

Faith To Trust

Text : **I King 17: 1-16**

INTRODUCTION :

A. The first instinct an infant displays is that of clinging.

1. Doctors test a newborn by putting their finger in his hand to see if it grabs it.
2. The instinctive fear of falling should never leave an individual no matter how advanced his years may become.

B. Developing faith is like learning to be a skydiver.

1. Many a student skydiver has been unable to jump out of the plane.
 - a. They've learned about the techniques of parachuting and are convinced it's safe.
 - b. They know all about their equipment and are confident it will function properly.
 - c. BUT ... when they step to that open door, they just can't let go of the plane.
2. No matter how much one knows about the process, he must still overcome his instinctive fear of falling.
 - a. Knowledge fosters understanding, but it does not guarantee courage.
 - b. Practice on the ground can give one confidence in his equipment, not give trust.
 - c. Eventually one must jump out of a perfectly good airplane.
3. *No matter how much one learns about God and His word, eventually he must put his trust in Him enough to jump.*

C. Many people confuse knowledge and academic acceptance with faith.

1. They study the bible ... often to the point of becoming scholars.
 - a. They're totally convinced that God is and that Jesus is His Son, *but don't jump.*
 - b. Many become advocates and bible teachers, *but they don't trust enough to jump.*
 - c. Remember : **James 2: 19-** You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.
2. To progress from knowledge to faith one must trust God completely.
 - a. Anything that we can accomplish on our own is not done by faith.
 - b. In the normal course, the overwhelming percentage of our lives are lived by sight.
 - c. Faith gives one the confidence to go and to do things that are beyond him.
3. Faith is a foreign concept to the people of the world. (*We walk to the beat*)
 - a. They view those who walk by faith as being foolish. (*of a different drum.*)
 - b. **I Cor. 1: 18-** For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Walking by faith is the willingness to step completely out of our comfort zone and trust God to sustain us.

I. This is not an easy transition to make.

A. It flies in the face of our very nature.

1. It's just like jumping out of a plane ... *totally counterintuitive.*
2. As we stand on the brink of faith ready to commit, every fiber of our earthly nature cries "*don't jump.*"

B. Satan attempts to feed you excuses faster than you can swallow them.

1. Are you nuts ? That's just crazy. Everyone will laugh. How dare they ask ..
2. You've got responsibilities; people are depending on you.
3. This is not the right time; you need to get your life in order first.

C. Belief is easy, but it requires a complete reorientation to begin living by faith.

1. **Rom. 12: 2-** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, ..
2. **Eph. 4: 20-24** But you did not learn Christ in this way, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, ²² that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.
("*Lusts of deceit*" is when the devils says, you'll be happy if you have ...)

D. Knowing that the world would have a powerful pull on us, Jesus taught and strongly emphasized the proper attitude toward things.

(According to Howard Dalton in leadership magazine :)

1. Jesus taught more parables about money and things than anything else. (**16 of 38**)
2. One out of every ten verses in the gospels is about money and things. (**288**)
3. In the bible there are :
 - a. 500 verses on prayer
 - b. 500 verses on faith
 - c. Over 2000 about money and possession.

* *The volume of material indicates where God thinks the emphasis should be. We need instructions about it, because we all have to deal with the problem.*

II. Jesus directly linked our attitude toward things to our faith.

A. Read ... Matt. 6: 19-24

1. Vs. 21 ... One's heart follows his treasure.
 - a. Thus, when we invest our time, talent and resources we locate our hearts.
 - b. The heart follows the treasure wherever it goes. (*Where is your heart ?*)
2. Vs. 22-23 ... The focus of the eye determines one's spiritual status.
 - a. In scripture light and darkness are always indicative of good and evil.
 - b. The Apostle Paul reinforces this teaching :
Gal. 6: 8- For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.
3. Vs. 24 ... One heart cannot be divided. (*One may not choose not to choose.*)
 - a. There is no such thing as joint custody ... it either belongs to God or Satan.
 - b. There are no double agents in the kingdom of God. *One must choose one loyalty.*

B. Read ... Matt. 6: 25-35

1. We are directly commanded **not** to focus our attentions on providing for ourselves.
 - a. Caring for self is the central focus of the people of the world. (*Those in darkness*)
 - b. Thus, the people of the world view Christianity as a foolish way to live.
2. This is not to say that Christians are not to work to earn their living.
 - a. **II Thes. 3: 10-** " ... if anyone is **not willing to work**, then he is not to eat, either."
 - b. The motivation for the Christian's labor is to benefit others.
Eph. 4: 28- He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have **something to share** with one who has need.
** The focus of the Christian's entire world view is outward, rather than inward.*
3. Jesus again re-emphasizes that the God-followers must choose to follow Him alone.
 - a. Vs. 33 - **But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**
 - b. Set your priorities correctly and I will take care of you. (*Do you believe that ?*)

C. This whole context deals with the God-follower's trust in God.

1. The person of faith, i.e., the God-follower prioritizes God above all else.
2. One's attitude toward things reveals whether or not God has his heart.

III. Our text demonstrates God's response to two people's faith.

A. The prophet Elijah was assigned to do a job that could have cost him his life.

1. He was to deliver a curse to Ahab, a very wicked king of Israel.
 - a. Israel had become unfaithful to God, worshipping the Baal and the Asherah.
 - b. His father (Omri) was the worst king in their history, but Ahab was even worse.
2. Ahab was married to that wicked Jezebel. (*Had Naboth killed to get his garden.*)
 - a. She had Naboth killed just to get his vineyard to be used as their garden.
 - b. Her father was King of Sidon and a pagan priest serving the Asherah.

B. After he obeyed God, he was told to go into hiding in an isolated place.

1. He had to give up friends, family and all that he possessed.
2. He went to a place that he did not know and relied on birds to feed him.
3. Is your faith strong enough to give up everything to warn someone to repent?

C. When Elijah's water supply went dry, he was sent to a distant stranger.

1. Zarephath was a Phoenician city in the territory of Sidon along the coast.
2. Ethbaal was the king of Sidon. (Priest of the pagan goddess Asherah)
3. He was the father of the one seeking to kill him, of the wicked Jezebel.

** Following God does not guarantee a carefree life; it seldom happens.*

D. When he arrived at the widow's house, he did not know what to expect.

1. He went to a strange city to the home of a person he did not know solely on faith.
2. They did not worship God in Sidon so she had no reason to hide him.

E. The widow did not have a direct revelation from God, but accepted the prophet.

1. We're not told how God "commanded" her, but she wasn't expecting company
2. She did not have enough to meet her own needs, but she shared her last meal.
3. She did not have faith, but she reacted to Elijah based upon her character.

Vs. 24 Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth."

4. Even after she had been feeding the prophet, she did not have faith.
5. People can be impressed by miracles, but just miracles don't create faith.

IV. There is no easy way to develop faith.

A. One cannot develop faith without knowledge.

1. **Romans 10: 17-** So faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word concerning Christ.
2. However, many hear the story of Jesus and do not even believe it.
3. Thus, it requires more than just hearing the word to develop faith.

B. One must allow the word to penetrate his heart so that he will apply it.

1. **James. 1: 21-22** Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. **22** But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.
2. This is the response that Jesus wants from each one who hears the gospel. Remember what He taught in the parable of the hearts. (“Sower”)
Luke 8: 15- But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.
3. Like a seed, the value of the word in the harvest it produces.
 - a. When we hear the word preached, hear it in a bible study or read it, it is only as valuable as the fruit it produces in our life.
 - b. There is no merit in just reading or studying if the word does not change us.

C. After one has taken classes, he becomes a skydiver, ONLY when he jumps out of the plane.

1. **James 2** .. Explains that academic acceptance is of no value apart from application.
2. *It's not the knowing what to do that draws one close to God, but the doing of what he knows.*

CONCLUSION :

- A. It is this living kind of faith that separates Christians from the world.
- B. Only this living faith causes one to entrust his life to God and to serve Him.
II Timothy 4: 7-8

INVITATION :

Lesson Text :

I Kings 17: 1-24

1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.” **2** The word of the LORD came to him, saying, **3** “Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. **4** “It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.” **5** So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. **6** The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook. **7** It happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, **9** “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you.” **10** So he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, “Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink.” **11** As she was going to get *it*, he called to her and said, “Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand.” **12** But she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.” **13** Then Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first and bring *it* out to me, and afterward you may make *one* for yourself and for your son. **14** “For thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth.’ ” **15** So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for *many* days. **16** The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah.

17 Now it came about after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. **18** So she said to Elijah, “What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death!” **19** He said to her, “Give me your son.” Then he took him from her bosom and carried him up to the upper room where he was living, and laid him on his own bed. **20** He called to the LORD and said, “O LORD my God, have You also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying, by causing her son to die?” **21** Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the LORD and said, “O LORD my God, I pray You, let this child’s life return to him.” **22** The LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him and he revived. **23** Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother; and Elijah said, “See, your son is alive.” **24** Then the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.”