

Blow Up Your Faith

I. Slide1 Intro:

- A. Jason did a great job last week. I liked his description of Elijah as *“the man with edges.”*
1. He never seemed to be *politically correct* but always *biblically sound*.
- B. These stories of Elijah are reminding us that...from the beginning God was intent on saving *all the peoples* of the earth. That God is both *all-powerful* and *all-compassionate*. Moreover, *He*, not *Baal*, held power over life.
1. Lk.4:25,26 *Certainly there were many needy widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the heavens were closed for three and a half years, and a severe famine devastated the land. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them. He was sent instead to a foreigner - a widow of Zarephath in the land of Sidon.*
 2. The contest between Yahweh and Baal continues, as Yahweh demonstrates that He is able to provide for Baal’s people deep in *Baal country* just as easily as he is able to provide for his own people and just as easily as He is able to withhold from whomever he chooses.
- C. Remember, this next miracle is still setting the stage for an even more dramatic, large-scale event that follow.
- D. Intro: what a strange commandment to Elijah, *Go to Gentile territory where a widow will feed you.*
1. Zarephath means *refining* and God was certainly putting his servant through the furnace.
 2. Imagine Elijah’s *feelings* when he discovered how poor the widow was, and that she was about to prepare her last meal...to which he had to ask for it.
 - a) But God’s commands are never wrong; for when the widow put God 1st (by obeying Elijah’s commands), God provided for her, her son, and her guest.

II. Slide2 THE BOY’S SICKNESS (17)

- A. Great blessings are usually followed by great testings.
1. The dry brook was *Elijah’s test*; the dead boy was *the widow’s test*.

B. **Sorrow** doesn't automatically mean that we are **out of God's will**, **or off God's path**, **or even in sin**.

1. *The way of obedience is often paved with flints.* (*flints* - ignite sparks)
2. Know God plan & live on it...**then** no good thing can fail. Elijah found it so.
3. Elijah took *each new trial* as an opportunity for deriving additional **grace and strength** from his Almighty friend.

III. Slide3 **THE MOTHER'S SORROW (18)**

A. I think Elijah was singing the chorus, *I'm just a soul whose intentions are good, Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood.* [popularized by *The Animals* 1965]

1. But, like any saint, his intentions were misunderstood.

B. The woman had **a guilty conscience** and immediately concluded that God was punishing her for her sin by killing her son.

1. This is a common reaction among many people **who do not know God's ways well** when personal tragedy enters their lives.

C. **Prophets were often considered dangerous & having one around posed considerable risk.**

1. The gods could be **harsh taskmasters** as often as they could be **generous benefactors**, **and** the prophets represented them. [which view of God do you have?]

IV. Slide4 **THE PROPHET'S SUPPLICATION (19-21)**

A. (19) The boy was small enough to be carried in his mother's arms.

B. Many homes in Palestine at that time had guest rooms built on their roofs. It was in one such upper room that Elijah was staying.

C. **Give me your son** - is Elijah's answer, for he knew God could raise the dead boy to life again.

D. This is the 1st recorded instance of resurrection in the Bible.

E. (20) **What an honest prayer.** Shows, *he wasn't sure about what she said in vs.18.*

F. (21) Three times Elijah did this, praying each time that God would restore the boy's life.

V. Slide5 **THE TRIUMPH (22,23)**

- A. (22) This is the 1st recorded instance in Scripture of restoration to life of 1 who had died.
- B. **Resurrection** - the act of being raised from the dead, **used in the Bible with 3 diff meanings**
1. It refers to miraculous raisings of the **dead back to earthly life**.
 - a) **Elijah** raising the boy. **Elisha** raised the Shunammite's son.
 - b) **Jesus** raised Jairus' daughter **and** Lazarus.
 - c) **Peter** raised Dorcas. **Paul** raised Eutychus.
 2. It also refers to the **eschatological resurrection** at the end of time for punishment or reward. (Jn 5:29 **res of life / res of condemnation**)
 3. It also refers to the resurrection of **Jesus Christ**.
- C. (23) **Another purpose Elijah was called there. 1st**, so the widow would provide for him (9) **& here**, so he would provide for the widow.
- D. **Slide6a** If Elijah's Gift was faith...**How Do I Identify My Gifts?**
1. Know what gifts are available.
 2. Be available to receive the gift. (u can't give a gift to someone who won't receive it)
 3. Pray for God's gift He's designed for you. (He has your name on it already)
 4. Step out in Faith. (**eg.** be bold in the confidence of your God)
 5. Don't wait around to **feel** gifted, **earnestly desire** the best gifts.
- E. **3 Challenges Concerning Gifts**
1. 1 Cor.12:31 **earnestly desire the best gifts.**
 2. 1 Tim.4:14 **do not neglect the gift that is in you.**
 3. 2 Tim.1:6 **stir up the gift of God which is in you.**
- F. **Slide6b** Swindoll gives great advice about gifts...
1. **Your gift is a privilege; so accept it, but don't flaunt it.**
Your gift is a responsibility; so use it, but don't abuse it.

VI. **Slide7 THE TESTIMONY (24)**

- A. Note the 2 things listed.

- B. Having been trained and tested in **private**, the prophet is now ready for his **public** ministry...*i.e.* ch.18.
- C. **Slide8** There is something so attractive about **Big Faith**. [Big Confidence in God]
- D. 1 Cor.12:9 **Gift of faith** - Not *saving faith*, but a *faith* of a different kind.
1. *The ability to discern God's will, pursue it with extraordinary confidence, & then lay hold of God's promises w/remarkable results.*
 2. They are people of prayer who *simply take God at His word.*
 3. It is when faith of a **mustard seed** is turned into the faith of an **Avocado seed**.
 4. Phillips Brooks writes, *it is undertaking something so great that you cannot accomplish it unaided.*
 5. **Example:** George Muller in 19th century England. By exercising the gift of faith he was able to raise money, time & time again, for the needs of the orphans w/o ever appealing to men.
 6. You will run into situations in life where you need to pray for **the gift of Faith**.
 7. *"I often times come to God in prayer asking Him to fill my thimble; & I find out more often then not...I should have brought my bucket!"*
- E. **Slide9a** What is Faith? Heb.11
- F. For centuries the islands of New Zealand were **unpopulated**. No human had ever set foot on them. **Then** the first settlers arrived. They were **Polynesians** from other Pacific islands who had sailed **a thousand miles in outrigger canoes** [Maori/orig.frm Taiwan/Melanesia(Vanuatu, Fiji)].
- The Polynesians came with the purpose of settling in New Zealand. **How did they know the land was there?** How did they know they would not simply sail across empty seas until food and water ran out and they perished?
- The Polynesians** had known for generations that land was there because their voyagers had seen **a long white cloud** on the distant horizon. They knew that when a cloud stayed in one place over a very long period of time, there was land beneath it. They called New Zealand **the Land of the Long White Cloud**.¹

¹ Mark Robert C. Shannon, 1000 Windows, (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing Company, 1997).

1. Slide9b Faith is like that. It is *voyaging* to an unseen land, *journeying* to an unknown future. But it is not mere *guesswork, or chance, or superstition*. There are **facts** behind faith, facts that suggest **conclusions**.
- G. Christianity is a **faith** that is based on a body of knowledge revealed by God.
1. Slide10a Faith is **not** a **blind leap** into darkness, **but** a **trust in God** that moves us **out of** darkness **into** light.
 2. Slide10b Faith is **simple**, **but** not **simplistic**.
 3. Slide10c Faith is **not credulity** [A tendency to believe too readily/gullible]. It is based on **sound reason** and **historical evidence**.
 4. Slide10d Faith provides the **substance** for our **future hope**.
 5. Slide10e Faith involves **trusting** in what is **not seen**.
 6. Slide10f Faith means more than believing **in** God; it means **believing** God.²
- H. **Faith** is the evidence of things **not seen** - **For we walk by faith, not by sight**. 2Cor.5:7
1. Some see **faith** *contrasted* by **sight**, **or** *contrasted* with **empirical evidence** (something based on experiment **or** experience).
 - a) We have a saying, *Seeing is...what?...believing*.
 2. Don't see **faith** as the *opposite* of **sight**, **or** in *contrast* to it. *Then what's he saying here?*
 - a) It is dealing with **future** issues. What we have seen in the **past** gives us faith to believe in the **future**, though we *haven't seen it*.
 - b) **Example: How visible was God to the children of Israel?** God showed Himself visible through: *the 10 plagues, the parting of the red Sea, the drowning of Pharaoh's men, the manna, earth opening, the shining face of Moses, etc.*
 - (1) I know you **saw** **giants** **but** have **giant faith**.
 - (2) **Could any Jew see tomorrow, look into the future? Can you?**
 - c) **So, true biblical faith is believing what has already been shown in the past; which causes us to have faith in His future promises, though we haven't seen them yet.** [my quote]

² Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, R.C.Sproul

(1) Faith is learning to live by **insight** *rather than* by **sight**.

- I. **Slide11** Faith is **confidence in God** that leads to **obedience to God**, as seen in Heb.11.
- To illustrate true faith, the writer points to some Old & NT believers, showing how they trusted God to: *bles, provide, protect, lead, conquer, & give life... even in the most dire circumstances.*
- J. **Slide12** What are the things that have been catalyst for **your faith growth**? [usually comes down to these 5]
- Practical Biblical Teaching** - remember when the Bible came alive to for the first time.
 - Providential Relationships** - did someone come alongside you in the beginning? Or maybe a group you got involved with.
 - Private Discipline** - when somebody encouraged you to start reading on your own. Praying in your own words (from memorized prayer). Maybe how to fast or tithe.
 - Personal Ministry** - remember when you started serving for the first time. Where your first missions trip. You became more dependent upon God.
 - Pivotal Circumstances** - maybe when someone close to you died. **Or, some crisis happened that might have moved you either way in your faith.**
Maybe your **first baby** (ahh...the responsibility!).
Maybe when you finally had the faith to **give** to the church **or** a missionary.
Allow God to change you. God will use pivotal circumstances to grow our faith.
 - And the key to all this? More Faith = *More Intimacy.***
- K. But Brian, this was Elijah, I'm nothing like him! ohhh...
- James 5:17 ***Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.***