

# Living by Faith - 1 Kings Chapter 18

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Preacher: Adrian Brixey

[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you.

The time we came to Whitby was last, a year ago, February, over a year ago. And on the way up, the car broke down. And we thought, oh, God really doesn't want us, you know, to get to Whitby in an easy way.

And we thought this time it would be easy because we have a newer car. But unfortunately, we had other challenges. Two of our children got a fever this week and were sick in the car.

And my wife is on crutches as well. Well, her knee kind of sort of, I don't know what happened to her, but it became very big and swelled up this week. So she had some cartilage problems.

So we arrived on crutches and with the smell of sick in the back of the car. But it was a delight to be here. And it only took 11 hours, so it was a great, I could have flown to Thailand quicker.

[ 1 : 19 ] So, but we actually detoured and we made our journey longer, I suppose. And we went to see John and Sybil. So they send their greetings. And they seem to be doing very well.

And it was lovely to spend a short time with them. And we were really encouraged to see them. And also, I'd like to send greetings from Trinity Baptist Church. That's the church where we fellowship.

And they know of your work here. And they pray for the work here as well, which is encouraging.

And also James, our son. He was here last year, this time last year for beach missions.

And this year he's doing some real work. He's working at the university, so he couldn't come. But he sends his greetings as well. So, for those who don't know what we do or don't know us, we've been involved since we left Whitby.

We used to live here for a few years. And we've been involved in working overseas in Southeast Asia, reaching Muslim communities, evangelism and discipleship and outreach.

[ 2 : 25 ] And we've been called back to work in the UK and Europe with a mission, European Christian Mission, based in Gloucester, where there are some Muslims.

Reaching the local community there, about 6,000 Muslims. And also, now I'm going to be leading a work across Europe. So, with all the challenges that you see on the news of the migrants and also the IS, so-called Islamic State, and other issues, some of the teams there, they're facing that reality in France, Belgium, Germany, Spain and here in the UK.

So, if you want to know more, please come on Wednesday. And particularly for the church members here, you've been so faithful in supporting us over many years. I want to encourage you to come along.

We want to report how things are going, but also to give you a chance to ask us questions. So, we're going to give a lot of time for you to ask questions. Because sometimes it's very difficult to say, well, what do you actually do?

You know, what is your week like? You know, do you just sit around the house all day praying? Or do you just go into the mosque and give out tracts? Or what do you actually do?

[ 3 : 41 ] So, I'd like sort of the opportunity for engagement, for you to ask the sort of difficult questions. And really kind of challenge us, so that we can tell you what we're involved in and make it clearer.

Because it isn't always easy to understand our work. Actually, this morning we got a text message from Ahmed, one of our friends. And I met Ahmed by a very miraculous way.

If you want to find out how, come on Wednesday. And he's just had a baby girl. So, he let us know and said, oh, I've just had a baby girl. And it's another girl. So, he's only got girls. So, he's a bit disappointed.

But I met Ahmed from quite a miraculous way. And God got us to relate to him. He lives in Gloucester. But he's actually from Malaysia. Which is where we used to, you know, relate with the

Malay in Thailand.

And he's been along to some church events. And he's hearing the gospel. So, if you want to know how did I meet Ahmed, come along on Wednesday. Okay. This morning, when I came into church, I noticed a scaffolding there.

[ 4 : 48 ] And I was looking at it. And I was thinking, oh, that's sad. What's happened? Is there some problem? And then I was thinking about my wife coming up with crutches up the stairs.

Thinking, oh dear, how times have changed. But maybe your faith is like that this morning. Maybe your faith is a bit like you're walking on crutches.

Or there's scaffolding there. It's just holding together. And you're feeling tired and a bit discouraged. Well, first of all, I'm going to speak this morning about faith.

And our journey of faith. But secondly, I want to say at the outset, like this morning's message, I had very little time to prepare this week. It's been a terrible week, humanly speaking.

But you are here. You are here. Whatever you perceive your faith to be, you are here to hear God's word.

[ 5 : 50 ] To sing his praise and to pray. You've made the effort. Whether some of you are ill, discouraged, tired, don't like something.

You are here. And you're part of a community. Because if none of you were here, I would just stand and look out at a sea of empty chairs.

Like I did last night when I stood here. I came to see how high the pulpit was. Because it frightened me that it was so high. And I was very encouraged. It's getting lower every year. And I saw empty chairs.

And I thought, wouldn't it be sad if it was empty tomorrow? And I would just close up my Bible and walk out the door. But you are here. And we should be thankful to God.

And praise God. No matter how weak our faith is. He holds us. He will never let us go. He will never leave us.

[ 6 : 54 ] And our journey, we have faced a lot of challenges. And it continues to be challenging. And tiring. And exhausting.

But if you are the Lord's, he will hold you. And I want to just take a moment just for you to think. Yes, thank you Lord that I am here.

And if you are here, it means that you can do something for God. It means that he is interested in you. It means that he wants to use you.

That your life is important to him. We can look at these great stories, can't we? Of the fire coming down from heaven.

And we can be so like, wow, I wish God was like that. But in a sense, it's maybe more of a miracle this morning that you are here. Let's not forget the miracles that God does.

[ 7 : 56 ] The simple miracles. Now, for the sermon. When I come to Whitby, when I first came to Whitby, I only lived here three years.

But it had such an impact on my life, I guess. We got married here and other things. But when I first came to Whitby, I heard about the 199 steps. And they lead up to the abbey.

So they said, you've got to walk the 199 steps. So I went, and I walked with James. I went and walked up the 199 steps. And what did I do as I walked up those steps?

I counted them. Yes. I counted them. Because I kind of wanted to know, are there 199 steps? Unfortunately, the first time I did it, James interrupted or something.

And I lost count. So then I thought, oh, I'm not going back down again. So I got to the top. And then every now and again, living in Whitby, I'd come to that. And let's walk up the steps. Every time, I'd count them.

[ 8 : 56 ] Every single time. And if I go there now, I know what's going to happen. Let's count the steps, OK? Because I just, I'm not sure. Are there actually 199?

And I've researched on the web. Apparently, there are 200. I can guarantee from somebody who does a blog, there are 200 steps. So if you don't believe me, you need to go sometime and walk those steps and recount them.

And the fastest ascent up those steps is 30 seconds. Someone has gone up in 30 seconds. Can you believe that? That's fast.

But you see, that is living by sights. That is, I want to know myself. I want to find out the answer. So I want to count them.

But God doesn't work like that. That isn't our faith. Our faith isn't counting steps. It's just trusting. Trusting God.

[ 9 : 58 ] So if God says there was 199, we could trust him. I don't know if there are. It's up for debate. But my faith in God and salvation through Jesus Christ is not up for debate.

We cannot waver in our position. You are either for the Lord or you are not. And it's so encouraging to be here with the beach missions.

Because that's the message they're taking out. It's a clear message. Of the cross. Of hope. Of opportunity. And ultimately, are you the Lord's?

Or are you not? So three points to look at. I see there's no clock still. So I take no responsibility for when I finish.

Whether it's too early or too late. We have three points. Faith in action. And I want to run through this account. Just drawing out points.

[ 11 : 01 ] And then our faithful God. And then our faith journey. So faith in action. What an encouraging account this is.

Isn't it an amazing story. Of how God came at this point. And demonstrated his powerful nature. We have Ahab. The king of Israel. At this point, the kingdom is divided. And we have Ahab. I don't have time to go into details of the whole story.

That's the shame of just dropping into a story, I know. But Ahab did more evil than any of the kings before him. He was an evil man.

In chapter 16, verse 31. It comments that he considered sin trivial. He considered sin trivial.

[ 12 : 02 ] He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat. But he also married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidians. And began to serve Baal and worship him.

He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asheropol and did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him.

This king was an evil king. He fully turned his back on God. And followed after other gods. In the end, he would give an account.

And he reigned for 22 years. And if you follow through the story of kings, you can see how, in the end, he died. But he was an evil man. And he led the people of Israel down the path of evil.

But Elijah was here. And Elijah, in judgment, in chapter 17, verse 1, came before Ahab and said, As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.

[ 13 : 16 ] And then we have the story of Elijah having to flee and being fed by the ravens and the widow. And there is judgment that God has proclaimed by withholding the rains.

And there is drought. And now we pick up the story. Elijah was commanded by God. If we go to chapter 18, verse 1.

After a long time in the third year, the word of the Lord came to Elijah. Go and present yourself to Ahab. And I will send rain on the land.

So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. God commanded Elijah to go back to Ahab. Not because of the repentance of the people.

But because of God's mercy. Because of his grace. Because of God's faithfulness. There was no turning back to God at this point.

[ 14 : 17 ] But God had not given up on his people. And he sent Elijah back into this situation. A situation that would be quite fearful.

And it was fully God's grace that came into this situation. We need to understand that. There wasn't a crying out from the people. Like there was in the time of the Egyptians under Pharaoh.

But God demonstrates love. And concern. And care. Even when. People continue in their sin.

Does God love the people of Whitby this morning? Yes he does. Are they crying out. For help from the Lord.

At this point. They are not. They are not. They are at home. Watching TV. Doing entertainment. Doing exercising.

[ 15 : 20 ] Whatever. Walking around. Enjoying the sunshine. But God cares. And God uses his people.

To do his work. Beach mission people. God has brought you here. God has brought you here. Not by chance.

But by his sovereign will. We don't know what God is going to do this week. We don't know what fruit will come out of that work.

Directly. But we do know. God will be honoured. By his witness. And it's wonderful.

When you hear the story. When you hear the story. Of how God worked. I never went to church. I was not born up a Christian.

[16:21] I was adopted. I was. You know. A child who never went to church. Had big issues. Came to faith. At teaching college.

And. When I talk about my testimony. You can remember the Christians. There at the teaching college. The ones when I was defacing.

The Christian posters. The ones I had arguments with. And eventually God. Softened my heart. And drew me to himself. But there was somebody before that. There was a Christian man.

In Ipswich. Where I grew up. And I worked in a factory with him. For two weeks. Cleaning some industrial machines. And he was a raving crazy Christian guy.

Who kept going on about. Christianity. And creation. And Jesus. And I kept arguing with him. And arguing with him. And at the end of two weeks. I just told him he was a loser.

[17:21] He was a waste of time. Oh. Just glad to get rid of him. And that was it. Five years later. I become a Christian. Up in the Lake District.

He didn't know. Wonderfully. About two years after that. When I was visiting my parents. I actually saw the guy.

And ran up to him. He stood back a bit at first. And they said. I'm a Christian. And he was like.

Really? I said yes. And he had to saw me. But there were many times. And many people.

That you will speak to. And you will share the gospel. And you will never know. Where along the faith journey. You were. You will never know.

What. That did. To bring that person to faith. We always hope. That we are at the end of the journey. Don't we? We always hope.

[18:15] That we are the person. That prays with that person. But we don't know. Where we are on the journey. So we need to be wise. But God will use you this week. As indeed. He used Elijah. I love the grace of God.

In this story though. We have someone else. A man of faith. Obadiah. He was the administrator. Of the palace. And he had saved a hundred prophets.

And I can't go into detail. But. He himself was faithful. Right there. In the middle of that evil situation. And God honoured him.

And cared for him. So. Moving on to the actual story. Quickly. We come to. Verse. 21. The challenge presented.

Two bulls. And an altar of wood. A clear choice. So. Get two bulls for us.

[19:18] Let them choose one for themselves. And let them cut it into pieces. And put it on the wood. But not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull. And put it on the wood. And not set fire to it.

That's verse 23. Then you call on the name of your God. And I will call on the name of the Lord. And the God who answers by fire. He is God.

There's a clear choice here. And a clear challenge. And actually it's quite significant. Because for the prophets of Baal. They would have proclaimed that their God was a God of lightning.

Of fire. So for them that would have been an easy challenge. Had Baal been truly a God. But there's a clear challenge presented. A clear option.

A clear choice. Who truly is God. And as we've read. I won't go through it. You know. The prophets of Baal try to call on their God.

[20:16] The whole day. And it's rather comical isn't it. How Elijah teases them. Makes fun of them. As they're there. Calling on their God. Asking for fire to come down.

And he teases them somewhat. I kind of get why he does that. And then you know. You see them go into a frenzy. But you know. It isn't funny. It isn't funny.

When we see it in our day. When I see my Muslim friends. Fasting. As they have been doing. For the last. You know. Month. Spending. The night of the 13th.

That I'm in prayer. All night long. Hoping. That on that night. Their prayers are going to be answered. A thousand times. Than any other night. When I see my Muslim friends.

In Southeast Asia. Scared of jinn. Which is a kind of spirit. That can cause them evil. People. Frightened. To go out of their houses. Because there's a bad jinn.

[ 21 : 13 ] In their community. That's part of folk Islam. It isn't comical. It's tragic. There's a tragedy there. When people are seeking.

After something. That is not there. The same. With those around us. Who do not have faith. In the Lord Jesus Christ. They seek after something. But in the end.

There is nothing. At the end of the journey. It's quite poignant. I thought. The sentence. In verse 29. But there was no response. No one answered.

No one paid attention. No response. No one answered. No one paid attention. There are many. Many people. That I've met. Ordinary. Muslim people. They're not radicals. They're not. Hell bent on murder.

[ 22 : 12 ] They're just. Normal people. Ordinary families. In Gloucester. We've met. Pakistan. Indian.

Afghan. Iranian. Indian. And normal people. Trying to live a life. Trying to seek after God. In the way that they think they have to. By rituals.

By prayers. By works. But at the end of the day. There will be no answer. For those who are in Islam. There is no salvation.

No one is paying attention. So when I visited the mosque last month. And I stood in that building. Beautiful building. Beautiful books.

Beautifully ornate. There's a beauty there. Which is often recognised. But it's just empty. It's empty. This morning my mother was taken into hospital.

[ 23 : 15 ] She's not well. My mother and father. Those who adopted me. She's getting quite bad now. And about four years ago.

I wrote a letter to them. Because they are not believers. They are not Christians. And I wrote a long letter. Explaining. Everything about my Christian faith. Why I gave up being a teacher.

Why I went overseas. How important it is. What I believe about it. And when I wrote the letter. I thought this is going to do the job. They can't deny this letter.

This is it. They're going to really understand. About Jesus now. And they rejected it. And they wrote back and said. We don't believe that. We don't think that's true.

We will just. We've done some good things. We've worked with the Red Cross. We've helped people. You know. We're Christians as well. Please don't buy like this again.

[ 24 : 12 ] And it broke my heart. It broke my heart. But at the end of the day. It doesn't come down to.

Communities. It comes down to individuals. And even those here. Yourselves. If you're not a Christian. At the end of the day.

You need to consider. Will there be a response from God. Will anyone answer. Will anyone pay attention. It's tragic.

That there are many. Lonely people. Often females. Who are. Now. Divorced. With children. Who are turning to Islam.

Because they feel a loneliness. And a sadness. There's no one there. And for some reason. They're turning to Islam. For some sort of comfort. There's a lot of lonely people around.

[ 25 : 11 ] And I think. If you're a Christian. You have a responsibility. To be aware of it. And to do something about it.

The hand of friendship. Giving your time. To those. Who have no one. Because we don't just bring friendship. We also bring hope.

We bring salvation with us. Through the gospel message. So. It is a clear choice. And it is a sad reality. There is no salvation.

Outside of Christ. And his sacrifice on the cross. He is the only one. Savior. It is clear. It is the true word of God.

And when I speak to my Muslim friends. About this. Some will listen. Some will acknowledge. Some will come to faith. When you ask them about their faith.

[ 26 : 12 ] They really don't know. They are not sure. They hope. That they have done enough. But they will never. Fully have assurance. Neither did their prophets.

The same with the Buddhist communities. That we worked near. And Hindu. And any other religion. There is only true hope. When there is a choice. It's in Christ.

And this example. Demonstrates that very clearly. So after. The prophets of Baal had failed. Elijah. Verse 30. Said to the people. Come here to me. They came to him.

And he repaired the altar of the Lord. Which was in ruins. That's significant. Because there was an altar there. But it was in ruins. God.

[ 27 : 09 ] Wanted to restore. The form of faithfulness. Of his people. He used this altar. That had been destroyed. Twelve stones. For the twelve tribes.

The Lord. Wanted to restore. His people. And still does. Want to restore. His people. Then he pours the water over.

And then. Elijah prays. O Lord. God of Abraham. Isaac. And Israel. Let it be known today. That you are God in Israel. And that I am your servant. And have done all these things. At your command. Answer me. O Lord. Answer me.

So these people will know. That you are God. O Lord. Are God. And that you are turning their hearts. Back again. We must remember. That God. Called Elijah.

[ 28 : 09 ] Back. To visit Ahab. God called Elijah. To stand there. And challenge. The prophets of Baal. And now. Elijah is calling upon God.

And saying. Honor. Your name. Answer me now. And honor. And honor your name. God of Abraham.

Isaac. And Israel. Let it be known today. That you are God. In Israel. And I am your servant. That takes faith.

In action. I don't know. If I was Elijah. I would have had the faith. To stand there. I may have had the faith.

To stand there. But I don't know. If I'd have the faith. To believe. That he would answer that prayer. I would have looked up. From heaven. And be mightily concerned. But God.

[ 29 : 10 ] In the scriptural narrative. God does special things. And works in special ways. And he answers. Miraculously.

Tangibly. And you might be sitting there. And you might say. Well that's all well and good. But that's not the God of today. Is it? That's not the God of today.

You know. If I stood here. And asked for fire. I hope fire doesn't come down. I shan't ask. I don't want to burn the church. That God doesn't work like that. Today.

Does he? No. Or does he? Or does he? Or does he?

Sometimes we don't tell the stories. We should tell. Sometimes we don't. Celebrate. The victories of God. I can tell you.

[ 30 : 14 ] First hand. That in Indonesia. There was a village. That got flattened. By a storm. And two local Christian people. Went from their village. To help.

And then got a group of people. To come and help rebuild it. And that Muslim village. That had been destroyed. They helped build it. And they got to share their faith. And there were 40 Muslims. Came to faith.

And baptized. And they're still going on. Believing. Even though there's been persecution. In that community. I could get you a map. And I won't. Because it's secure.

I could tell you where it happened. There's a book out recently. Called Wind in the House of Islam. And a man interviewed a thousand Muslims.

Who came to faith. Very respected researcher. He's not just some fly your pants guy. This guy is a very well known researcher. And interviewed a thousand Muslims. Who have come to faith.

[ 31 : 07 ] Throughout the world. Took him many years. He researched something thoroughly. Are there Muslims coming to faith really? And there are over 600 movements of faith.

Of Muslims. And they define a movement as. Over a thousand Muslims. Coming to faith in 20 years. And have been baptized. I don't have time to explain all of that.

But enough to say. That when you read the news about IS. And the conflict with the Sunni. And the Shia. And the Kurds. And the conflict with Saudi Arabia.

Getting involved. Underneath that. And before that. Over the last 10 years. Actually 20 years. But in the last 10 years. Specifically.

There have been. Many hundreds. And thousands of Muslims. Becoming Christians. This is a spiritual battle. Taking place. It isn't just politics. There are things happening.

[ 32 : 05 ] Underneath. In the services. And you don't hear about it on the news. You'll occasionally hear a story. But you won't hear all the stories. And even myself.

Who works in this realm. I only can find out some of the stories. But God is like that today. So be encouraged.

When you go down to the beach. Be encouraged. When we do the open air. This is the same God. When I told my daughter.

There's an open air this afternoon. She said. What's an open air? I said. Well. They go down in the open. And they maybe sing some hymns. And maybe talk about. You know.

And I'm. Going to be saying about. How I became a Christian. We tell people the gospel. And then one of my daughters. I won't say which one. She said. Oh. Someone's going to get punched in the face then. Which. And I thought.

[ 32 : 59 ] Oh. Okay then. But isn't it interesting? That's what one of my daughters said. Somebody's going to get punched in the face. I had to laugh.

Somebody may get punched in the face. I hope it's Peter. Not me. But. No. I take that back. Brother. Somebody may get punched in the face.

You go and do that down in. Some other place in England. Maybe worse. I go and walk into. Some local mosque. And do that. It'll be much worse.

But this is the same God. This is the same God.

We don't go to the open air. Or beach missions. Or witness to Muslims. Because we have no message. We don't give up a career. And end up going all over the world.

[ 34 : 01 ] Killing yourselves. Because there's no message. A man doesn't research for five years. Spending all his money. Interviewing these Muslims. Because they're made up stories.

They're not. It's the same message. It's the same God. It's the only God. It's the creator God. Who loves mankind. And desires to save us.

Because he gave us his son. How dare anyone. Sit here.

In this church. Unless you're the Lord's. I don't know. In fact. The only person I know.

Who's a believer is myself. That's the only person. I don't know. But if you are here. And you're not the Lord's.

[ 34 : 59 ] Don't you dare stand up. Without asking him to come into your life. Because he's done everything for you.

He's done it all. He's done it all. That's the first point.

I have no idea where time is. I'm sorry. Secondly. We have a faithful God. We have a faithful God. God.

Demonstrates. In this account. And throughout the whole narrative of scripture. That he is faithful. To his people. To mankind.

In Trinity. We're studying the Bible in five. They're going to go through each book. Of the Bible. In the evening services. And complete it in five years.

[ 36 : 00 ] And I was thinking. How old will I be at the end of that? And I thought. Oh I don't know if I'd like that. That's a bit strange. Is it going to be interesting? And is it going to be laborious?

But you know. It's fascinating. When you go through Genesis. And Exodus. And when you go through these books. Because they're looking at the theme. Of the book.

They're not trying to cover it thematically. All. Every sermon. In each. No. They'll go into something in a sermon. But when you begin to look at this book.

As one story. The story of God's love. For mankind. When you look at it as a big story. You really see God's faithfulness.

It is quite interesting. To study. God is faithful to his people. God was faithful to Elijah. God was faithful to Obadiah.

[ 36 : 56 ] God is faithful throughout history. Even today. Even with the scaffolding. God is faithful to his people. We have a faithful God.

God. He is constant. He is constant. And unchanging. When we. Went to Gloucester. We weren't sure.

What God was doing. It seemed a strange place. To go to. We met a woman. On a hill. When we first visited Gloucester.

You may recall that story. If you're a church member. We took a picture of her. She's a Muslim woman. And we were visiting. Looking at houses. We met her on this hill. Outside Gloucester.

And Tony started to SMS her. Starting to become friends. A little bit. By SMS. And that was about. You know. Eight. Nine months ago. We're now living in Gloucester.

[ 37 : 54 ] She still SMSs this woman. She's divorced. She's a Muslim. And then. Later on down the story. And Tony's starting. A Bible club.

Where she meets with Muslim women. And Christians. And they read the Bible together. And the Quran. And compare the stories. And the person who is the Muslim.

Representative of their group. When they meet. Is the woman. On the hill. Oh hello Antonia.

And that was the person. That she met. When we first moved to Gloucester. That's a faithful God. Because there's a trust. Straight away.

And this woman. Is very. Very significant. Muslim woman in her community. And already. God has said. Don't worry. There's a trust there. With you and Antonia. And then they've been looking at the scripture.

[ 38 : 52 ] And meeting regularly. We have a faithful God. In your life. Remember the times. When God has been faithful to you. I want you to do that now.

Just for 30 seconds. When has God been faithful to you? I tell you.

When God's been faithful to me. God's been faithful to me. When I was in tears in Thailand. And I couldn't cope. God's been faithful to me.

When a Muslim friend asked me. For a scripture. Not a whole Bible. But a Luke's gospel. God has been faithful to me. When I was widowed.

God has been faithful to me. When I saw the birth of Joseph. And I thought. I'm too old for this.

Definitely too old for this. All the doctors look like teenagers.

[ 39 : 56 ] You beach missions look like teenagers. You are teenagers. You know. God is faithful through the good times. And through the bad times. We don't live a life of ease as Christians.

It's not an easy journey. We walk. It's hard. It's despairing. It's challenging.

It's not easy. But every experience we go through. God is faithful. God is there. With us.

Working his purposes out. Helping us. Defining us. Sometimes crushing us.

You talk about that when you eat your lunch. Does God really crush us? Feels like it doesn't it?

[ 40 : 58 ] Feels like it. Some days. If I'm honest. Trust. But he doesn't. Really. It's only when we look back.

Sometimes. That we say. No actually. God was there. He wasn't crushing me. He was with me.

But God is faithful to. His. Understanding. Not ours. And we must be careful. Never to question God.

Too far. That we forget. Who he truly is. Because we will never fully understand. One other of my daughters.

Is very good at asking. The difficult questions. And as an ex teacher. I always like to give the answers. Because.

[ 41 : 58 ] As a teacher. We should always have the answers. But when she got a little bit older. The questions were getting harder. And harder. And harder. So I have now. That we are back in England.

I have found the best strategy ever. And I give this to any fathers out there. If they have deep theological questions. That are difficult for you to answer. You just tell them.

Ah. On Sunday. Ask the pastor. So. So every Sunday. My daughter. Goes and stands waiting to shake the pastor's hand. And she'll ask the difficult question.

And that's great. So Peter. Be prepared. So. Isn't it wonderful that we can question our God. Isn't it wonderful that we can question.

We can challenge. We can be honest with God. We can wrestle with God. You can't challenge Allah. But you can challenge our God.

[ 42 : 59 ] Because he is faithful. And we have the reassurance that he cares and loves us. And honours us. When I woke up this morning.

I thought about the beach mission team. And my first time when I did beach missions. I was actually. The. I wouldn't choose as a good example. I was sort of homeless at the time. Wandering through the Isle of Man.

And. Went up to the beach mission team. And said. Can I join your team? And they let me. Can you believe that? And then I served in the beach mission team. That must have been against all the rules.

But. You know. When I woke up this morning. I looked at the weather. And it was pouring down with rain. And I praise God. Because I knew it would be sunny later. Because that's Whitby. If it starts with rain. It will be sunny later.

But you know. We can't live in that moment. Of. Ah. It's raining. That's going to be bad for beach missions. Because we don't know. Later on. What's going to happen.

[ 43 : 54 ] We can't. Trust God. In a moment. Alone. We have to trust God. In the whole picture.

We have to say. At the moment. I feel crushed. But God. I know. There's a big picture there. We have a faithful God. And closing very quickly.

What about our faith journey? What about our journey of faith? Faith in action. Faithful God.

Faith journey. Faith journey. I became a Christian. In Ambleside. Where I was training. To be a teacher. I then moved.

To a place. Near Maryport. I then moved. To Whitby. I then moved. To Redbourne. Near. Hartford.

[ 44 : 53 ] I then moved. To a town. Called Lotbury. In Thailand. Thailand. I then moved. To a place. Called Patani. In South Thailand. I then moved.

Back to Redbourne. I then moved. Back to Patani. I then moved. Back to Redbourne. Then I moved. To Bangkok. Then I moved. Where did I go after that?

And then I moved. Somewhere else. And to Gloucester. Okay. We've had a lot of moves. It has to be said. But that's not. My faith journey. That's a physical journey.

We mustn't get confused. That's not my faith journey. What about my financial journey? What about my financial journey?

I remember as a child. Getting pocket money. And I opened. A post office account. And I go to the post office. And put money in. And save. And then I became a student. And I got a grant.

[ 45 : 53 ] In those days. And then I became a teacher. And got some money. And I became a head teacher. And got an enormous salary. Like head teachers get. And then I became a missionary. And became poor again.

And then. You know. The financial journey goes up and down. And for some of us. The financial journey can be a real worry. It really does pressurise us. Doesn't it? Do we have enough money to live off?

There have been times. When we have run out of money in Thailand. Then there is the emotional journey. Am I having a good season? Is this a good time in my life?

Is it an exhausting time? But what I want us to focus on is our spiritual journey. Our spiritual journey. Where are we spiritually?

When we read this story. When we look at the faithfulness of Elijah. And Obadiah. Where do we place ourselves in that story? Where are we in our spiritual journey with God?

[ 46 : 57 ] Are we at a low point? Are we at a high point? Are we coasting? Where are we? I was reading through Hebrews.

And the account of the men of faith. And the women of faith. Such an encouraging chapter. And I was reading through by faith. Hebrews chapter 11.

What God did through his people. And I was really encouraged reading it. And I thought maybe I should choose that passage. I thought this is great.

By faith Abraham. When he was tested. Offered Isaac as a sacrifice. By faith Joseph did this.

Moses did that. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.

And then when I get to the end. I was a bit discouraged. Because then I read some other things. Hebrews 11 verse 37. They were stoned.

[ 47 : 57 ] They were sword in two. They were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins. Destitute. Persecuted. They were persecuted. They were persecuted. They were persecuted. They were persecuted. The world was not worthy of them.

They wandered in deserts and mountains. And in caves and holes in the ground. That wasn't so encouraging. Facing that kind of persecution. They were all commended for their faith.

And yet they were all commended for their faith. Yet none of them received what they had been promised. God had planned something better for us.

So that only together with us would they be made perfect. Whatever our circumstances. Whether we face persecution.

Whether we are living in luxury. Whether the days are easy. Whether our emotional journey is easy or difficult. Our spiritual journey. Ends in the knowledge.

[ 49 : 02 ] That we are the Lord's. And that he will gather us to himself. With a new heaven and a new earth. We have that in the distance.

We have that hope. And as we spiritually walk before God. We need to acknowledge him daily.

We need to come before him. Journey with him. Serve him. Live for him. Not amble along.

Letting life go ahead of us. Letting the years tick by. Not race ahead.

With the, oh when I retire. When I retire. Because that may never happen. But our spiritual journey is a journey of growth in God.

[ 50 : 13 ] And it begins with his word. Reading his word. It begins in prayer.

And it begins in being honest with God. Talking to him. Making our faith real.

Not being something we're not. Not creating a Sunday morning persona. But being real. As individuals.

And as a community. Being able to trust one another. Love one another. Spiritually build each other up.

Have faith for others. God has given you a faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for your eternal salvation and good. You have the most precious gift.

[ 51 : 11 ] Of all. That God. Desires. That these days we live. Are for those around us.

God desires. That they're for those around us. Faith in action.

Faithful God. Faith journey. As we conclude. Let us acknowledge. That we. Are God's people.

That he is. The only true God. That salvation is found in Jesus Christ. Alone. That that gospel truth.

Will always remain in our heart. No matter what people say. No matter what our family believe.

Whether. In days to come we face.

[ 52 : 05 ] Persecution or prison. That is the truth. Let us. Live by faith. With this faithful God. And let us strive.

Let's not. Amble up the 199 steps. Let's strive with God. To serve him. Because he is good. And wonderful.

In all things. Amen. Amen. We're going to...