

FAITH THAT BRINGS FIRE



How did Elijah do it?

How did he get the fire of heaven to fall on his sacrifice?

Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire to it.” And they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped about the altar which they had made. And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, “Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is musing, or he has gone aside, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.” And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice; no one answered, no one heeded.

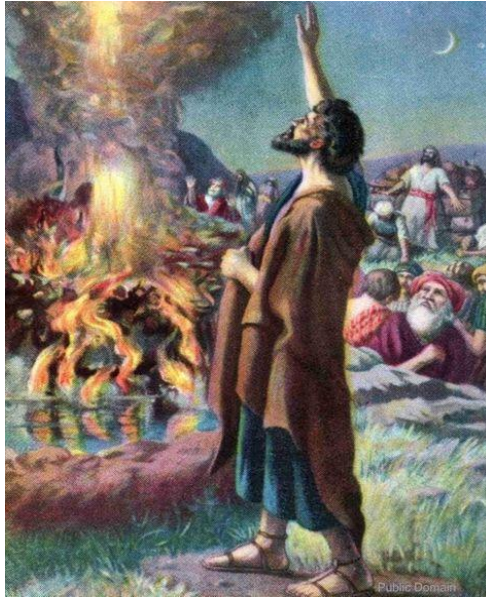
Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come near to me”; and all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down; Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, “Israel shall be your name”; and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD. And he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, “Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the burnt offering, and on the wood.” And he said, “Do it a second time”; and they did it a second time. And he said, “Do it a third time”; and they did it a third time. And the water ran round about the altar, and filled the trench also with water.

And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and 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. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that thou, O LORD, art God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back.” Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God.”

So the prophets of Baal built their altar and laid their sacrifice, but no fire came.

They had religion, but it had no life.

Elijah built an altar, laid the sacrifice, doused it with water three times so it would be evident that he wasn't playing any tricks on them, and prayed. Suddenly fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust, and even drank up the water.



Much of the time we Christians have a faith, which is much more like the altar of Baal than the altar of God.

We have the sacrifice on the altar and it's neatly laid out, but no fire comes.

Nothing happens.

Nobody comes to repentance.

No lives are changed.

There is no power.

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe me for the sake of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works I do. And greater works than these they will do, because I go to the Father.

John 14:11-12

Jesus teaches clearly, that if we believe in him....

not just mouth religious words,

not just run around and do our own thing and call it a faith,

.... but really believe in him....

....then our nature will be absorbed by his nature.

We will begin

- to think his thoughts
- to do his works....

.... and the lives around us will be cleansed by the power of his crucifixion.....lifted by the power of his resurrection...in us.

When we say, as we so often do, *“How come nothing is happening from my life? How come nobody is being changed through my ministry?”*

He says, *“When you believe, things will start to happen.”*

“Wait a minute Lord! I believe! Look at the changes I’ve made. Look at the hardships I’ve endured. Look at my discipline. Look at my sacrifices.”

And yet there is an awareness in our heart-of-hearts that there is something missing.....

The sacrifice is there, but there is no fire.

Not only is the power missing in our ministry to other people, it’s missing in our own inner lives.

The life we really live, away from the eyes of others, is earthbound.

Isn't it ridiculous? We want to open the eyes of the blind, and set the captives free, when we ourselves are still in captivity.

The most helpful thing we can do is frankly admit how far we are from the faith Jesus calls us to have.

When Jesus says, *“Whoever believes in me, the works I do he will do also”*, he's not exaggerating, but describing a faith which is far beyond where we now are.

Of course, if we want that faith, it can be ours.

We can have a faith that is visited by fire from heaven, that licks up the wood, the sacrifice, the stones, the dust, and the water.

A faith where we begin to do the works Jesus does, and even greater works than these, as he pours out his Spirit from the right hand of the Father.

“This is the work of God”, Jesus says, *“that you believe on him whom he has sent.”*

Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves.

Whoever believes in me the works that I do, will they do also.

But this belief is not a matter of the mind or of the imagination.

It is a thing of the will.

Don't sit around, as we so often have, wondering, *When is it going to come?* Hoping that faith will come and envelop us like a cloud.

This faith will burn in our hearts as we bend our will toward the will of God.



The faith that brings down fire from heaven begins with a deliberate abandonment of our lives into the hands of Jesus.

Okay. We all know that. We've heard it a thousand times. Yes, we know the theory well, but have we actually done it?

Whoever comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, and even his own life – he cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14: 26

This commitment belongs only to Jesus.

The commitment we have made to our father, or mother, or wife, or husband, or child, or brother or sister, or to ourselves, or our particular religious community, or our favorite kind of evangelism, or our particular choice in doctrine, has to be replaced with a commitment to....

Jesus as the supreme focus of our lives.

To Jesus only.

If we haven't made such a commitment to the Lord Jesus, if we aren't maintaining that commitment every day, we cannot possibly understand what Jesus is talking about when he calls us to this kind of faith.

“Unless you forsake, renounce, all that you have, you can't be my disciple,”

Or if you prefer: Unless we renounce *“all that has us”*, we can't have that kind of faith.

When we begin to renounce -the things *that have us* - these attachments, whatever they are, then we begin to understand what Jesus is calling for.

**When we renounce the things that have us,
we are able to do the things he commands us.**

And we will also know how to apply his commands in daily life.

Having faith that brings down fire, calls us to follow him into a world of risk, onto a sea of uncertainty.

To...

Launch out into the deep.

Deny yourself.

Take up your cross.

Launch out into the deep



It won't be a popular risk—

It may not mean that we are supposed to go to South Sudan, or break into the heart of the Muslim world, or do some dramatic thing that causes us to be fired from our job. Although, it could mean any of those things. Yet somehow, as we follow him, we will find ourselves traveling a road where things become quite uncertain.

For instance, most of us have been quite clever about not doing or saying things that might upset our friends, or alienate those whose respect we crave. We don't care what the rest of the world thinks, but for these people in particular—we seem to really need their admiration, their friendship. Then one day, we find that we're moved from within, to speak to them of God's mercy. And as we do, they shake their heads and turn away from us as if we had leprosy.

Of course, the adventure that God has in store for each of us is going to be different; and nobody can predict what that is. It's entirely up to the Lord. But we can be sure of this....

.... as we follow him we are going to find ourselves walking down a road where the things that comforted us and gave us security are gone.

Now, the only certainty that we have left is Jesus.

Deny yourself

This may be offensive to some readers, but here it is...The faith that brings down the fire involves a deliberate turning away of our heart love from past pleasures and fixing our heart's love on the joy of remaining faithful to Jesus in the midst of derision, privation, or even death.

“I’m taking you to a banquet”, Jesus says to us, “but the road to the banquet is not a picnic. And if you are going to survive the hardships on that road, you are going to have to deliberately and continuously learn to give up distractions and find your meaning exclusively in me.”

O, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man/woman that trusts in him.

Psalm 34:8



You taste the goodness of the Lord by deliberately subjecting yourself to being disenchanted from your former distractions, whatever they are - the things that made life pleasant and livable in the past, and learning to find a new kind of joy, a new kind of meaning..

This is not morbidity. We are not saying that you have to be unhappy to be a disciple of Jesus.

But now we have to find a new kind of joy and a new kind of meaning.

You give up the pleasures of Baal and take hold of the pleasures of God

—which are far better, and far more lasting.

Take up your cross

Finally; the faith that brings the fire involves a daring trust.... that the way of Jesus’ cross is the right way, the best way, the most satisfying way, no matter how absurd it looks in the eyes of the world.

“When I came to you”, says Paul, “I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

When Paul was saying that, he was not talking about his “doctrinal position.” He was talking about his life. Jesus Christ and him crucified was the door to God for Paul.

**Jesus was his source of his joy. His life.
His everything - day by day, and hour by hour.**

But Jesus Christ and him crucified was also for Paul, his example, his pattern. This is what he was learning to do, day by day and hour by hour.

**Paul was walking in the footsteps of his Master -
- the bleeding footsteps of his Master.**

Learning to deny himself.

And as Paul did this, learned to deny himself, that others might taste God--

-- the fire from heaven fell upon him and his ministry.

As we learn to do this joyfully----daily to deny ourselves, that others might taste God--

--the fire from heaven falls upon us.



And it will continue to fall as we find ourselves doing, the works of Jesus, and even greater works, as the Spirit moves upon us.

This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me or else, believe me for the sake of the works themselves. Whoever believes in me will do the works I do, and greater works than these will they do, because I go to the Father.

There are people on this earth right now, who are in possession of that kind of faith.

We can join their ranks if we will.

It all depends on how earnestly we desire to have a faith that brings the fire.



A Prayer.....Lord, you know our hearts. And you know the longing in them to be able to do something effective. And Father, you know how frustrated we get when it just doesn't seem to happen. We ask you to help us to be the men and women you are calling us to be. And to come into a life of faith beyond anything we've ever tasted. Disillusion us in whatever way necessary, if we think that we have it when we don't, Lord. Help us to press on until we begin to enter into that territory where the life of Jesus becomes everything to us. Where the delight of knowing him far surpasses every other delight. We ask it Father in Jesus' name. Amen.

Message and Prayer: REB- 1977

Featured Art: Amy Rylander at amyrylander.com

Maranatha Mirror Messages



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WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN