

Carmelite Faith – I Kings 18:1-2; 17-21.

I. Introduction:

- A. I am calling this message: *“Carmelite Faith.”*
1. That word may accurately encapsulate our subject, but it might mislead a few people who know one of the special meanings of the word *“Carmelite.”*
 2. There is as a Roman Catholic religious order of nuns and monks who use that name.
 3. They are mendicants, referring to their vows of poverty requiring the necessity of begging.
 4. Their patron saints are Mary and Elijah.
 5. This message has nothing to do with the false faith of those well-meaning people.
 6. It is all about their patron, Elijah, who displayed great faith in the Lord at the top of Mount Carmel.
- B. Carmel is a small mountain range jutting into the Mediterranean Sea and then dropping down toward Samaria.
1. At it's highest point, it is about 1700' above the sea with the Brook Kishon flowing west just under its northern slope.
 2. There may be several places on Carmel from which people might look out onto the Mediterranean.
 3. And this chapter takes place on one of those flat benches where a large group of people could gather.
- C. As I said in our last lesson, this was the site of where, perhaps, Elijah displayed his most notable trust in God.
1. And in our search for examples of practical faith, this event provides us with some helpful thoughts.
 2. Tonight, I'm just going to point to several verses, offering an application or two.
 3. There is more which could be said tonight, but I'll leave that between you and the Lord.

II. Verse 1 and 2.

- A. *“And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria.”*
1. Before going on I need to apologize and correct a blunder in my last message.
 2. In the back of my mind I knew that the drought and famine of these chapters lasted three years, but I couldn't find that stated in **chapter 17**, and then right here my mind quit with *“after many days.”*
 3. Initially Elijah left his prophecy of the coming drought – open-ended.
 - a. *“As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew or rain these years, but according to my word.”*
 - b. I am going to assume that if Ahab had repented of his idolatry, leading Israel also to repent, the famine might have ended after a year or tow. But, of course, that didn't happen.
 4. Here we are in **chapter 18**, we are told that three years have passed.
 5. Furthermore, the **Book of James** tells us that it had been three and a half years since Elijah hid himself at the Brook Cherith.
 6. In fact, **James 5:17**, takes the message of those 42 months in the same direction I want to take them.
 - a. *“Elias (Elijah) was a man subject to like passions as we are, & he prayed earnestly that it might not rain:*
 - b. *and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*
 - c. *And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”*
- B. The first thing I'd like you to see speaks to something we've noticed before.
1. The faith which God would like us to have must be **patient**. It always waits for God's perfect timing.
 2. The **flesh** likes to hurry, often running ahead of the Lord, but **faith** is **patient** when the Lord wants it to be.
 3. For many months Elijah was on a special God-ordained diet, which didn't include gaining weight.
 - a. Day after day he looked for the incoming ravens with their mouths filled with bread and meat.
 - b. When that bird-period expired and he moved on, his widowed hostess looked into her meal barrel, and there was always enough for one more breakfast or dinner. *“And it came to pass after many days...”*
 4. Day followed day, with each of them being a **test of faith**, but God supplied, supplied and supplied again.
 5. Every day was an on-going **exercise**, strengthening their faith, and the Lord never let them down.

- C. So the Lord has not yet answered your prayer of faith and saved the soul of your dear friend, but don't stop praying and don't stop trusting the Saviour. Utilize your faith; expect to hear the good news.
1. Or maybe there is something else filling your soul & demanding your faith. Something requiring a miracle.
 2. We all have those things.
 3. Perhaps the time isn't right because the Lord has lessons for other people related to this burden of yours.
 4. Be patient. It may take three years. It may take three and a half years. Perhaps longer.
 5. Faith is all about trusting the God who knows what is best and Who is in complete control of all things.
- D. I think it is interesting that God told Elijah to simply *"shew himself"* to Ahab.
1. The Lord didn't say, *"Go to Samaria and order the king to go with you to Mount Carmel."*
 2. The truth is, Ahab wasn't at home at this time, and it took several steps to put the two men together.
 3. And remember that Elijah had been *"hidden"* all this time. Now all God said was *"shew"* yourself to him.
 4. But *"shew thyself"* sounds a lot like: *"Elijah, step right into the cross hairs of the enemy's guns."*
- E. True faith in God requires us to take risks, sometimes obvious and dangerous risks.
1. But sometimes those risks are nothing more than exposing our faith to God's test. *"Trust me, He says."*
 2. While there may be risks, remember that they need to be taken within the will of the Lord.
 3. It was God who told Elijah to do these things. It wasn't the man's idea.
 4. The Bible speaks about picking up poisonous serpents, and we see Paul bitten but not harmed.
 5. But I see no written command, and the Lord has not whispered to me, to let a Western Diamondback wrap his body around my neck and look me in the eye.
- F. There are foolish risks in the name of *"faith,"* and there are risks which the Lord ordains we take by faith.
1. Yes, God wants us to stick our necks out from time to time, but it must be in accord with His Word.
 2. To jeopardize your job by talking to your boss about his soul, is not snake handling or walking on water.
 3. It is foolish to not buy any oat meal and expect your meal jar to stay miraculously full, unless, as He did Elijah, the Lord has specifically told you to do so.
 4. Our faith must be Biblical in nature.

III. Verse 17.

- A. *"And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?"*
1. It is safe to say that our faith will often be misunderstood.
 2. Of course Ahab wasn't thinking about Elijah's faith, so much as it was to his pronouncement that the rains would stop.
 3. When he first heard the words of **chapter 17**, he probably just laughed, but he had not been laughing lately.
 4. No, he wasn't thinking about Elijah's faith, nevertheless from Elijah's standpoint that was what he was criticizing.
- B. When we speak to others about specific things for we are trusting the Lord, as I did last Sunday night, we must expect to be misunderstood by others who don't understand faith.
1. We may be accused of **pride** when we say, *"Look what God has done for me, or through me."*
 2. We might be accused of **self-glorification**. *"Are you saying your faith is greater than mine?"*
 3. And then when that little corps of saints are praying that the Lord's power and leadership would take their church in a more Godly direction, they might hear: *"What's wrong with our church. Art thou he that troubleth Israel?"*
 4. Despite those who disagree, there are thousands of good churches which need to be awakened & stirred.
 5. The trouble, of course, is not with the prayer and faith warriors, but with the complacent and settled souls – many of whom are idolaters to one degree or another.
 6. Let's pray and trust God to trouble Israel. *"Lord trouble us all."*
 7. That is exactly what is needed and it may require your prayer of faith to stir things up.

C. *“And (Elijah) answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.”*

1. As I’ve said already, faith may put a person in danger. But at the same time it will remove his fear.
2. Having surrendered himself to the Lord, and proven his willingness to declare God’s word, Elijah put himself in danger of Ahab’s sword. *“Thou art the man.”*
3. The man of faith must be willing to share the Word of the Lord, facing the consequences, while at the same time trusting the Lord to protect or use him as He wills.

D. Elijah then **extended** his **endangerment** by taking charge, even over the king.

1. His faith enabled him **to take control**, because he served the King who is over King Ahab.
2. **Verse 19** – *“Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel’s table.”*
3. Elijah will mistakenly say, *“I am the only servant God has left in the world; I am the only prophet of the Lord.”*
4. While that was not exactly true, at the top of Carmel, it essentially was true. He was alone indeed.
5. Eight hundred and fifty false prophets against one. And yet Elijah and the Lord had the enemy surrounded.
6. I can’t say it often enough, the kind of faith we need, and the kind of faith this world needs to see will usually be found only in a tiny minority.
7. It may begin hidden on the banks of the Brook Cherith for a while, but it will eventually stand under God’s spotlight with perhaps thousands of angry eyes staring at it.

IV. Verse 21 – *“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”*

1. I don’t know if I have adequately emphasized that the kind of faith God blesses, is **always about Him**.
2. Yes, you are praying for your friend to be miraculously healed, but what is your motivation?
 - a. Does it flow out of the pain that person is suffering, or is it actually your pain as you think of him?
 - b. If it is not, first and foremost, about the Lord, then your faith is not only misplaced, but it is misdirected.
3. If we yearn for revival in order to put our church in the national headlines like that foolishness at Kentucky’s Asbury University right now, then there will never be true revival.
4. If we want the Holy Spirit to straighten out our corrupt government in order that we might continue to live in ease and relative peace, then our country will continue to deteriorate.
5. If you want your loved one to be saved, because he is a sinner and headed to hell, your spiritual glasses need a new prescription.
6. The goal of **true faith** is always the **true God**. *“If the LORD be God, follow him.”*

B. And the **message** of **true faith** will always be the **truth**.

1. *“If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.”*
2. Faith exposes the weaknesses of error, false doctrine and false practice.
3. *“Call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD (Jehovah): and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.”*
4. Did Elijah have any doubts about what would happen?
 - a. Did he expect the Lord to permit Satan to incinerate the sacrifice of the enemy? Of course he didn’t.
 - b. Exceptional faith, the kind we need, doesn’t leave the back door open for doubt to push through.

C. Also, faith should often invite scrutiny.

1. *“And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him.”*
2. We don’t know how many of the citizens of Israel were present that day.
 - a. Ahab had summoned the leadership of the nation, so dozens of mayors, governors & elders were there.
 - b. But it seems to me that many of the common people, people who hungered for the Lord, also came.
3. And Elijah told them to step in close to examine the miracle of God, proving to themselves there was no trickery or Satanic tomfoolery.

- D. For the sake of time, I won't describe how the miracle was carried out. I hope you know how Elijah prepared the offering, guaranteeing that no one but the Lord could engulf it in flames.
- E. Then in **verse 36** and **37** he verbalized his faith. He prayed his faith.
1. He uttered some of the greatest words of prayerful faith ever recorded:
 2. *"Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again."*
 3. Someone might fault Elijah for asking God to prove that he was the Lord's servant.
 4. But the circumstances demanded that if God was to be glorified that day, then the man who was instrumental in it would also be glorified.
 5. And yet that was not the point. The point was the magnification of the Lord.
- F. It is my prayer that God will ignite the Calvary Baptist Church just as if we were that useless, water drenched bullock laying lifelessly on a pile of a dozen rocks.
1. It is my prayer that we be consumed sufficiently that the city of Post Falls might know that Jehovah is God.
 2. It is my desire that our neighbors, and the people of this valley, from Spokane to Coeur d'Alene be turned back again.
 3. *"Turned back again"* – can't we interpret the prophet's words to speak of repentance? I think so.
 4. That was the need in Elijah's day, and that is still the need of this day.
 5. *"Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."* That is true not only of lost souls, but also of lost churches.
- G. Notice how clearly Elijah's faith was expressed. It wasn't a mere hope; it was a full expectation.
1. In his conversation with the Lord he said, *"and thou **HAST** turned their heart back again."*
 2. It was not, *"I hope they will repent,"* or *"I wish they would return to thee."* He **expected** their repentance.
 3. *"And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD (Jehovah), he is the (one and only true) God."*
 4. Was someone saved that day?
 5. Were there a few in that generation who began to serve and and worship the Lord?
 6. That was one of the purposes of all this.
- H. And then *"Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there."*
1. I don't think it is sin on my part, but I don't pray for the death of today's false prophets, as it was in Elijah's day.
 2. I would not rejoice to hear about the murder of Joel Osteen, the assassination of Pope Francis or about an accident taking the life of J. D. Jakes.
 3. But spiritualizing the results of Elijah's faith here, I **would** rejoice to see the **death** of **false doctrines** like salvation by works, baptismal regeneration, and the worship of Mary.
 4. It is a great day when, by faith, truth prevails over heresy.
 5. That was a great day indeed there near the summit of Mount Carmel.

V. Conclusion

- A. Lives were changed that day in those people who were standing on the slopes of the mountain.
1. God was glorified, false doctrine was slain, and many were convicted of their unbelief and idolatry.
 2. And the human key – the human instrumentality – was a single man, under the direction of the Lord, who put his faith in the living God and His promise.
- B. And when the nation showed their tiny bit of repentance, God blessed and the rains came.
1. The rains came – I will save that for another message.