONG; BECAUSE HE HATH Poured OUT HIS SOUL UNTO DEATH: AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH THE TRANSGRESSORS; AND HE BARE THE SINS OF MANY, AND MADE INTERCESSION FOR THE TRANSGRESSORS.”

[MATTHEW 27:38] “ THEN WERE THERE TWO THIEVES CRUCIFIED WITH HIM; ONE ON THE RIGHT HAND, AND ANOTHER ON THE LEFT.”

HE WOULD DIE, NO A BONE BE BROKEN;

[PSALMS 34:20] “HE KEEPETH ALL HIS BONES, NOT ONE OF THEM IS BROKEN.”

[JOHN 19:33] “BUT WHEN THEY CAME TO JESUS, AND SAW THAT HE WAS DEAD ALREADY, THEY BRAKE NOT HIS BONES.”

HE WOULD BE BURIED;

[ISAIAH 53:9] “AND HE MADE HIS GRAVE WITH THE WICKED, AND WITH THE RICH IN HIS DEATH; BECAUSE HE HAD DONE NO VIOLENCE, NEITHER WAS ANY DECEIT IN HIS MOUTH.”

[MATTHEW 27:57-60] [VERSE 57] WHEN THE EVEN WAS COME THERE CAME A RICH MAN OF ARIMATHEA, NAMED JOSEPH, WHO ALSO HIMSELF WAS JESUS’ DISCIPLE:

[VERSE 58] HE WENT TO PILATE, AND BEGGED THE BODY OF JESUS. THEN PILATE COMMANDED THE BODY TO BE DELIVERED.

[VERSE 59] AND WHEN JOSEPH HAD TAKEN THE BODY, HE WRAPPED IT IN A CLEAN LINEN CLOTH.

[VERSE 60] AND LAID IT IN HIS OWN NEW TOMB, WHICH HE HAD HEWN OUT IN THE ROCK; AND HE ROLLED A GREAT STONE TO THE DOOR OF THE SEPULCHRE, AND DEPARTED.

HIS RESURRECTION;

[PSALMS 16:10] “FOR THOU WILT NOT LEAVE MY SOUL IN HELL; NEITHER WILT THOU SUFFER THINE HOLY ONE TO SEE CORRUPTION.”

[MATTHEW 28:9] “AND AS THEY WENT TO TELL HIS DISCIPLES, BEHOLD, JESUS MET THEM, SAYING, ALL HAIL. AND THEY CAME AND HELD HIM BY THE FEET, AND WORSHIPPED HIM.”