

“Faith’s Embrace of God’s Truth”

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Scriptural Foundation: 2 Kings 1:1-17, ESV

Elijah Denounces Ahaziah

¹ After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel.

² Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay sick; so he sent messengers, telling them, “Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this sickness.” ³ But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, “Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?’ ⁴ Now therefore thus says the LORD, You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.” So Elijah went.

⁵ The messengers returned to the king, and he said to them, “Why have you returned?” ⁶ And they said to him, “There came a man to meet us, and said to us, ‘Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, Thus says the LORD, Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’” ⁷ He said to them, “What kind of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things?” ⁸ They answered him, “He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist.” And he said, “It is Elijah the Tishbite.”

⁹ Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty men with his fifty. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, “O man of God, the king says, ‘Come down.’” ¹⁰ But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

¹¹ Again the king sent to him another captain of fifty men with his fifty. And he answered and said to him, “O man of God, this is the king’s order, ‘Come down quickly!’” ¹² But Elijah answered them, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

¹³ Again the king sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up and came and fell on his knees before Elijah and entreated him, “O man of God, please let my life, and the life of these fifty servants of yours, be precious in your sight. ¹⁴ Behold, fire came down from heaven and consumed the two former captains of fifty men with their fifties, but now let my life be precious in your sight.” ¹⁵ Then the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, “Go down with him; do not be afraid of him.” So he arose and went down with him to the king ¹⁶ and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron—is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word?—therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’”

¹⁷ So he died according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken. Jehoram became king in his place in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, because Ahaziah had no son.

One of the benefits of “Facebook” is the spiritual encouragement some of God’s people post for other’s benefit. This week, Greg, one of our college students, posted several paragraphs from John Piper’s book, Jesus, The Only Way To God.¹ The post of this young man truly encouraged me. Let me share some of it. He quotes John Piper, “If we embrace a limitation on the universal necessity of the Gospel to be heard and believed, we will begin to loose the Gospel and with it our own souls. The spiritual health of the church hangs on her full-blooded Gospel engagement, with all of its dangers and joys in the mission of Jesus to gather His sheep from every religion and every language and

¹ Baker Books, 2010

every culture on this planet. It is almost certain cultural compromise and the fear of man are, in large measure, behind the abandonment of the dangerous doctrine of Jesus' global claims upon the allegiance of every person.

“Therefore, if we surrender this teaching we embrace fear and conformity. It will not feel like fear and conformity, because the adversary will tell us it is love and humility. But, renaming a disease is not a remedy. It goes on eating away at the soul and will either lead to repentance or to more and more weakness. This is no small thing. Jesus is needed by the whole world for salvation. If we say otherwise we strike a blow against our own conscience and we wound our soul.”

This college student, Greg, then posts his own comment: “Do you find yourself talking to a person about God and yet hold back on sharing the full Gospel with that person because you are afraid they will hate you or will not agree with you? Why? Why do we fear people will hate us? Jesus clearly explains to us the world hates us because it hated Jesus first. I know I am guilty of this. I have done this so many times because I have wanted to love the person as Christ loved us, but what is greater love – watering down the Gospel in order not to talk to this person or sharing the Gospel in its fullness and having the person hate you for it? The Gospel has the power to save a person’s soul. Sharing the Gospel with someone is the greatest thing we could do to show love to someone. Do not embrace fear and conformity. Share the Good News. Christ, fully God and fully man, died for our sins upon the cross. He took all of God’s wrath upon Himself. We deserve the full wrath of God, but praise be to God His Jesus is our atonement. Now Christ has risen. He has conquered the grave and through Him we have the righteousness of God.”

I nearly wept when I read those words from this young college student. I thank God for young men like Greg who are exalting Jesus in a context in which much of the church has grown ashamed of Him and of His Gospel. May Greg’s tribe increase.

This post connects the story we are studying in 2 Kings 1. Both the post and the story focus on the necessity of embracing God’s Truth undiluted and unmixed. Both urge us not to suppress the Truth of God, revise the Truth of God, reduce the Truth of God, or reject the Truth of God, but rather to believe the Truth of God and rejoice in it as the wonderful Word of life it is to us.

In this study we are introduced to three men who interacted with God and with God’s Truth variously. One responded in rejection and defiance to God. Another responded by clinging to God and His Truth more passionately, even when it was very difficult to do so. We can learn from negative examples as well as positive examples, and in this study we hope to learn from both.

We learn from these three men the practical lesson: God’s Truth always prevails and if we are to find life, we must find God’s Truth and give ourselves to it. There are three examples which teach us to rejoice in God’s Truth. The first is that of King and he teaches us to be careful not to suppress God’s Truth in willful defiance.

The context of the story is that of wicked King Ahab who dies in battle. His blood is licked up by the dogs, as Elijah prophesied. Ahab’s son then ascends to the throne. His son’s brief biography appears in 1 Kings 22,

⁵¹ Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned two years over Israel. ⁵² He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. ⁵³ He served Baal and worshiped him and provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger in every way that his father had done.

Ahaziah’s “mommy dearest” is still alive; his dad is gone, but Jezebel, who is the power behind the throne, still lives. While Ahaziah is sitting in the king’s throne, nonetheless, Jezebel is still holding the reigns of power. We learn of Ahaziah’s final days at the beginning of 2 Kings 1,

¹ After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel.

² Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay sick...

2 Kings 8 tells us King David conquered the Moabites, so the Moabites have been in subjection to Israel for the past 130 years. Moab rests east of the Jordan River and in submission to Israel has presented to Israel, every year, one hundred thousand lamb fleeces and one hundred thousand ram skins. That was their tax!

But, Israel, at this time, as a result of her idolatry, is weakening as a nation. That is what happens when a country gives herself to idolatry; she weakens as a nation. When King Ahab dies, Moab sees her opportunity to revolt and that is exactly what she does. This new administration of this new King Ahaziah is faltering from the beginning. He has problems. He will only reign two years, but already, from the very moment he takes the reigns of government, he is stumbling out of the gate. To add injury to the insult, Ahaziah falls through the lattice of his upper room chamber in his Samarian palace.

This has to be a real embarrassment for a new king. To be injured in battle is a mark of honor for a king, but to be injured because you clumsily stumbled through a trellis in your home has to be an embarrassment. This is not something he wants the reporters to write about in The Jerusalem Post.

Ahaziah may have been drunk; he may have been tripped; he may just have been clumsy. We do not know how this fall took place, but it resulted in a very serious injury. It is an injury so severe he cannot get out of bed and he begins to wonder if he is going to die from it. What does King Ahaziah do? How Ahaziah responds provides for us an example of what not to do in relationship to God's Truth, as we read,

² Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay sick; so he sent messengers, telling them, "Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this sickness."

His first thought was, "I need to find truth. Truth is what is going to help me in life. Truth is going to help me make decisions regarding my condition. Truth is what is going to provide me with peace in the midst of my trial, so I need to find truth." That is a good pursuit. The pursuit of truth is the pursuit we need to be about.

We need Truth in order to make decisions and in order to think rightly about life. Without Truth we have no foundation upon which to build our lives.

Ahaziah's blunder was not in pursuing truth. His blunder was in the place he chose to find truth. He chose to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron. Ahaziah decides the best place on earth he could find truth is outside of YAHWAH, outside of the Lord, outside of the Scriptures (he is a Jew so he has the Scriptures), and inside some false deity. This is evidence Ahaziah's soul is in worse condition than his body because he does not know where to find Truth.

A thousand sources claim to possess truth, but only One delivers it and that is the Lord.

The name "Baal-zebub" literally means "the lord of the flies" and it may indicate the worshippers in that day and in that culture thought flies, which were present everywhere, could somehow cure diseases and tell the future. That may be what was behind the name Baal-zebub. How foolish idolatry is!

Also, this name may be a sarcastic, biblical twist on the name "Beelzebul", so the worshippers may have called this god this, which means "the glorious prince" or "Baal is glorious". The biblical writer may have intentionally put "Baal-zebub", "lord of the flies", whom Ahaziah is really going after. It is the only time Baal-zebub appears in Scripture. Beelzebul, however, appears in The New Testament. It is the name The New Testament assigns to Satan, the prince of demons.

In Matthew 12, Jesus cast out demons in a blind and mute man, and the Pharisees accused Him, saying,

²⁴ "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." ²⁵ Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶ And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges."

We know Ahaziah sought spiritual counsel in time of deep distress from the demonic realm. He did not understand it as being demonic. He believed it was a good and a great place to find truth, but it is demonic.

By way of application, Christian, beware of pursuing truth about life and about your future outside of God's Word. When you do that, immediately you enter into the realm of the demonic because there is not truth outside of God. On the surface Beelzebul may have looked like nothing more than a shaped piece of stone or a carved piece of wood, but this god originated in the mind of Satan himself. Satan is the one who invents every idol and false god known to man. He is the driving force behind false truth. He is a liar from the beginning. He is a deceiver. He is the one who sets up false gods in order to compete with the True and Living God for the hearts of men and women.

In our culture and our day, the name Beelzebul, or Baal-zebul, may not be the false idol we are tempted to invoke when we wonder about life. What is the course of my life? Where do I get my counsel? Where do I go to discover my future? I do not know too many people who say, "I am going to Beelzebul", but, nonetheless, any other god outside of the True and Living God, the God of Scripture, is a cousin and a relative to Beelzebul and it always come from a satanic or demonic source.

Many people, Christians included, are tempted to pursue after sources of knowledge about the future from clairvoyants, spiritesses, mystical palm readers, horoscopes, ouija boards, or some other smooth-talking medium in order to find information. The Bible teaches these sources of "truth" are demonic and then will corrupt our soul. Have nothing to do with these things. Leviticus 19 says,

³¹ "Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God."²

I believe God intended to use Ahaziah's troubles to awaken him to God's grace and to God's mercy, so Ahaziah would turn to God in surrender, submission, and humility and find in God life. God loves sinners. He takes no delight in the death of the wicked. He longs to bless sinners as we humble ourselves before Him. God uses our pain as a megaphone to shout into our deaf souls so He can bless us.

How different the story would have been written, in 2 Kings 1, had Verse 2 ended this way, "Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria, and lay sick; so he humbled himself before the Lord and he turned from his idols and he committed himself in faith to serve the living and true God." That story would have been completely different is we would have read that, but that is not what we read because Ahaziah, in his willfulness, decided he was not going to submit his life to God, he had a plan which was willful and independent, and he could live the way he wanted to live in defiance against YAHWAH and still receive the blessing for which he longed.

Ahaziah, of all people, should have searched God's Word for the Truth and he should have known God is Truth. Ahaziah was a Jew, and as such he had access to the written Word of God, the Scriptures. He lived in Ahab and Jezebel's home and he witness the presence of His prophet, Elijah's ministry, speaking Truth and every time Elijah spoke to his family what Elijah said came true. He saw the drought come upon the land as a result of his parent's sin and as a testimony of Elijah's prophecy. He saw rain return to the land as a result of the power of God's Word at work. He saw fire fall down from Heaven and consume the sacrifice. He observed, painfully, God's Word fulfilled in the death of his own father.

Now the Lord sends a messenger directly to him,

³ But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebul, the god of Ekron?' ⁴ Now therefore thus says the LORD, You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'" So Elijah went.

⁵ The messengers returned to the king, and he said to them, "Why have you returned?"

² New International Version, 1984 (NIV)

Elijah gives this message to take to King Ahaziah and they return. It is interesting these ungodly messengers, who recognize the power of God in this prophet, obeyed him, even at risk to their own lives. God, in grace and mercy, sends a warning to King Ahaziah of the disaster which is to befall him, and yet Ahaziah's response is to seek out God's messenger, to kill him and silence him.

⁶ And they said to him, "There came a man to meet us, and said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, Thus says the LORD, Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?'"

What a great question for our lives! Is it because God has not spoken we are looking to other sources of truth in order to direct our lives? Is that the way it is? Why do we search after truth in the realm of man's rationale, in the realm of our emotions, and in the realm of idols? "Why?" is the question. Why would we when we have access to God's precious Word?

⁶ "Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die." ⁷ He said to them, "What kind of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things?"

Ahaziah is not interested in the Truth. He said, "Just tell me who. Do not tell me more of the message. Tell me who said that."

⁸ They answered him, "He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist."

Ahaziah said, "I know who that is." He is a person who is acquainted with this prophet, "Elijah the Tishbite". Ahaziah cannot claim ignorance to the Truth of God. He knows this is God's prophet, and yet he sends a military squadron to capture Elijah,

⁹ Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty men with his fifty.

He does not send out this military squadron to invite Elijah to tea. He sends this military squadron to take Elijah by force. It is physical threat. Here is a man who has the Word of God thrown mercifully in his face, yet what does he do with the Truth of God? He suppresses it. He pushes it down. He willfully turns from the Truth which could save his life, even on his death bed he is still suppressing the Truth of life and pushing it away from him; truth which could bring him blessing.

One commentator writes these words, "We may shake our heads in bemusement at Ahaziah's reaction to Elijah's message, but many of us have done, and are doing, the exact same thing. The 'Ahaziah Syndrome' lives on in everyone who tries to deny or destroy God's message." Have you ever suffered from the Ahaziah Syndrome? It is a common malady, even among God's people. What a deadly disease to the soul it is. It is even more deadly than cancer and worse than AIDS, and here is the warning for us to heed, be careful not to suppress God's Truth in willful defiance.

When I read about Ahaziah, I think immediately of Romans 1. The Apostle Paul is commenting about the condition of the soul of all men and women, and he writes,

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

That is what we and that is the way our soul is bent in relationship to God's Truth. That is the way we naturally respond in suppressing God's Truth; pushing it down. To suppress means to actively evade the Truth of God, to push it away from us, and to bury it so we will not have to see it, let alone obey it.

Have you ever played with a beach ball in a pool? When you take that beach ball and inflate it and you try and push it under the water and keep it under the water, what happens the moment you stop exerting force upon that beach ball? It comes popping to the surface and that is the way it is with God's Truth. God's Truth is forever floating up to the surface of our lives and we do not like that because it challenges our sin, our selfishness, our pride, and our desire to

go our own way. What do we do with God's Truth when it comes to us? We take the beach ball and we push it down. Our whole lives become an effort to evade and oppress the Truth of God from having an influence over us.

God in His grace keeps revealing His Truth to willful man, but man, in defiance of God, proudly defies Him. We begin to look for other sources to lead us. We continue in Paul's letter,

²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Suppressing the Truth of God changes the way we think and distorts it so we become in a condition of such spiritual darkness so as to no longer be able to see,

²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools...²⁸ since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God...³

Man decides, "God's Truth is not worthwhile for me. It will not lead to my blessing. It will not lead to my joy, so it is irrelevant and unimportant and I can easily set it aside." It is like yesterday's garbage to be discarded and sent away.

How opposite the child of God is in his or her response to God's Truth and we come to know God is the God of Life and the God of Blessing. Proverbs 8 says,

¹⁰ Choose my instruction instead of silver,
knowledge rather than choice gold,

¹¹ for wisdom is more precious than rubies,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.

Jeremiah delighted in God's Truth and listen to what he says in regards to God's Truth, in Jeremiah 15,

¹⁶ When your words came, I ate them;
they were my joy and my heart's delight,
for I bear your name,
O LORD God Almighty.⁴

Friends, we must be careful not to become a person who suppresses God's Truth in willful defiance. Our flesh wars against God's Spirit in every area of life and our flesh whispers to us God's Truth will not bring us joy and will not lead us to a blessing so we must move away from God's Truth and find a source which tells us what we want to hear.

Often I talk with believers who stop coming to a Bible-teaching church or who stop reading their Bible, and they do so because they know what they are going to hear and what they are going to read is that which offends their flesh and they are unwilling to live by it, so they set it aside. They say, "I cannot go to a church like that. I cannot read the Bible anymore." They become convinced, in the darkness of their mind, joy, blessing, and life are found outside of God and inside the will of man, so, instead of searching for God and His Truth they run after other sources which are going to affirm their sin and be a salve to their guilty conscience. They gather for themselves friends and counselors who will tell them what their emotions and their flesh want to hear.

Unfortunately, we do not have to look very far to find such counselors and find such friends who will help them suppress the Truth of God in their lives.

The second example is that of the Prophet Elijah: Be courageous to express God's Truth in faithful service. Elijah is constantly being given the most difficult and dangerous of assignments by God. He is a man strong in faith and very bold. God often will send His servants into dangerous paths. When you come to Jesus, it is not a safe road God puts you on; it is a road which leads to life, but it is not safe along the journey.

³ NIV

⁴ Ibid.

Elijah is constantly being asked to communicate God's Truth, a Truth which is often very offensive to the person who hears it, and yet Elijah is faithful to God and to the people to whom he is sent. As we reread our text, in Verses 3 and 4, we see how the angel of the Lord comes to Elijah and says, "Elijah, you must go back to that king and you must tell him, 'Why are you inquiring of Baal-zebub? Is it because the Lord is not to be found in all of Israel?' Because you have desired to inquire of this false god, in defiance of the True God, you are not going to get up from your sick bed. You are going to die there."

There are two truths which are very offensive to Ahaziah which Elijah is given to proclaim. The first truth is: "The God of the Bible is the only God. I know you love Baal. I know you worship Baal, but he is no god at all and I must tell you that! Your god is no god. It is a worthless god and you need to turn from that god because that god is going to destroy your life." That is a hard message, is it not?

To put it in modern, 21st Century context, have you ever told a neighbor who is falling some other god, "Your god is no god at all!" That is what God asks us to do as believers. We do so lovingly. We do so sensitively. We must do that clearly, for God is jealous for His glory and He will not allow Himself to be placed alongside other gods.⁵

The second offensive truth Ahaziah is told by Elijah is, "The wages of sin is death."⁶ Ahaziah, you are going to die because you worship idols." We see that clearer in the text,

¹⁶ "Thus says the LORD, 'Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub... therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up...'"

He links the sin with the sentence of death.

These two offensive truths are still very much a part and parcel of the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus. They are central to the message God calls every believer to communicate. The Gospel of Jesus would be meaningless and powerless without these offensive truths.

Not all of the truths God calls us to express to our world are offensive. For instance, in the Gospel, we have the joy of sharing to the lost world God is love and God loves sinners and God offers the joy of Heaven to everyone who would believe in Him; no one is shut out. These are joyful truths which are very easy for us to share, yet these joyful truths rest upon those two offensive pillars God called Elijah to express to Ahaziah: Pillar Number One – the God of the Bible is the only True God. He allows no competitors. Jesus is the only way to the Father and to Heaven. No one comes to the Father except through Him.⁷ It is not through Mohammad. It is not through the Hindu gods. And, it is not through Buddha. A person must turn from all other gods and embrace Jesus and Jesus alone if they are to find God and find eternal life.

Pillar Number Two – the wages of your sin is death. Our sin is not light and trivial, but it is heavy as to merit eternal damnation. We deserve God's wrath and judgment and we will receive it unless we find mercy through faith in Jesus. Jesus alone bore our sins in His body upon the cross. Jesus took upon Himself God's righteous response for our sin. He suffered underneath the wrath of His Father so He might bear our sins. Our sins were laid upon Him and He was wounded for our transgressions. It is by His stripes we are healed. This is the reason why, on the cross, Jesus said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"⁸ because He was becoming a curse for us.

These truths are still very offensive to the person who proudly asserts they can find their own way to God and whatever they choose, they can choose and God will accept them if they are sincere.

The Gospel tells us we must come to God on His terms and not our own. God's Gospel says, to all mankind, "Any religion outside of Jesus is false religion; you must bow the knee to my Son."

⁵ Genesis 20:5

⁶ Romans 6:23

⁷ John 14:6b

⁸ Matthew 27:46

The question is, as we think about Elijah expressing the Truth of God in faithfulness, do we? I know it will not make us popular, but do people know that about Christ because they are near us? It is the full Truth of God we need not be ashamed of because it is the full truth of the Gospel which is God's power and salvation. It takes a heart which is so defiant, so proud, and so resistant, when they hear it they are broken by it.

It is true many will be crushed under it. They will die in defiance, but many, when they hear the true message of the Gospel will have the power of God for salvation.

We live in strange days. Sadly, the evangelical church has compromised God's Truth and has largely abandoned any part of the Gospel which is offensive to the unregenerate man. If it is heard, it is heard in very faint whispers and not very clearly. We have forgotten who we represent.

We began this message with Greg's post on Facebook, quoting from John Piper. It is almost certain cultural compromise and fear of man are in large measure behind the abandonment of the dangerous doctrine of Jesus' global claim on the allegiance upon every person. Therefore, if we surrender to this teaching, we embrace fear and conformity. It will not "feel" like fear and conformity because the adversary will tell us it is love and not humility, but renaming a disease is not a remedy. Greg would comment, "Do you find yourself talking to a person about God and yet holding back on sharing the full Gospel with that person because you are afraid they will hate you or they will not agree with you? Watering down the Gospel in order not to talk to this person or sharing the faith in its fullness, and having the person hate you for it, the Gospel has the power to save a person's soul and sharing the Gospel with someone is the greatest thing we can do for them and to show them true love."

That sounds like Elijah when I read that. How many young Elijah's do we have in this church? How many old Elijah's do we have in this church? Modern Elijah's know God's Word is a two-edged sword and it is a weapon in God's hands to assail the kingdom of darkness. Modern Elijah's understand our charter is not to appeal to this world's sensitivities or sinful biases, but to be faithful to the King who sent us.

God's message is adversarial to fleshly desires, to worldly lust, to empty profession, and to demonic deception. We can expect resistance for this is a spiritual war and our weapon is not of this world. We do not fight by screaming and shouting. We do not fight by putting on protests or taking up the sword. We fight with God's Word and with the Truth of the Gospel.

Elijah's life was threatened because of his commitment to obey God and to share His Truth. God does not say that will be easy.

The last example is the third captain: Be confident to impress God's Truth upon our life. In the story we have read, the king sends the first fifty men with his captain, and I believe there is some sarcasm in the captain's command,

⁹ Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty men with his fifty. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, "O man of God, the king says, 'Come down.'" ¹⁰ But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

Ahaziah sends out another fifty, and we read, with more sarcasm,

¹¹ Again the king sent to him another captain of fifty men with his fifty. And he answered and said to him, "O man of God, this is the king's order, 'Come down quickly!'" ¹² But Elijah answered them, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty." Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

Ahaziah sends the third captain, but this captain gets it. He has heard the Truth of God and he submits to it. Notice, what he says, as he entreats,

¹³ "O man of God, please let my life, and the life of these fifty servants of yours, be precious in your sight. ¹⁴ Behold, fire came down from heaven and consumed the two former captains of fifty men with their fifties, but now let my life be precious in your sight."

This captain of the third group is in a different disposition than the king and the first two captains. He humbled himself before God. He received God's Truth and he acts upon it. He possesses a fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom for his life and he applies the Truth of God to his life's circumstances. He refuses to look at life through the lens of idolatry, but he opens himself up to the revelation of the True and Living God.

Truth received is always truth obeyed and it is truth without doubt. We do not hold on to truth as a doctrinal statement to teach or to affirm a theology class. God's Truth must transform the way we live. That is the reason why James says, "Be doers of the word and not hearers only, because if you are a hearer only you will deceive yourself."⁹

We read further in the text,

¹⁵ Then the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So he arose and went down with him to the king...

The principle we learn from this is: We can be confident to impress God's Truth upon our life in humility. God will bless us for it; through obedience there is the blessing of God and this captain was blessed because he took God's Truth, he affirmed it, and he impressed it upon his life. Even though he knew Ahaziah was king, and from a human standpoint Ahaziah held all of the cards, yet he feared God more than he feared man.

Recently my thirteen-year old son, Jackson, and I were running through our neighborhood together on our morning jog. What a gorgeous day God gave us! I was concerned about the use of the word "impressed" in this third part. I asked Jackson, "What does it mean for someone to impress God's Word upon their own life?" He replied, "It means you put it on and you wear it." I thought that was a pretty good word then, because that was what I was trying to communicate. We can be confident to wear God's Truth and we impress God's Truth in our lives when we treasure God's Truth and we say, "I want to find God's Truth. I want to know it and this is the place I am going to inquire of the Lord, through the Scriptures God has given us, so we might know Him and know His will for our lives and when we tremble before it and we treasure it."

Isaiah 66 says,

² ...this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

I wonder, do we tremble at God's Word? Do we treasure it and say, "I am going to seek it out," and when we find it say, "Lord, I commit my way by faith to live according to your Word and your ways."

King Ahaziah teaches us to be careful not to suppress God's Truth. The Prophet Elijah teaches us to be courageous to express God's Truth and speak it. The third captain teaches us to be confident and impress God's Truth upon our lives.

Jesus said it, in answer to Satan's temptation, in Matthew 4,

⁴ *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."*

Amen and amen.

⁹ James 1:22