

Argo, 7/20

Staying Strong: Elijah

INTRO

What a crazy, stressful, in some ways unprecedented time we're living in.

I've had to laugh at some of the memes--the jokes--I've seen about 2020.

One said if 2020 was a bag of potato chips, the flavor would be Orange Juice & Toothpaste.

Another--from back in April--said, "2020 is a unique leap year. It has 29 days in February, 300 days in March, and 5 years in April." And whoever made that one had no idea that May, June, & July were just sneaking around the corner.

But it has been hard; it's made life difficult.

- Almost 59,000 dead from Coronavirus
- Businesses shut down
- People losing jobs/taking pay cuts
- Violence in the streets
- Demands for abolishing the police
- I don't think there is a single demographic that doesn't somehow feel persecuted
- Months of quarantine--unable to be with the ones we love
- The list could go on.

Life has not been easy for ANY of us the past few months.

So, how do we cope?

In times like these, how are we supposed to be "strong and courageous," as Hezekiah urged Judah, in 2 Chron. 37?

I've talked a lot over the past months about how we should *bear with one another*, as Romans 15:1 says, "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak." But we have to wonder, are there any who are "strong," and not weak, right now?

Granted, I am sure there are *more* weak than strong, but you don't have to be among the weak.

There was a man ~870 BC who was strong, and...

- Endured a drought...
- Lost loved ones...
- Had to live in hiding (1 Kg. 17:2), and on the run...
- Prayed for God to take his life, as a result...
- Thought he was the only one left.

But God answered him, "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

Of course, this man was Elijah.

How did he stay strong enough through his tribulations to be able to consider himself the only person left who was still loyal to God?

Turn to 1 Kings 17, and we'll take a look.

[PRAY]

- I. He knew where he stood. 1 Kg. 17:1, And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."
- II. He obeyed God, even when it was scary. 1 Kg. 17:5, So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. (also 17:10; 18:1-2;
 - A. He found God's promises true. 1 Kg. 17:6, The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook.
- III. He spread God's word. 17:14, "For thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth.' "
 - A. God's promises again were found true. (v. 15-16)
- IV. He cried out to God. v. 20 & 21 (also 19:4
 - A. God heard the cries, and answered.
 - B. And God was glorified
- V. He utilized other disciples. 18:7-16
- VI. He was confident of the truth, stood on it, and stated it. 18:17-18
 - A. This is very important, and practical.
 - B. The only way to be confident of the truth is by doing these things.
 1. Read the Word.
 2. Contemplate the Word.
 3. Pray to understand the Word.
 - C. When confident of the Word of truth, we become confident in God's promises.
 - D. We stand on that; not anything around us--in this world.
 1. Everything around us can be falling apart.
 2. But since our confidence isn't in this world, it doesn't matter.
 - a) It might hurt.
 - b) It might be scary, sad, or infuriating.
 - c) But it won't impact our *joy*...our *HOPE*.
 - E. And WE. NEED. TO. STATE. IT.
 1. To our loved ones...
 2. To our neighbors...
 3. To strangers...
 4. And TO. OURSELVES.
- VII. He acted on his faith. 18:19-37
 - A. I've got a feeling Elijah *knew* God would send down the fire.
 - B. What if he didn't know?
 - C. There's another story about people who didn't know. Dan.3.
 1. Nebuchadnezzar decreed the worship of the golden statue.
 2. Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego, didn't; and were reported.
 3. They were brought before Nebuchadnezzar.

4. V. 15, But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?" 16, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17, "If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. 18, "But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."