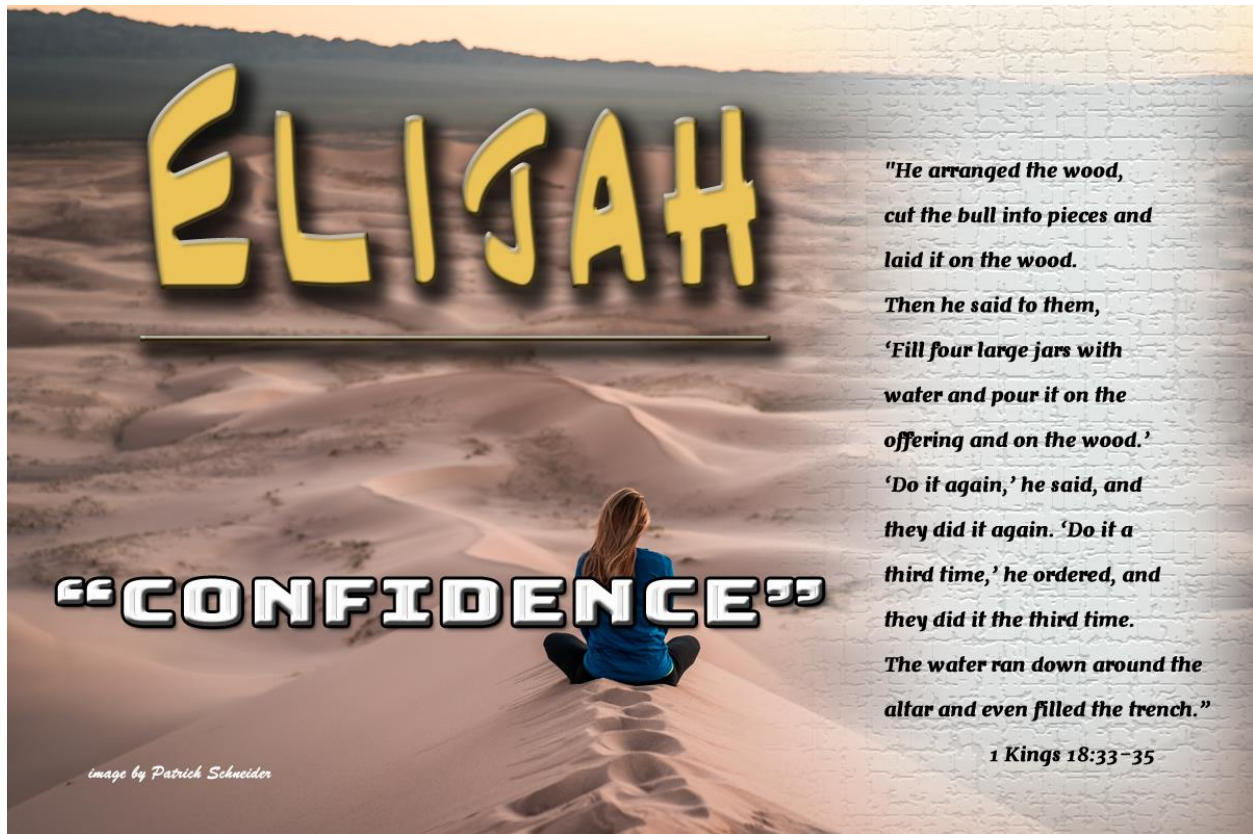


January 30, 2022

“Confidence”



Special Music: “Confidence”

Sanctus Real

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEGGVmSSr-I>

### 1 Kings 18:33-35

**33 He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, “Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.”**

**34 “Do it again,” he said, and they did it again.**

**“Do it a third time,” he ordered, and they did it the third time.**

**35 The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench**

## **HE CATCHES ME**

As a babe  
I learned to stand  
My mother took me  
By the hand  
I learned to talk  
I learned to walk  
And when I fell  
She caught me

As a child  
In my father's care  
He would throw me  
Into the air  
His muscled arms  
That could do no harm  
Reaching skyward  
To catch me

I fly through the air  
On life's trapeze  
Hands on the bar  
Swinging free  
Stalwart strings  
That carry me  
As I toss and turn  
And catch myself

But what would happen  
If I let go  
And allowed the swing  
To throw  
Me through the air  
Towards whatever's there  
God reaching out  
To catch me.

I'm confident  
That He'll be there  
To grab me  
From the air  
Strong arms and loving grace  
Stretching into sacred space  
He holds me fast  
And brings me home.

Doing something in front of an audience is one of the hardest things for most people to do. Whether it is playing an instrument, singing, giving a speech, performing in a play, or speaking at a rally. Generally, doing those things doesn't bring us physical harm, but the potential for bruising our fragile egos can often leave us with stage fright, or at least apprehension.

When I was in High School, I played piano at a number of recitals and concerts. I sang and played guitar before large and small audiences. I performed in numerous plays and musicals. I gave speeches and preached. But I never got rid of my stage fright. I did learn one thing that made performing in front of groups of people less traumatic. I learned that preparation and practice were the keys to overcoming any apprehension that I felt.

I realized that I was much more frightened to perform when I wasn't prepared. It wasn't that I gave a bad performance, but when I was prepared, I was much less nervous because I knew, no matter what happened, I had done everything I could do to be successful. People know when we are prepared. They know when we have practiced. They see and hear the hard work that it took to get us to that moment. And, for the most part, people are appreciative of the effort. People can also tell when we are not prepared, and the fear of rejection is real.

If we spend time in preparation, we are less likely to forget our lines, or the lyrics to the songs we are singing. We are less likely to mess up that guitar bridge between the verses. We are less likely to fumble our blocking and wind up

**someplace on stage where we never meant to be. We are less likely to get our ego bruised.**

**When we prepare, we become less susceptible to criticism and find we are more interested in mastering our craft. We challenge ourselves to raise the bar from what we have done in the past. Our focus turns inward as we strive to increase our skills and our performance level.**

**I hear you saying “Wait, Walt, I don’t sing. I don’t perform. I seldom talk to groups of people. I don’t play the piano or guitar. What does any of this have to do with me?”**

**It has everything to do with each of us in our walk with Christ. So often, we become Christians, make our commitment, profess our faith through baptism, serve on the board, or as deacons or elders. We might take a position in ministry where we teach Sunday School or Bible Study or sing in the choir. Those are all great things. But each one of those steps requires us to stop and examine ourselves and prepare for our lives of Christian Service. It is only through preparation and practice that we become confident in our walk with Christ. By being prepared and practicing our faith we gain the confidence we need to serve our Lord with gladness, knowing that He will prepare us for the ministries ahead. If we don’t do that, we have a tendency to say ‘no’ when we are asked to serve. We say things like “I can’t do that.” “I’ve never trained for that.” “That’s not in my skillset.” “I am not qualified.”**

The old adage is true. “God doesn’t call the equipped. God equips the called.” The calling always comes first. God know that we have skills and talents that we are totally unaware of. We forget that He is our potter and knows us better than we know ourselves. When we accept the knowledge that He will equip us for the areas that He calls us to, we gain confidence knowing that God will provide.

I’m going to pick up our story from where we left off last week. This is such a wonderful story and I don’t want to leave anything out.

### **1 Kings 18:22-35**

**22 Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the Lord’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. (Elijah doesn’t know that Obadiah, Ahab’s Palace Administrator, has hidden 100 prophets of God in caves to protect them. Neither God nor Obadiah think it is important for Elijah to know this. Or maybe God needs for Elijah to stand tall by himself among the people to make this moment even more miraculous.)**

**23 Get two bulls for us. Let Baal’s prophets 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 but not set fire to it. (Did you notice here that Elijah lets the prophets of Baal choose which bull. He doesn’t want anyone to think this event is rigged. He is taking every opportunity to level the playing field.)**

**24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by fire—he is God.”**

**Then all the people said, “What you say is good.”** (This is truly a great challenge because whichever god responds, the people can get off the fence they have put themselves on. Everything really does hinge on this moment if things are to move forward. If Baal answers with fire, then the people will get off the fence and worship Baal. If the Lord answers with fire, the people will get off the fence and worship God. If neither answers, or both answer, the people will stay on the fence and nothing will change.)

**25 Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.”** (Hey, Elijah is giving the opposing team the first at bat. Now there’s example of confidence. Not only does Elijah have confidence in God, he has confidence that Baal is just a piece of expensive furniture.)

**26 So they took the bull given them and prepared it.**

**Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.** (One might think here that we are all in an Indiana Jones movie at this point. We can see and hear these 950 priests dancing, screaming, singing, and who know what else, trying to get Baal’s attention, trying to get Baal to answer them. They do this for hours! Even though there is no hint that anything is happening, they keep right on dancing and

shouting. By noon, they've got to feel a little bit embarrassed, or possibly ignored.)

**27 At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened."** (Who would have thought that Elijah would stoop to heckling? But after more than 5 hours of this nonsense you would think that something would start to sink in. But no, Elijah's laughing and heckling just stirred them up more.)

**28 So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed.** (Well, here's a good plan. Maybe Baal is out for blood. Maybe he needs to see even more commitment than 950 priests doing a crazy dance. Maybe Baal wants to see them bleed to prove that they believe. And then again, maybe he's just a rock.)

**29 Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.** (It's getting late in the afternoon. This is beyond ridiculous. Baal's priests have had all day. If Baal was going to answer the challenge, and surely, he would if he could, he would have done it by now in a most spectacular way. That dismembered bull has been in the hot desert sun all day with nothing to show for it except that it was starting to smell pretty bad. Elijah is fed up. It's time for team Yahweh to step up to the plate.)



**30 Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord, which had been torn down.** (There is a lot going on in this verse. Please note that the altar of the Lord had been torn down. This altar in the desert already existed. It had been torn down in deference to worshipping Baal. Elijah is using the same stones from the old altar to build the new altar. This is an attempt to remind them of what they have forgotten, of what what their fence sitting has cost them. We also see that the people begin to help Elijah. If Elijah had presented his sacrifice first, no one would have come to help him. Everyone would have stayed on the fence. But now that it’s obvious Baal is either not interested in playing this game or he is not the god that Ahab and Jezebel have purported him to be, it’s a little less difficult for the people to get involved. Now, this move on their part really isn’t much of a commitment, nor does it really example confidence. But it’s a start. The people may still wonder if the God of their ancestors is going to show up, but they do know that Baal didn’t. So, while they can’t be sure that Elijah’s side of the fence is the right one, they know that Baal’s side is definitely the wrong one.)

**31 Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.”** (Elijah doesn’t start with a proclamation or a long sermon. He is not trying to influence the people with rhetoric or his oratory skills. He doesn’t really say anything. He just starts stacking rocks. Twelve rocks representing the twelve tribes of Israel. This is not something new. It is something that the people have forgotten. Joshua did the very same thing as a prelude to God parting the River Jordan for

the children of Israel to enter the promised land. This is tradition. This is a return to their faith. Twelve tribes become one nation. In today's world, we also forget. Although we are fragmented by thousands of denominations. We are one church with one mission, to bring the gospel to the world. Elijah is showing the people that no matter their tribe, they are one nation, loved by their Creator. The same is true of us and the church universal.

**32 With the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs 18:32 That is, probably about 24 pounds or about 11 kilograms of seed.** (This is a pretty substantial trench. I'm sure that everyone was wondering what in the world he was doing. Was he trying to make things difficult for God? Shouldn't he be a little more reasonable in his expectations.)

**33 He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, "Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood."** (Okay, it's time to get off the fence. Elijah is telling them, it's not enough to just expect God to do His thing. God is expecting a commitment from the people. Either they believe it, or they don't. If they want to see how great God is, they are going to have to commit. They are going to have to put their money down on the right horse. I know you have to be saying, "What are you talking about, Walt? All Elijah told them to do was pour four large jars of water on the offering and the wood. No big deal." Now, I want you to think hard about this. This showdown is happening in the desert. There is no town nearby. The land is suffering from a great drought. There is no rain, or river, or lake. So, where is

this water going to coming from? Well, the people had to have brought it with them so that they wouldn't run out while they were out there in the middle of nowhere. This was their survival water. This was a life source for them. And Elijah was asking them to take this precious water and pour it out on the altar. He's saying, "it's time to commit. It's time to get off the fence rail. Show God that you trust Him. After all, the priests of Baal were willing to bleed in their commitment. Show God that you are willing to place your life in His hands." You would think by pouring out these jars of water on the altar it would prove to be enough commitment, enough confidence in God's presence, but...)

**34 "Do it again," he said, and they did it again.** (And yes, they did it again. But even that wasn't enough.)

**"Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time.** (And yes, they did it again. Don't you know how hard it must have been for them as they watched that water pour over the altar, the sacrifice, and the wood the first time. It would have been painful to watch that water flow down the altar and onto the desert floor. It wasn't like that could run out and get some more. But they did it. And they did it again. Then they did it a third time. They offered everything they had up to God expecting with confidence the miracle that was about to occur)

**35 The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.** (They drenched the offering, the wood, the altar and filled the trench around it. Now, if you happen to be in Elijah's sandals, you would probably understand as he understood, that if God didn't show up, Elijah was not getting out of this alive. Elijah had asked for a tremendous commitment by the people. The priests of

**Baal had asked them for nothing. If that water that the people had just poured on the altar proved to be in vain, Elijah's head was going to be removed from his body. Don't misunderstand me, Elijah had no worries about God showing up. He showed how much confidence he had in God by putting himself in this position. We have a front row seat as we watch the 950 priests of Baal, having forgotten all about the Baal's failure to show up, laughing and taunting Elijah as he goes to extremes to make God's job more difficult. On the other side of the field, the people of Israel are trying to stand firm in their commitment, but the apprehension is surely showing through.)**

**I remember when I was young that my mother would drop my sister and me off at the movie theatre on Saturday afternoon. Being on an Air Force Base, this wasn't really a problem. For 25 cents you could see two movies, get a large bag of popcorn, and a fountain drink. It was cheaper than a babysitter. This was in the 60s and there were always serial editions as well. You know, Buck Rogers, The Lone Ranger, Sherlock Holmes, The Cisco Kid, Dick Tracy, The Green Hornet, Superman, Batman, and others. So, you just had to go back the next Saturday to catch the next installment of whatever serial was showing.**

**Guess what? You're just going to have to come back next week to hear how this all turns out. But it will be worth it.**

**The takeaway I want for all of us today, is that commitment and confidence go hand in hand. But the commitment has to come first. We have to practice what we have learned. We have to study God's word. We need to have the desire to be better, to do better, to make better decisions. We need to accept our**

**responsibility of being Jesus' hands and feet in this world. We need to pour everything we have, no matter how precious it is to us, onto the altar of God. No, I am not asking you to give more. I am asking you to understand all that you have belongs to God to be used for His glory. It is not a matter of keeping what we need. It is a matter of giving our all to God and letting him handle things. It is about knowing that he is there to catch us when we fall. It is having the confidence to get out of bed every day and give our lives over to our Creator to be used to meet His needs in this world.**

**This week, I want us all to take inventory of our lives. Not just the things we call our own, but also our time and attitudes. Have we truly offered it all back to God? Are we willing to let Him use our time, our experiences, our joys, our sorrows, our passions, and our finances for His glory. Not just here and there. Not just now and then. God never called us to be part-time Christians. He wants us all in. He wants us off the fence rail and firmly planted beside Jesus, the one who gave His all for each of us.**

**God bless you all!**

**AMEN**

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