

BIBLE BRIEFING

“How about a nice prophetic punch?”

First Kings 20:35-43

1 Kings 20:35 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.

1 Kings 20:36 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.

1 Kings 20:37 And he found another man, and said, "Strike me, please." So the man struck him, inflicting a wound.

1 Kings 20:38 Then the prophet departed and waited for the king by the road, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes.

1 Kings 20:39 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.'

1 Kings 20:40 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*."

1 Kings 20:41 And he hastened to take the bandage away from his eyes; and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets.

1 Kings 20:42 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.' "

1 Kings 20:43 So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria.

A little background will help.

Ahab was king over the Northern kingdom of Israel. Ben-Hadad was king over Syria. Twice Ben-Hadad attacked the Jews; twice God gave the Jews decisive victories:

1. Ben-Hadad besieged Samaria, the capital city of the North. He sent surrender terms to Ahab: **Your silver . . . your gold . . . your loveliest wives and children.** Ahab meekly and weakly agreed. Not satisfied, Ben-Hadad next demanded right of entry for his servants and the right to seize anything they wanted. The elders of Israel were indignant at this second demand and

- urged noncompliance. When Ben-Hadad was notified of Israel's refusal, he flew into a rage. A prophet of the Lord approached Ahab, assuring him of victory. God used a small force of two hundred and thirty-two servants of the governors of the districts, followed by seven thousand of the people of Israel, to defeat a much larger force from the north. Ahab attacked at noon, when Ben-Hadad and his allies were getting drunk. When Ben-Hadad heard that the 232 men of Israel were advancing, he ordered that they be taken alive. This gave a military advantage to the Israelites and resulted in a great slaughter of the Syrians. The survivors retreated to their homeland. The prophet of the Lord warned Ahab that the Syrian army would return in the spring.
2. In the spring, Ben-Hadad marched against Israel again. In the battle, Israel killed one hundred thousand foot soldiers. The Syrians who escaped tried to take up positions on the walls of the city of Aphek, but the walls collapsed, killing twenty-seven thousand of them. Ben-Hadad hid in an inner chamber of Aphek. His servants persuaded him to let them go out to Ahab, clothed with symbols of surrender and mourning, and to plead for mercy. Ahab made a treaty and let Ben-Hadad escape instead of killing him, as he should have done.

There was a compelling strategic reason for not killing Ben-Hadad. An alliance with Syria provided Israel with a buffer between them and the dreaded Assyrians.

God did not need Ahab's strategy. In fact, it detracted from the stunning spiritual victories God had given Israel.

Ahab disobeyed God. He ought to have killed Ben-Hadad. The account in verses thirty-five through forty-three is an object lesson, acted out by the prophet.

When I was in the world of business, we had many expressions to keep us focused and on track. One was: *Keep the main thing the main thing!* (Or the longer version: *The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing*).

Ahab did not have any room to show mercy to the enemies of God. It did not bring God glory. To the contrary, it showed that Ahab was relying on the arm of the flesh.

As Christians we can obey the Lord in every way... except one. The bulk of our obedience doesn't cancel-out our disobedience.

I'm not saying we will ever perfectly obey. I am saying that we can fool ourselves into thinking we are doing the Lord's work while we are ignoring or refusing or rejecting something He has called us to do or to not do.

Let's hold that in mind as we look at these verses.

1 Kings 20:35 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.

1 Kings 20:36 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.

Take note of the phrase, **by the word of the Lord**. This was two prophets in an official function where one disobeyed the clear word of the Lord. We'll establish why this was so important in a moment.

First, let's deal with an issue that is raised. Does God still ask us to do weird stuff?

Notice I said 'still,' because He *did* ask His servants to do a lot of weird stuff in the past:

Ezekiel comes to mind:

Ezekiel 4:1 "You also, son of man, take a clay tablet and lay it before you, and portray on it a city, Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 4:2 Lay siege against it, build a siege wall against it, and heap up a mound against it; set camps against it also, and place battering rams against it all around.

Ezekiel 4:3 Moreover take for yourself an iron plate, and set it *as* an iron wall between you and the city. Set your face against it, and it shall be besieged, and you shall lay siege against it. This *will be* a sign to the house of Israel.

Ezekiel 4:4 "Lie also on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it. *According* to the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their iniquity.

Ezekiel 4:5 For I have laid on you the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days; so you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.

Ezekiel 4:6 And when you have completed them, lie again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days. I have laid on you a day for each year.

Ezekiel 4:7 "Therefore you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem; your arm *shall be* uncovered, and you shall prophesy against it.

Ezekiel 4:8 And surely I will restrain you so that you cannot turn from one side to another till you have ended the days of your siege.

Ezekiel 4:9 "Also take for yourself wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt; put them into one vessel, and make bread of them for yourself. *During* the number of days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days, you shall eat it.

Ezekiel 4:10 And your food which you eat *shall be* by weight, twenty shekels a day; from time to time you shall eat it.

Ezekiel 4:11 You shall also drink water by measure, one-sixth of a hin; from time to time you shall drink.

Ezekiel 4:12 And you shall eat it *as* barley cakes; and bake it using fuel of human waste in their sight."

Ezekiel 4:13 Then the Lord said, "So shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, where I will drive them."

Then there was Isaiah:

Isaiah 20:2 at the same time the Lord spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go, and remove the sackcloth from your body, and take your sandals off your feet." And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

Isaiah 20:3 Then the Lord said, "Just as My servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot three years *for* a sign and a wonder against Egypt and Ethiopia,

Isaiah 20:4 so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as prisoners and the Ethiopians as captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.

You're not entirely safe in the the New Testament. It has Agabus. He was a rather flamboyant prophet:

Acts 21:10 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

Acts 21:11 When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his *own* hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.' "

So... Does God still ask us to do weird stuff? Here's the answer:

[1 Corinthians 14:32](#) And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

Paul laid down that principle in a discussion about order, and not calling attention to yourself, and about being Scriptural. Within those parameters, I think there's some room for individuality.

Not for nakedness, though!

Back to our text... Why did God punish the disobedient prophet – the one who refused to strike his friend at the word of the Lord? “If a good prophet were thus punished for sparing his friend and God's from a simple physical blow, when God said **Smite**, of much greater punishment should a wicked king be thought worthy, who spared his enemy and God's from death, when God said **Smite** (Believers Bible Commentary).

[1 Kings 20:37](#) And he found another man, and said, "Strike me, please." So the man struck him, inflicting a wound.

You bet he struck him! The point is this: **Do what God tells you.**

God does ask us to do some things that don't immediately make sense. He asks you to spank your children. It is His method of corporal punishment to drive foolishness out of the heart of a little sinner. Does it really make sense? Do you do it?

How about forgiving others? Or returning blessings for cursing? This is what we are really talking about.

The story finishes out:

[1 Kings 20:38](#) Then the prophet departed and waited for the king by the road, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes.

[1 Kings 20:39](#) 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.'

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Ahab was condemned by his own words. It's a good reason, by the way, to err on the side of grace and showing mercy!

Again I want to emphasize that God tells you to do some strange things:

1. I mentioned forgiveness. When questioned about how many times we should forgive the same person for a repeat offense, Jesus said, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to **seventy times seven** (Matthew 18:22).
2. He also said, **But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you...** (Matthew 5:44).
3. Wives are to submit to their husbands; and husbands are to learn how to understand their wives.

There are crazy, hyper-Pentecostal folks doing all manner of strange things. I ran across this description of a DVD compilation of recent Pentecostal behaviors:

On this video you'll see such bizarre happenings you'll scarcely believe your eyes: men barking and crawling around church platforms on all fours, being led by dog leashes, women howling from the pulpit like wild wolves, crowded auditoriums erupting in demonic laughter, with people going bonkers and running around whooping and hollering like madmen!

My pastor in San Bernardino, John Miller, used to quote this well-worn saying: "It's not how high you jump when the Holy Spirit touches you. It's how straight you walk when you come down."

There is liberty to be an Agabus. God doesn't stifle our individuality. The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets – and subject

to certain principles laid-down in the Word that exclude things like barking and holy laughter and other such excesses.

God still asks us to do things that don't immediately make sense; or that go against our natural inclinations. We still plot our own strategies rather than implement God's.

Do what God has asked! Otherwise your enemy, who goes about like a roaring lion, is seeking to devour you.

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As we close-out in worship, ask the Lord to set before you **one thing** He has asked of you. Then commit to doing it.

