

1 KINGS 20:35-43 “MISSED OPPORTUNITIES”

A bit of background for today’s sermon:

- Israel divided in 2
 - 2 Tribes in the south: Benjamin and Judah
 - Jehoshaphat – the godly King of Judah
 - 10 Tribes to the North
 - Ahab – the wicked King of Israel
- Jezebel – the wicked wife of Ahab, a former priestess of Baal
- Ben-Hadad – the King of Syria living in Damascus

1 Kings 20:1–10

1 Now **Ben-Hadad the king of Syria** gathered all his forces together; thirty-two kings were with him, with horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria, and made war against it.

2 Then he sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel, and said to him, “Thus says Ben-Hadad:

3 ‘Your silver and your gold are mine; your loveliest wives and children are mine.’ ”

4 **And the king of Israel answered and said, “My lord, O king, just as you say, I and all that I have are yours.”**

5 Then the messengers came back and said, “Thus speaks Ben-Hadad, saying, ‘Indeed I have sent to you, saying, “You shall deliver to me your silver and your gold, your wives and your children”;

6 but I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house and the houses of your servants. **And it shall be, that whatever is pleasant in your eyes, they will put it in their hands and take it.’ ”**

7 So the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, “Notice, please, and see how this man seeks trouble, for he sent to me for my wives, my children, my silver, and my gold; and I did not deny him.”

8 And all the elders and all the people said to him, “Do not listen or consent.”

9 Therefore he said to the messengers of Ben-Hadad, “Tell my lord the king, ‘All that you sent for to your servant the first time I will do, but this thing I cannot do.’ ” And the messengers departed and brought back word to him.

10 **Then Ben-Hadad sent to him and said, “The gods do so to me, and more also, if enough dust is left of Samaria for a handful for each of the people who follow me.”**

1 Kings 20:27–34

27 And the children of Israel were mustered and given provisions, and they went against them. **Now the children of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of goats, while the Syrians filled the countryside.**

28 Then a man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel, and said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Because the Syrians have said, “The LORD is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys,” therefore **I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.’ ”**

29 And they encamped opposite each other for seven days. So it was that on the seventh day the battle was joined; and the children of Israel killed one hundred thousand foot soldiers of the Syrians in one day.

30 But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; then a wall fell on twenty-seven thousand of the men who were left. **And Ben-Hadad fled and went into the city, into an inner chamber.**

31 Then his servants said to him, “Look now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Please, let us put sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life.”

- **Chuck Smith:** “The Assyrians were noted for their cruelty, for the way that they would brutalize the captives, mutilating their bodies, torturing them. Pulling out their tongues, cutting off their noses, or ears, and mutilating their captives. They were so horrible, so unmerciful, that many times entire cities would commit suicide, rather than be captured by the Assyrians. They were noted for their cruelty.
“But we’ve heard that the kings of Israel are merciful.” Yes they were, because they knew God, and had received mercy from God.”

32 So they wore sackcloth around their waists and put ropes around their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said, “**Your servant Ben-Hadad says,** ‘Please let me live.’ ” And he said, “Is he still alive? He is my brother.”

33 Now the men were watching closely to see whether any sign of mercy would come from him; and they quickly grasped at this word and said, “Your brother Ben-Hadad.” So he said, “Go, bring him.” Then Ben-Hadad came out to him; and he had him come up into the chariot.

34 So Ben-Hadad said to him, “The cities which my father took from your father I will restore; and you may set up marketplaces for yourself in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.” Then Ahab said, “I will send you away with this treaty.” So he made a treaty with him and sent him away.

- Isn't Ben-Hadad like any proud, insincere, sinner – when humbled and brought low?
 - Caught in his sin – now he is the most humble of them all, the most repented, the most to be forgiven – but does his heart truly repent?
- “Doth he not come, as with a rope round his neck, and sackcloth on his loins, like one ready for execution; confessing, after all his proud and self-righteous language, that now, the weapons of sin being taken out of his hands, he merits nothing but punishment in the very moment he pleads for mercy.”¹

35 Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor **by the word of the LORD**, “Strike me, please.”

And the man refused to strike him.

36 Then he said to him, “**Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD**, surely, as soon as you depart from me, a lion shall kill you.”

And as soon as he left him, a lion found him and killed him.

Sons of the prophets:

- Groups of young men that studied under the great Prophets in their age.
- The Jews have concluded that it was Micaiah, of whom we read in the 22d chapter, because Ahab expresses in that chapter his hatred of him on account of his prophesying evil.²
 - **MICAIAH** — “who is like Jehovah?”, the son of Imlah, a faithful prophet of Samaria (1 Kings 22:8–28).³

1 Kings 22:8 So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is still one man, **Micaiah the son of Imlah**, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.” And Jehoshaphat said, “Let not the king say such things!”
- By the word of the Lord
 - Not enough for someone to say this to **me** anymore
 - Not enough for someone to say this to **you** anymore
 - This has been abused and miss-used
 - Not many Christians want to hit someone “**by the word of the Lord.**”

¹ Robert Hawker, *Poor Man's Old Testament Commentary: 1 Kings–Esther*, vol. 3 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2013), 136–137.

² Robert Hawker, *Poor Man's Old Testament Commentary: 1 Kings–Esther*, vol. 3 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2013), 138.

³ M. G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893).

- *Heb. smiting and wounding.*⁴

What happens when we don't do what the Word of the Lord asks us to do?

- Positives and Negatives
 - What His Word tells us TO DO.
 - What His Word tells us NOT TO DO
 - **613 Laws in Scripture**
 - 248 Positives
 - 365 Negatives
- Commission & Omission
 - What you did
 - What you should have done
- Timeliness
 - Delayed obedience is disobedience

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, **but** the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Dead to the call of the Holy Spirit
- Dead to the joy of your salvation
- Dead to the excitement of serving others

37 And he found another man, and said, "Strike me (lit. wound me), please." So the man struck him, inflicting a wound.

38 Then the prophet departed and waited for the king by the road, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes.

- Did you know that God will find someone to do his will if you won't
Matthew 25:29 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.
- **Chuck Smith:** "You may fail, you may fail God, you may fail to fulfill the purposes of God. If you fail, God will raise someone else to do it. But you will be at a loss, because of your failure. God uses human instruments to do His work. There's a risk there,

⁴ B. Blayney, Thomas Scott, and R.A. Torrey with John Canne, Browne, *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, vol. 1 (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, n.d.), 251.

because the human instruments are not always faithful to God, because we are self-determinant. We have the power of choice. I can choose not to do the will of God. I can choose to do my own thing, to go my own way. I can fail to fulfill the purposes of God by my exercise of choice or will. Now that doesn't mean that the purposes of God are going to totally fail.

I have the opportunity of being the instrument, if I so yield my life to God, and if I do, then God blesses and rewards me. But if I fail, then I'm the loser. Ahab was the instrument to bring God's judgment against Ben-Hadad. God had appointed that Ahab should bring His judgement, for God had appointed Ben-Hadad to utter destruction. Ahab failed. He chose to release him."

39 Now as the king passed by, he cried out to the king and said, "Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and there, a man came over and brought a man to me, and said, 'Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.'

- This silver payment, however, was an exorbitant one, one hundred times that of the price of a slave (Exod 21:32). 5

40 While your servant was **busy here and there**, he was gone." Then the king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it."

- People get busy, forget to do things, forget promises made
- No one should ever get too busy to not do God's will
 - ALL of God's will
- **Ahab squandered his opportunity**
 - to finish the race with endurance
 - Fight the good fight
 - 1 Timothy 6:12** **Fight the good fight of faith**, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.
 - 2 Timothy 4:7** **I have fought the good fight**, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

⁵ R. D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, "1, 2 Kings," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 158.

41 And he hastened to take the bandage away from his eyes; and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets.

42 Then he said to him, “**Thus says the LORD:**

‘Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.’ ”

43 So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria.

- As Ahab decided his own fate – his life was taken in a later battle.

1 Kings 22:34–35

34 Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, “Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded.”

35 The battle increased that day; and the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Syrians, and died at evening. The blood ran out from the wound onto the floor of the chariot.

- So Ahab reflected on his own judgment – and went home bummed out
 - סָר (*sar*, “sullen”) comes from the root *sārār* (“be stubborn”; cf. Akkad. *sarāru*, “**be unstable, obstinate**”). It often portrays Israel, which, like Ahab, walked in its own stubborn way (cf. Neh 9:29; Ps 78:8; Isa 1:23; 65:2; Jer 5:23; 6:28; Zech 7:11).⁶

Chuck Smith: “So many times our lives are made miserable because of our disobedience to God.

When there are experiences that we should be rejoicing and have great victory over, and what should be cause of great rejoicing, we’re miserable, because we did not obey God fully.

Those times of rejoicing and victory are often turned into that of sadness and sorrow, because of our failure of obedience.

Such was the case with Ahab.”

A time of rededication!

- To rededicate ourselves to the “whole counsel of God”
- To do ALL of God’s will, not just the easy part
- To recommit ourselves to holiness and purity before the Lord.

⁶ R. D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 158.