

Home Group study week beginning 25th November 2019

Holy Spirit Blocks

Part 2: Fear

Introduction

What things cause you to be afraid? How has that fear affected your life? What have you tried to do to overcome that fear? Have you ever discovered that a fear you experienced was nothing to be frightened of after all?

Read:

1 Kings 19, vv1-9

If you prefer, you can read 1 Kings Chapters 17-19, but it may give you more time in your groups just to summarise Elijah's life so far.

Elijah was possibly the greatest prophet of all time; notably he didn't die like other human beings but was whisked straight into Heaven in a chariot of fire in a whirlwind. Not just your ordinary, bloke then.

In the chapters leading up to Chapter 19, Elijah has:

- Warned Ahab, the evil King of Israel, that God has told him there will be no rain or dew for several years
- Been taken to safety in Kerith Ravine by the Word of God and fed by ravens
- Sent by God to a widow's house to be fed when Kerith Brook dried up
- Miraculously given the widow an endless supply of flour and oil
- Miraculously raised her son from the dead
- Seen a massive victory over 450 prophets of Baal in a contest to call down fire to burn up a sacrifice
- Slaughtered the prophets of Baal
- Seen God send the rain.

This catalogue of events takes us right to the end of Chapter 18; Elijah has seen God at work so powerfully in so many ways. Yet by v3 of Chapter 19, what has happened?

If we had seen God work in the way Elijah had seen him work, what would our faith level be like?

Why has Elijah's faith apparently vanished over night?

In what ways does fear affect his life adversely?

What do we make of God's question to Elijah at the end of v9? Clearly God knows the answer to his question, so why do you think he asks it? Does God need to ask any of us the same question?

Clearly fear undermines our faith.

God doesn't just leave Elijah there; he appears to Elijah (as a still, small voice of calm after the earthquake, wind and fire). The story continues:

¹⁴ Elijah replied, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.'

¹⁵ The Lord said to him, 'Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also, anoint Jehu king over Israel, and anoint Elisha to succeed you as prophet.'

Interestingly, although Elijah explains to God the reasons for his fear and grumbles that he's been zealous for God and that's what's landed him in this mess, God doesn't address his fear but sends him straight back: with a very positive mission to achieve. It appears that having seen God and been recommissioned by him, Elijah forgets his fear.

Application

In his sermon on Sunday Carnie gave us seven points to look at to prevent our faith being undermined by fear. Discuss together how people might achieve each of these points (or as many of them as you have time to get through).

1) Complete trust in God

How can we work on trusting God completely?

(Elijah saw God's power in abundance yet even then his faith faltered)

2) Walk in the Holy Spirit

What does this mean? How do we 'walk in the spirit'?

(for example, keeping close to God in prayer, exercising gifts of the Spirit, expecting to see the Spirit develop fruit in our lives. 1 Cor 14 vv1-4 may be helpful.)

3) Be filled with the Holy Spirit

How does that differ from 'walking' in the Holy Spirit?

(NB Ephesians 5 v18: 'be filled' is in the present tense in the original Greek and means 'keep being filled...' To quote the NIV notes on this verse, '... the filling of the Spirit is not a once-for-all experience. Repeatedly, as the occasion requires, the Spirit empowers for worship, service and testimony')

4) Cast out the spirit - Resist fear

There is a spirit of fear which we can pray against. How else can we 'resist fear'?

Consider the Shield of Faith (Ephesians 6 v16), which doesn't stop the 'flaming arrows' from coming, but protects us. A wooden shield would 'extinguish' a flaming arrow that penetrated it).

5) Contend for the faith which displaces fear

'Contend' is a difficult word for us. Think of it as to fight or strive for (for example Andy Murray 'contending' for first place at Wimbledon against very strong competition from the likes of Federer, Nadal and Djokovic), or think of a barrister standing up in court and 'contending' that something is true. How do we apply those definitions to faith?

6) Then live daily by that faith

How do we 'live daily' by faith? What strategies might we need to put into place?

7) Abiding knowledge of who dwells in us

What does 'abiding knowledge' mean? How do we develop that abiding knowledge? There are many different ways we can work on that 'abiding knowledge'.

For what it's worth I find the more I look at creation the more I am convinced of the reality of God (Romans 1 v20: 'For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.') But that's just one example.