

## 12. Crisis, ignorant, dead and true

July 19, 2009

I am sure that you are thinking that this title doesn't make sense. But by the time we finish this study, it will, if you keep up with me.

Last Sunday we study about living off someone else's faith which is not a good thing at all. Faith is like a toothbrush: Everybody should have one and use it regularly, but it isn't safe to use somebody else's. But what kind of faith are we talking about? This is a good time for us to examine our own faith to see if we have the right faith in Him.

### A. THE MORE KINGS, THE MORE CONFUSION

*2 Kings 13:1 In the twenty-third year of Joash the son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years.*

Y'all have been listening to my sermons of 2 Kings attentively each Sunday for last 11 weeks even though some of you may not know how to figure out which king belonged to which kingdom, let alone how to pronounce their strange Hebrew names. In your bulletin, you find a chronological chart of Israel's Monarchy that starts from king Saul in 1030 B.C. to the return of the Jews from their exile places in 520 B.C.

I know, I know, some of you would say, "Nobody can read these tiny letters." You can use a magnifying glass to read them. I tried to put all the kings' names and some of the events that constituted over 510 years. Besides, if I made this chart in four pages, most of you would leave it at home rather than carrying it in your Bible. From now on, when you find the kings' names in 2 Kings, consult this chart, please. It will make so much more sense to you.

I am sure that you've noticed that there are many times two kings in the same period in the same kingdom in your chart. You wonder why. It is what we call "Co-regency". Ancient kings sometimes made their sons co-regents, perhaps to provide on-the-job training and to ensure an orderly transfer of power. The practice of co-regency became very common in Judah southern kingdom and Israel northern kingdom.

### B. CRISIS FAITH

*2 Kings 13:2-9 And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. He did not depart from them. 3 Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel, and He delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-Hadad the son of Hazael, all their days. 4 So Jehoahaz pleaded with the Lord, and the Lord listened to him; for He saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them. 5 Then the Lord gave Israel a deliverer, so that they escaped from under the hand of the Syrians; and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents as before. 6 Nevertheless they did not depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin, but walked in them; and the wooden image also remained in Samaria. 7 For He left of the army of Jehoahaz only fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers; for the king of Syria had destroyed them and made them like the dust at threshing. 8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, all that he*

*did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 9 So Jehoahaz rested with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria. Then Joash his son reigned in his place.*

It's no surprise that Jehoahaz chose to follow the example of Jeroboam who was the first king of Israel, because his father Jehu had done the same thing. Jehoahaz would rather worship the golden calves than the living God, but when he found himself in a seriously tight situation, he turned to the Lord for help.

Do you know people still believe the first lie of satan that was told the first couple – Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden – “You will not surely die” in Genesis 3? The Lord told them clearly that they will die if they disobey Him and eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan put a doubt in their minds and they went down hook, line and sinker.

Satan says, “Do whatever your heart desires. Enjoy. Because there are no serious consequences to sin. Even if you sin, God is a God of love, mercy and forgiveness. Just do it.” It sounds like a Nike commercial, huh? Know this and remember it, whether to chasten or to bless, God is always true and faithful to His Word.

The situation became so desperate that this heathen king Jehoahaz prayed to God for help, just the way Israel had done during the period of the Book of Judges as well as many unbelievers now. Did God's rescue change the king's heart? Obviously not, because he went right back to idol worship of the golden calves just like before, nor he encouraged his people to turn to God.

Listen carefully, please. Crisis faith is rarely deep or lasting. Once people see that they just passed their horrible dilemmas with God's help, they choose to forget the Lord and go right back to their old worldly and ungodly lifestyle until the next crisis. Good examples were the beginning of Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and right after 9/11 in 2001. Churches across America were filled to standing room only. Within short time, everything went back to business as usual.

Crisis faith is not dependable. Yes, there are such things as “foxhole conversions” and “deathbed conversions.” I don't want to discourage anyone from turning to God in the hour of crisis. Because in many times the Lord pushes those dead-hearted people to the place where they can not find absolutely no help other than Him or extends His mercy to their last breath.

But how many times can they call on the Lord when they're in trouble and then ignore Him when they're safe? People who depend on crisis faith need to heed the warnings of Proverbs 1.

*Proverbs 1:25-28 Because you despised all my counsel, And would have none of my rebuke, 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, 27 When your terror comes like a storm, And your destruction comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. 28 “Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me.*

Our God is extremely patient, but His patience has a limit. Someday, He will say, “Enough is enough.” If you are one of those who have been playing games with God, I highly recommend that you stop now. If you are planning to do that one more time, it might be just too late.

## C. IGNORANT FAITH

*2 Kings 13:14-19 Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, "O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!" 15 And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and some arrows." So he took himself a bow and some arrows. 16 Then he said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on the bow." So he put his hand on it, and Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. 17 And he said, "Open the east window"; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot"; and he shot. And he said, "The arrow of the Lord's deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for you must strike the Syrians at Aphek till you have destroyed them." 18 Then he said, "Take the arrows"; so he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground"; so he struck three times, and stopped. 19 And the man of God was angry with him, and said, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times."*

Before we talk about the faith of king Joash of Israel, we must notice a simple fact. Elisha was old, he was sick and he was going to die. The man who performed more miracles than anyone in the Bible with the exception of Jesus was sick and dying. Don't tell me this man of God didn't have enough faith that he got sick. This man was used by God to raise a dead boy, healed the sick and captured a raiding band of Syria. It was simply the time for him to get sick and die.

I don't know how many of you have heard some Bible teachers claim that the reason why you are sick is because you don't have enough faith. There is a Hebrew word for that – bologna! It is a wrong theology that hurts many believers.

Now Elisha was old and about to die, and the king of Israel went to see him. With respect to the man of God, he called him the same way Elisha called Elijah when he was taken to heaven. Elisha was like a father to the nation and was more valuable than all their armies which was not much.

King Joash was not the believer of God and he did not have spiritual discernment and insight that people have who live in the Word and walk by faith.

When the prophet put his hands on the king's hands, it obviously symbolized a conveying of power from God. When Elisha commanded him to shoot an arrow toward the area where the Syrians were in control, it clearly spoke of victory over the enemy. This much the king could have understood because Elisha gave him a clear promise of victory.

But when Elisha told him to take the remaining arrows and strike the ground with them, he didn't have the spiritual understanding he needed to make the most of it. Had he been a faithful worshiper of the living God, he would have seen the truth. But he was spiritually blind like the dead idols he worshiped. Shooting one arrow guaranteed victory, but the number of times he strike the ground determined how many victories God would give him. Because Joash had ignorant faith, he limited himself to only three victories over the Syrians.

Some of you may think, "I don't think that is fair. Elisha didn't explain to Joash what striking the ground meant." If you are thinking that way, you don't understand the definition of faith. Faith is taking the Word of God at its face value and believing and doing it without a doubt and question. If it was explained to Joash from the

beginning – actually Elisha already had given enough information to him, it would not be faith in God.

#### **D. DEAD FAITH**

So far, we looked at two kinds of faith – Crisis Faith and Ignorant Faith. These faith are of unbelievers. But the dead faith can be seen in many believers.

*James 2:14-26 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

I think that James made it very clear. Many Christians know the Word of God and they believe, yet many will not do what they are supposed to do. That is what I call 'Dead faith'.

Let me put it in this way: To row a boat, we need two oars. If I only use one oar to row, I would continue in a circle and go nowhere. In this illustration, one oar is our faith in Christ, the other our work for Him. It takes two of them to make a true Christian life. The work we do for the Lord does not make us Christians, but it proves that we are born-again followers of Jesus Christ.

#### **E. TRUE FAITH**

*Hebrews 11:1-3 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.*

Somehow we think that if we have true faith, everything will go perfectly and we would not suffer. The same Bible teachers who teach that if you have enough faith, you will never get sick, also teach that you will be rich and prosper and live long. Not so. There is a big difference between presumption and faith in God. Don't ever think that everything we want is God's will. That would be a presumption.

*Hebrews 11:35b-40 And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a*

*good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.*

As Christians, when we encounter difficult times, when we experience trials, when we suffer hardships, we might say, "Hold on now. I didn't sign up for this. I don't want hardships. I want to live an easy life." Sadly, when these times do come, some Christians will throw in the towel and return to their old life again.

But Christians must learn to respect the valleys in life. It's in the valleys that God reveals Himself in a special way. And it's in the valleys that we learn lessons of compassion that we can learn nowhere else.

As you walk through your own valleys, you may not understand why God has allowed them. But later on, you will be able to use the lessons you learned as a tool to minister to people struggling through similar valleys.

To be honest with you, faith is not a pleasure ride. It demands patience and perseverance. Most of all, faith requires vulnerability – trusting a God we can't control, relying on His timeline, not ours. But believing that, no matter what, our God is good and He keeps His promise.

Our God is faithful. It is a logical thing to put our faith in our faithful God.

## **F. APPLICATIONS**

1) When we see God for who He is, it is easy to trust Him. Faith does not completely depend on knowledge, but the right knowledge of God from the Bible gives great strength to faith.

2) Faith is always marked by obedience.