

# BIBLE BRIEFING

## “Faith Strikes-out”

Second Kings 13:14-21

**2 Kings 13:14** 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!"

**2 Kings 13:15** And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and some arrows." So he took himself a bow and some arrows.

**2 Kings 13:16** 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.

**2 Kings 13:17** 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*."

**2 Kings 13:18** 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.

**2 Kings 13:19** 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."

**2 Kings 13:20** Then Elisha died, and they buried him. And the *raiding* bands from Moab invaded the land in the spring of the year.

**2 Kings 13:21** So it was, as they were burying a man, that suddenly they spied a band *of raiders*; and they put the man in the tomb of Elisha; and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet.

- being changed to bring change -  
If you were asked to summarize Christian doctrine and duty in one simple phrase, what would you say? You might want to say what the Apostle Paul said twice, and what the writer to the Hebrews said. You might want to say, "The just shall live by faith." These six words are the principle of your life; they are the basic truth, rule, and standard of Christianity.

The phrase, "the just shall live by faith," is, as I said, repeated three times in the New Testament. You find it in Romans 1:17, in Galatians 3:11, and in Hebrews 10:38. Each of the books it occurs within describes one aspect of the phrase:

1. The Book of Romans describes the words "the just"; it describes how you are justified by God.

2. The Book of Galatians describes the words "shall live"; it describes how you are sanctified by God.
3. The Book of Hebrews describes the words "by faith"; it describes how you glorify God in your walk.

Romans describes **the just**:

God looks upon you to save you. But it is God Who looks upon you - a thrice holy, absolutely righteous God. His standard of righteousness is perfection. His standard and your standing are in conflict, for He says that **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God** (3:23). God cannot compromise His standard of righteousness to accommodate your standing. What can be done to save you?

*Only one thing!* Your standing must be changed. You must stand before God in perfect righteousness. Since your *inherited* righteousness falls short, God must *impute* **His** righteousness to you.

In Romans 4:6 you read **blessed is the man to whom God imputes righteousness**. To *impute* means to put into one's account. God puts His righteousness to your account and, thus, He can save you without compromising His standard of righteousness.

The only righteousness that an absolutely holy and perfect God can accept is His own. If you are to have God's own righteousness, it cannot be *achieved* by faithfulness - it can only be *received* by faith. God must give it to you; He must *impute* it to you.

God imputes His righteousness to you when you trust Christ alone as Savior. When you have Jesus Christ's righteousness imputed, you are declared righteous in your standing before God. The Bible uses a special word for this declaration: Justified. Justification is the act of God whereby He declares a believing sinner righteous on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Galatians describes **shall live**:

If you are a Christian, God the Holy Spirit lives within you. His indwelling and overflowing presence is the key to joy and victory in your Christian life. You want to be filled with the Spirit, baptized by the Spirit, and led by the Spirit in order to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.

Since the empowering presence of the Spirit is so crucial to your walk, it is important to discover how to daily experience Him in and through your life.

The empowering presence of the Holy Spirit is a *gift* to be received not a *goal* to be achieved.

**Galatians 3:5** Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Paul uses the phrase, **He who supplies the Spirit to you...** He is describing your experience of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. It is something that is available to you in never ending supply from your Lord, Jesus Christ.

Without hesitation Paul tells you that you experience the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit as a gift, not a goal; it is received, not achieved. That should come as wonderful news to you! The daily "supply" of God's Spirit you need for any and every situation you face is immediately available to you by faith.

Hebrews describes **by faith**:

Especially in chapter eleven, the writer chronicles the faith of the patriarchs and all those "great cloud of witnesses" who have gone before us - walking by faith and not by sight. As we study their lives we see how justified people live by faith to the glory of God. -

Now: What if you wanted to **illustrate** the phrase, "the just shall live by faith?"

You could do it from this episode between Elisha and King Joash.

Joash comes to Elisha on his deathbed and says to him, ***the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!***

You might recall these words. Elisha spoke them to Elijah as Elijah was being taken up into heaven in a chariot of fire. They were more than just a description of what Elisha witnessed. They were a declaration of how Elisha would walk with the Lord. Elisha had asked for a double portion of God's Spirit to be given him at Elijah's

departure. Elijah promised him that, if he saw Elijah depart, he would indeed receive the Spirit in double measure. As Elijah was being raptured, Elisha said, "*the chariot of Israel and its horsemen.*" Elisha's life, from that moment on, was epitomized by faith in the promise of the Spirit.

He immediately began to walk by faith - striking the water of the Jordan River with Elijah's mantle so he could cross over. He went on walking by faith, performing miracle after miracle. Even in his death miracles occurred, as you see a man being resurrected by coming into contact with Elisha's bones!

Elisha had struck the Jordan River by faith, and he went right on striking by faith throughout his whole life. Now, as King Joash came, Elisha wanted to teach him a lesson on striking by faith.

***We can learn that lesson as well!***

**2 Kings 13:14** 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!"

**2 Kings 13:15** And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and some arrows." So he took himself a bow and some arrows.

**2 Kings 13:16** 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.

**2 Kings 13:17** 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*."

He helps Joash hold the bow, helps him cock it, aim, and fire! Just as Elisha held and helped him strike the arrow, **so God would hold and help him strike the Syrians!**

That is faith. It is following the reasonable leading of God step-by-step. His Word gives you the step-by-step. You take the steps as if He were really there instructing you; as if He were putting His hands on your hands, your feet in His steps, His Words in your mouth. You get the idea.

The illustration wasn't over. Elisha tells Joash to repeat the actions, only this time Elisha doesn't physically help Joash.

**2 Kings 13:18** 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.

**2 Kings 13:19** 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."

**Strike the ground** probably means that the king was to shoot these arrows just as he had shot the first ones.<sup>1</sup> Joash shot three of the remaining arrows, then stopped. **He ought to have shot them all!** Elisha had just told him, "you must strike the Syrians at Aphek *till you have destroyed them.*" In other words, God had promised victory through Joash's obedience and diligence.

What was different this time? There is no mention of Elisha shadowing Joash. Elisha was still there, giving instruction. But Joash didn't 'feel' him.

**Faith has nothing to do with feeling!** God is there, shadowing you, whether you can feel Him or not. Strike by faith... or you will strike-out!

Elisha dies... *But his death is not the end of his miracles!*

**2 Kings 13:20** Then Elisha died, and they buried him. And the *raiding* bands from Moab invaded the land in the spring of the year.

**2 Kings 13:21** So it was, as they were burying a man, that suddenly they spied a band *of raiders*; and they put the man in the tomb of Elisha; and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet.

Some folks believe that relics from deceased believers have special power. That is **not** what the Holy Spirit is intending to teach us here - or anywhere, for that matter!

The theme of these verses is faith. The fact that Elisha's bones have a power to raise the dead is simply intended to illustrate something about faith. Though dead, Elisha, in a sense, lived-on in his miracles, because - though dead - *Elisha lived-on!* His bones were in the tomb,

---

<sup>1</sup>*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 564.

but his spirit was with the Lord. The man who was raised from the dead reminds us that there is, indeed, a resurrection.

Elisha lived by faith, *and he died in faith* - knowing he would live-on in eternity! Being dead, he couldn't himself tell anyone he lived-on. But God told them by allowing, in this rare instance, Elisha's bones to bring life to a corpse.

Our faith is a living faith; or, as Jesus once put it, [God] **is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.**<sup>2</sup> Faith is the promise you live by. This world, this existence, is not all that there is; there is heaven, there is eternity. You look forward to either the Rapture or the resurrection from the dead!

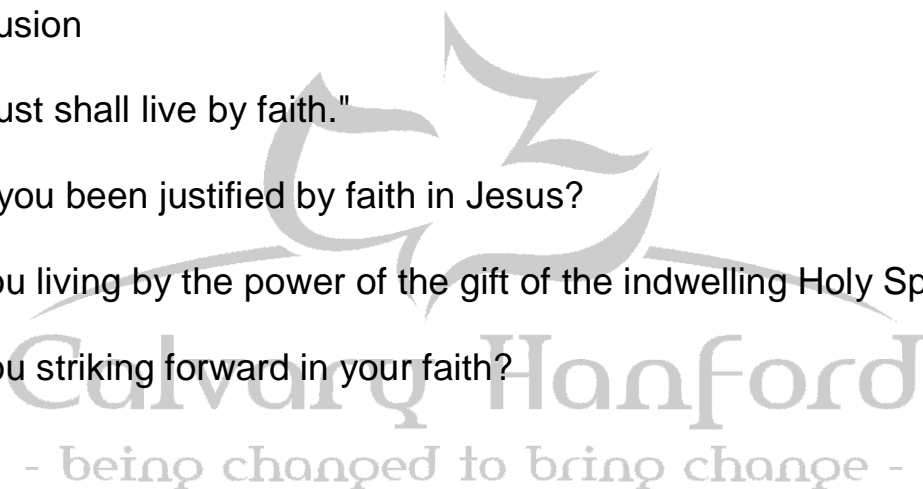
Conclusion

"The just shall live by faith."

Have you been justified by faith in Jesus?

Are you living by the power of the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit?

Are you striking forward in your faith?



---

<sup>2</sup>Mark 12:27