

STAYING THE COURSE

I. INTRO: 1 Kings 17:1-6, THE STORY OF ELIJAH W/IN ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- State of the country
 - Not what it once was. Not what it was intended to be.
 - Humanity enthroned (convenient/culturally relevant worship, political maneuvering, war mongering)
- State of God's person/people (seemed to Elijah, he was the only one left)
 - Strangers in their own land. Hurt. Passionate for righteousness.
 - Ready for a change / to be the change.
- Plotting a course
 - **A line in the sand.** A strong and courageous move—backed by The King of Heaven.
 - Necessary; Valiant; Empowering
- Staying the course
 - Life got harder, not easier. Physical strength depended on spiritual strength.
 - **God's person took the "the lesson" along with everyone else (and at a higher level)**
 - Lesson: To rely on God alone.
 - **Elijah's line in the sand created a tension between man's ways and God's—and would be felt most acutely by God's person, the line-drawer.**

Key Questions:

- **What do we do? How do we live? How can we stay strong and courageous? How do we "stay the course?"**

II. Like Elijah, we must: RESOLVE TO TRUST GOD COMPLETELY (this was and is "the lesson").

1. **Faith is our grasp on the rudder, anchor in the storm, navigational beacon.**
 - a. Isaiah 40:6-8
"All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever."
 - b. **I often wonder how, and why, people try to get by without a living faith (TOBY).**
 - i. "Constellations" analogy. A story that lends value & purpose by connecting & relating.
2. **Faith in God as the loving, Creator, GOD is the foundation—Each human life is based upon a response to this truth (and the proof, as they say, is "in the pudding!").**
 - a. Matthew 7:24-25
 - ii. *"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock."*
 - b. The alternative is no alternative. **Living without faith is like building your house, your livelihood, your security, the good of your family...on shifting sand.**
 - a. Stock markets rise and fall, leaders come and go, life itself is fleeting.

And this is why we must constantly...

III. 3 WAYS WE CAN GUARD AND STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH.

1. Know what faith is, and understand its significance.

- *Hebrews 11:1*

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things unseen.”

- And what is it we hope for...that is unseen?
 - The salvation of our souls.
 - that there’s a meaning to life—and even suffering.
 - that God is real, and that He has a plan for our lives.
 - that there’s hope, that we can change.
- Our faith is the substance of these things—
- AND...our faith is the evidence that such things exist.
- Without these things, we are like ships w/o rudders, cars w/o steering wheels... (this was the situation in ancient Israel)

2. Don’t let any question/doubt dwell long enough to loosen our grasp on “the wheel.”

- **Submit invading thoughts to God. Don’t grapple with them on your own.**
 - This is: *“casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God,”* and it is *“bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Cor. 10:5).
- **AND what is “the obedience of Christ,” in this context?**
 - It’s the fact that everything that was made, was made through Christ.
 - It’s the fact that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily.
 - And it is the fact that all who believe find supra-natural life in Him.
- **THIS MEANS anything that tells us “we’re not good enough,” “we don’t measure up,” “we’re not going to make it...” all of these must submit to THE LORD OF ALL.**
- **SO WE REFUSE to let any thought arise in our minds that suggests anything less.**
 - *John 15:5, 7-8 “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. [...] If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified: that you bear much fruit! ...And so show yourselves My disciples.*

3. Ask God to strengthen your faith.

- **Having faith isn’t a *me thing*—it’s a *we thing*—a group project between each of us and the Holy Spirit.**
 - *“For it is God,”* Paul says in Philippians 2:13, *“who works in us both to will and to do...”*
 - *Mark 9:24 Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”*
 - *Romans 10:17 “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*

IV. OUTRO: THE STORY OF ELIJAH IS OUR OWN.

• **A land & people...who are in *many ways*...lost.**

- ...Who need God’s ambassadors to draw lines in the sand, be strong & courageous...and stay the course!