**Elijah Committed ° Courageous ° Common Week 9**

*“Is it not beautiful to behold this glorious outburst of the faith of Cherith, Zarephath, and Carmel? The old man, nearing his reward, was as vigorous in this as in his first challenge to Ahab. He bore fruit in old age, like one of God's evergreens which are full of sap. Glory be to Him who restores the soul of His faltering saints and brings them up from the grave and sets them again as stars in His right hand and deigns to use them once more in His glorious service!” -* FB Meyer

We looked at several passages on Sunday regarding Elijah’s last little bit of ministry here on earth and I want to focus in on one specific passage that I believe gives us a great picture of God’s mercy and the proper reaction to it. We ended our time looking at the opportunities that God gave Ahab and Ahaziah to swallow their pride, put their own agendas aside and look to Him for help and deliverance. Not only that, but God wanted them to show remorse, to be sorry for the wickedness they had done. If you recall the text we looked at in **Deut. 17:14-20**, then you know how important it was to God that the kings of the land revere Him and His perfect law.

We see Ahab finally do that (to an extent) in 1 Kings 21:27-29. But what was the occasion? What finally drove Ahab to show remorse for his sin when he hadn’t previously responded to drought, fire, or seeing Elijah outrun his chariots from Carmel to Jezreel? **Judgement.** Back up from verse 27 and read verses 21-24. It sure looks like judgement, doesn’t it? It should have been enough to know the law of God and all that He required of the kings. It should have been enough when the miracles of God were on display for Ahab to see. But when those things weren’t enough, God finally says “ok, this is what’s going to happen,” and at that point Ahab is greatly affected and is driven to remorse and fasting. He humbles himself before Almighty God. And how does God respond to that? He bestows mercy. ***“Because he shows remorse before me, I will not bring disaster on his dynasty during his lifetime, but during the reign of his son.”***

Were there still going to be consequences? Oh yes! But mercy was still extended. So why the sudden change in Ahab’s attitude? God had said back in Deuteronomy 17 that IF the kings would do all that He had commanded, they would enjoy many years of ruling over their kingdom in Israel. That was the standard. Ahab was nowhere close to lining up with that standard so God delivered some bad news – “Your dynasty is coming to an end.” Bad news has a way of bringing about change in our lives, doesn’t it?

For the last 10 years I’ve eaten like I was still 15 with no concern regarding all the information that is divulged on a label. Sodium, trans-fats and cholesterol be darned, I feel fine! Of course I see commercials on TV all the time telling me that as I grow older if I don’t keep those things in check then it’ll affect my health but in my mind, those warnings were for *someone else*, not me. You can imagine then my surprise when I heard from my Dr. last week that my cholesterol and blood pressure were high and I needed to do something about it. First off, that was bad news and was going to require some change on my part. But that wasn’t all of it. The doc went on to say that if I changed my ways, then my body will correct itself and things will be business as normal. That was good news.

Before I received that bad news, did the reality that diet and exercise helps with blood pressure and cholesterol mean a hill of beans to me? NO! That wasn’t for me, it was for *someone else*…someone that has high blood pressure and cholesterol. But once the Dr. confronted me with the state of my health (bad news) that good news all of a sudden became somewhat of a saving grace.

Speaking of grace, isn’t that an amazing word (pun intended)? The truth is that we are all born with bad genes and we all suffer from this sin nature in our lives (bad news). Making that news even worse is the diagnosis that goes along with it – the wages of sin is DEATH. That should cause our ears to perk up. But there’s also good news that comes along with it – Yes, the wages of sin is death, BUT, the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. So there is a “prescription” for what ails us. This bad news/good news scenario should be causing people to come to the Lord in droves, shouldn’t it? After all, we are all sinners and the wages of sin is death.

The unfortunate truth is, there are people who are as sublimely ignorant towards the gospel as I was regarding my health. They hear things here and there, but in their minds it is for someone else – they are perfectly fine. Folks, until we are confronted with the bad news we’ll never glory in the good news and as such we’ll continue on as we always have.

Look with me for a moment at 2 Kings 1:9-15. You have here 3 different sets of troops each consisting of a general and fifty soldiers. Each are commanded to do the same thing – bring in Elijah. The first group goes in flying blind. They are confident in their numbers – after all, it’s 51 against 1…what could go wrong, right? They confront Elijah, give him the command to come down and go with them and Elijah’s response is to call down fire from Heaven and consume the whole group. Bummer. Strike 1.

Then Ahaziah sends a 2nd group as he did the first. This group had obviously learned nothing from the fate of the previous group as they go in and make the same demand of Elijah and as a result of that, suffer the same fate. Fire once again falls from Heaven and consumes them. Double bummer. Strike 2.

Imagine the conversation taking place among the kings army as they talk about who is going to get the call next. Surely it’s going to mean certain doom. I have no doubt that whomever is called upon to go next is going to view that call as bad news. But, alas, the king chooses and a third group goes to confront Elijah. But this groups does things a little differently. They acknowledge Elijah and his position before the Lord God of Israel and they throw themselves down and plead for mercy. How does the God respond to this request? By giving Elijah the green light to go with them. Home run!

These men were confronted with bad news and it affected the way they carried out their tasks. If they hadn’t known what had previously happened to the other groups, would they have been as earnest in their pleas for mercy? No.

What is my point in all of this? My point is that we have become exceedingly soft when it comes to confronting sin. Let me again quote FB Meyer: “*Our vast populations are indifferent to the message of mercy, because they have not been aroused with the message of the holy wrath of God against sin.”* In other words, why do we need good news when there isn’t first any bad news? If we live in a world where sin is fine because we have reasoned it to be that way then God’s wrath and judgement isn’t bad news. And if there isn’t that bad news then what do we need of God’s grace and mercy? Why do we need a savior? Do you see the point? And once again, it starts with us as believers. We must hold sin to be what it really is. If we find ourselves justifying it in our own lives, how can we expect non-believers to put to death the deeds of the flesh? On the flip side however, consider again the richness of God’s mercy on those who humble themselves before Him.

In closing, consider Ephesians 2:2-10.