

(1 Kings) the Work of Unknown Prophets

by David Guzik

God works through anonymous people to accomplish His purposes, and He reminds us that He can use anyone, regardless of their status or name, to deliver His people from any situation.

Duration: 49:40

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:18, 2 Kings 6:18-20, Matthew 25:21

Topics: "Faithful Obedience", "Christian Responsibility"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of fulfilling the tasks and responsibilities that God has given us. He warns against the temptation of almost completing the work and encourages believers to strive for the full victory that the Lord desires for them. The preacher uses a story from the Bible to illustrate this point, where a prophet is unfaithful in guarding a prisoner and offers the excuse of being busy here and there. The sermon concludes with the reminder that God has a purpose for each individual and it is crucial to take our responsibilities seriously and not let opportunities escape us in the Christian life.

Transcript

We do want to come together and take a look at chapter 20 tonight. I find chapter 20 fascinating because previously in our previous time together we saw First Kings chapters 18 and 19 this very dramatic confrontation with the Prophet Elijah Against the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel and you know Elijah shown Very brightly in the last chapter and at the end of chapter 19 We have Elijah finding Elisha his you know sort of associate prophet his young prophet that he would mentor up and Throw his mantle over so to speak And so we're left with this great picture of these two outstanding figures of the Old Testament side-by-side at the end of chapter 19 and as we come to chapter 20 We're excited and we're okay great Tell us what's going to happen with Elijah and Elisha in first Kings chapter 20 And the answer to that is nothing We don't find anything from these two prophets here instead. We find some anonymous prophets at work here in this important chapter And I think it's there to show us something First of all to remind us that God works through anonymous people just as much as he does through big names but also to remind us of the idea that God Comforted Elijah when Elijah thought he was all alone with the idea that there were 7,000 men in Israel who had not bowed their knee or kissed the idol of Baal and he meant that to be an Encouragement to him.

Well, I think chapter 20 is in this arrangement and in with this idea of parsley The Holy Spirit has given it to us here to emphasize to us that God used some of those unnamed 7,000 as well. He doesn't just use the big names like Elisha and Elisha So let's jump right into it here chapter 20 beginning at verse 1 now Ben Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together 32 kings were with him with horses and chariots And he went up and besieged Samaria and made war against it Then he sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel and said to him Thus says Ben Hadad your silver and your gold are mine Your loveliest wives and children are mine The king of Israel answered and said my lord Oh King just as you say and I and all that I have are yours 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 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 Well, this was a very formidable attack from Ben Hadad the king of Syria who gathered his mighty army against the kingdom of Israel which was just to the south of the kingdom of Syria just as today you can go there in the the Nation of Syria is just to the north of the nation of Israel Anyway, the Syrian King comes against the northern kingdom of Israel and they came with a very strong Military attack and I find it interesting that you know, generally speaking Israel was strong Militarily and economically during the reign of Ahab But they weren't strong enough to repel this attack and it was a great force that came and he could really dictate the terms To King Ahab and say I'm going to take whatever I want from your palace and from your kingdom Of course, we're sort of discouraged to see the response of Ahab in these verses Didn't you see it there in verse 4 where he says my lord?

Oh king are just as you say I and all that I have are yours You know this response to Ben Hadad from Ahab sort of fits the general personality profile We have a king Ahab he was a man concerned with the luxuries and the comforts of living and so he really didn't have the Character to stand in the face of a great attack from a man like Ben Hadad Ahab surrendered Unconditionally to Ben Hadad of Syria whatever you want you come and take and he just believed that he was in no place to put up a Fight or resistance against the Syrian King.

I wonder if some of it didn't have to do With a three and a half year drought and famine that the kingdom of Israel just got finished with experiencing You know, that would leave the nation at a pretty low point Economically and militarily after those three and a half years in any regard at the end of this section at the end of verse 6 We see how Ben Hadad threatens and says my servants are going to come and search your house and the houses of all your servants And they're just going to come and take everything He agrees to terms and then he sees that he has the power So he makes the the deal even better in his favor Ben Hadad does in regard to Ahab So look at the advice Ahab is going to get starting now at verse 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.

No the elders and all the people said him do not listen or consent Therefore he said to the messengers of Ben Hadad Tell my lord the king all that you have sent for your servant the first time I will do But this thing I cannot do and the messengers departed and brought back word to him Well, it's sort of interesting. You wonder why? King Ahab did not seek the counsel of his elders and says before he made that first surrender to Ben Hadad It didn't seem like he asked him for the advice then only when the second demand came the second demand which was much stronger than the first demand But now he says well Don't listen and consent that was the advice of the elders of Israel to King Ahab They rightly saw that if you surrender to Ben Hadad in this way if you tell him You come into our houses and anything you see by

the way, including our wives and children Anything you see you take that's just total surrender of your kingdom to this Syrian King You can buy him off But don't unconditionally surrender to him Therefore Ahab took the advice of his elders and he told Ben Ahab that I will do most of what you've requested But not all Now, how do you think that usually works in the world of the way that Kings and tyrants and such are? You know when somebody's a tyrant like this if you refuse them on one point They feel like you've refused them on all points. Do you think Ben Hadad is going to take this and say well You know, he's giving us most of what we wanted.

It sounds very reasonable to us. Why don't we just take what he's offered? No, that's not the way a man like Ben Hadad reacts. He's offended because he knows you're not giving me everything that I've asked for so now verse 10 then Ben Hadad Sent to him and said the gods do so to me and more Also, if there's enough dust of Samaria for a handful of each of the people who follow me So the king of Israel answered and said tell him Let the one who puts on his armor, excuse me Let not the one who puts on his armor boast like the one who takes it off And it happened when Ben Hadad heard this message He and his kings were drinking at the command post that he said to his servants get ready and they got ready to attack the city so Ben Hadad swears this oath of vengeance against Israel and against King Ahab and when Ahab hears about this, I love the phrase that Ahab uses here I just this phrase just sort of sticks in my mind as a biblical phrase.

Let not the one who puts on his armor Boast like the one who takes it off, you know, that's uncharacteristically bold speech from Ahab Usually I don't see Ahab with such backbone to say such a thing, but really it's a wonderful piece of wisdom The idea is simply you should do your boasting after the battle. Don't do your boasting before the battle You do your boasting after you've won the game not before you play. Let not him who puts his armor on Boast the same way that the man who takes it off successfully after the battle So they got ready to attack the city You know a battles coming between the kingdom of Syria and the city of Samaria Which was the capital of the Northern Kingdom now verse 13 suddenly a prophet approached the Ahab king of Israel saying Thus says the Lord have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand today and you shall know that I am the Lord First of all, I just have to pause at verse 13 and ask who is this prophet? Well, the answer is what we don't know who this prophet was.

It's absolutely unnamed I find it very interesting a couple commentators that I read they can't resist Sticking Elijah or Elisha in here somewhere one commentary guy like Adam Clark He says I think this is Elijah in disguise Speaking to King Ahab. There's absolutely no reason for saying that this is he feels like he has to find Elijah in this chapter somewhere But he isn't in here This was an unnamed prophet one of the seven thousand of Israel who were faithful to Yahweh when it seemed like the whole nation was given over to Baal worship and The the promise here in verse 13 is really more important than the identity the prophet the promises Thus says the Lord have you seen all this great multitude behold? I will deliver it into your hand and you shall know that I am the Lord What a generous promise of God towards Ahab in Israel now Let's remember was this godly King Ahab who was seeking the Lord and wanted the best for God and his people Not at all. This was idolatrous King Ahab This was King Ahab who officially sponsored Baal and Ashtoreth worship This was King Ahab who supported his wife's murderous persecution of the people of God This was wicked King Ahab and yet God makes this promise of delivery Even though they had a hardened idolatry and a rejection of God and even though they deserved divine abandonment God had every right to just leave them alone and let them perish without his help But God's rich in mercy and he showed that mercy to Ahab and Israel.

I'm just struck by this God had absolutely no obligation To help them in this situation If he gave them what they deserved he would just let them get slaughtered by the Syrians, but God is greater than that. I Find a small irony in this statement, too Did you see what it says there in verse 13 and you shall know that I am the Lord now, wait a minute. Wait a minute Didn't just two chapters ago God proved to Ahab and everybody that he was the Lord by a little display of power on Mount Carmel Apparently by this time Ahab is already forgotten Again, and again and again God has to show that Ahab's of the world and I suppose sometimes us as well that he is the Lord Apparently Ahab was not yet completely Convinced and very graciously God would give him even more evidence And so now verse 14 look at Ahab's great response of faith and affirmation to the Lord verse 14 So I have said by whom? And he said thus says the Lord by the young leaders of the provinces Then he said well who will set the battle in order and he answered you Then he mustered the young leaders of the provinces and there were 232 after them.

He mustered all the people all the children of Israel 7,000, you know God promises this great victory and Ahab looks around at his army Which by the way had probably been greatly weakened by three and a half years of famine and drought He looks around at his army. He goes it if who are you going to deliver? I don't think you're gonna deliver me through this army You know, what what army are you gonna bring to help deliver me God? He looked around at his army and his military leaders and he thought how can God bring victory from these people? And so he says how are you gonna do it? And God said I'm gonna do it through these men and they said well How more are you gonna do it and God told Ahab? I'm gonna do it through you Isn't that amazing? I think that's wonderful Ahab was in one of these situations where he knew that God wanted to do a work and he asked the logical question Well God, who are you gonna do this work through and God basically said I'm gonna do it through you and through the people that you Have with you right now Through the captains of the army that you have right now. You see in Ahab's thinking help had to come from the outside Right if God was going to win a dramatic victory.

Well, you had to send another army I don't know the army of Judah the army of Egypt the army of somebody but but not the people I have right here Not me. That's what Ahab's thinking This is an important spiritual principle when a work for God is to be done We often ask a have same question. We want to say by whom who's going to do this Lord and When many Christian leaders ask this question, they expect that God will answer it by bringing somebody new to them You know a leader or a champion who can do the work or at least help with it I'll take God's normal way of working God's normal way of working is to use the people that that Christian leader already has Even if they seem like a very unlikely army Now I think of it.

I think of there's just a hypothetical Guy who's pastoring a small congregation, you know, and he oh lord. We need help. We need workers, you know, we need leaders God We need leaders for this work and and you know, he feels good Yes, I'm gonna raise up great leaders for the work here and God says a man says to God Well, where are you going to send them got this by the people that you have right here? The man says Lord have you seen the group that you've given me here? They're not exactly leadership potential God You know I mean It looks like a bunch of misfits or people who are too busy or people are there to be you know God's way of saying is you pour into these people that you have Don't don't wait for the Lone Ranger to come in on a white horse from the outside Now listen, maybe God will send the Lone Ranger.

Maybe God will send somebody from the outside, but that should not be your concern You look to raise up leaders from the group. God has given you Think that God is going to use the people that you have right here in front of you And that's what God told Ahab. He was going to do You see God would do this work

against Syria and been hated with an army of only 7,000 and Now the work was going to get underway.

So look here in verse 16, so they went out at noon Meanwhile, then hey dad in the 32 Kings helping him We're getting drunk at the command post the young leaders of the provinces went out first and Then hey dad sent out a patrol and they told him saying men are coming out of Samaria So he said if they've come out for peace take them alive and if they've come out for war take them alive Stop right there. See what's happening so far here so far Ahab says, okay God you say you're going to win this victory through the Captains of the army that you've given. All right I'm gonna send them out gonna just put them on horses and send them towards the Syrian camp Who knows what's gonna happen? And so when they go meanwhile, Ben, hey dad and all his Kings.

What are they doing? They're getting drunk The same sinful heart that made Ben. Hey dad attack Israel also made him a drunk If you want to look for an underlying reason for the defeat of Ben Hey, that's I'm need to spoil the story for anybody But this guy loses if you want to look for the reason for it, it's simply because his weak moral character Anyway, he's getting drunk with all of his men. They see this party of captains coming out You know here to approach the army the call Hey, there's people coming from the city of the Israelites are coming to us from the city of Samaria And what has been hey dad see did you see it there? What what he said in verse 18 if they'd come out for peace take them alive And if they come out for a war take them alive Okay, does that make sense to you? Does it sound like it's coming from the mouth of a drunk man? I Think he's giving confused orders because he's he's just wasted You know, he he's not thinking clearly.

Yeah, if they come out for war to take him alive And if they come out for peace take him alive or we don't wear it. He's just he's just not thinking And so we've probably spoken this drunk confusion and he gave foolish orders to his soldiers and his soldiers Blink and they don't know what to do. You know, everybody's confused What happens here verse 19? Then these young leaders of the provinces went out of the city with the army which followed them and each one killed his man So the Syrians fled and Israel pursued them and Ben.

Hey dad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with the cavalry then the king of Israel went out and attacked the horses and the chariots and killed the Syrians with a great slaughter and The Prophet came to the king of Israel and said to him go Strengthen yourself take note and see what you should do for in the spring of the year The king of Syria will come up against you So it's a great battle strategy You know all Ahab knew was that God said he's gonna win a victory through these men so well I don't let's send these men towards the Syrian camp and Because of the drunkenness of Ben. Hey dad because of the blessing of God and because of the moral confusion in the Syrian camp There was a great victory in the Syrian army was routed and they went away But God didn't want a have to celebrate too great because the Syrian army was going to come back This nameless prophet your verse 22, right? Not Elijah. Not Elijah.

Mr Nameless prophet comes again advises Ahab and he says they are going to come back I want you to notice something They weren't really prepared for the Syrians when God gave him this great victory that we just read about right? But yet God wanted them to prepare For an attack that was to come next year. It's almost as if God is telling Ahab listen Don't rely on these miracles Don't think that you can make no preparation You don't have to worry about Ben. Hey dad attacking you just you know Live your life carelessly and then when the crisis comes as Oh Lord send a miracle.

No, why don't you start preparing now? because Ben, hey dad is going to come back with an army again next year. Well, that's what happened here verse 23 Then the servants of the king of Syria told him this is great Their gods are gods of the hills Therefore they were stronger than we but if we fight against them in the plane Surely we will be stronger than they so do this thing Dismiss the Kings eat from their position and put the captains in their places and you shall must be an arm muster an army like An army that you have lost horse for horse and chariot for chariot, then we will fight against them in the plane Surely we will be stronger than they and he listened to their voice and did so Now there's two levels going on here. First of all, there's a military analysis level and on a military analysis They say listen Ben.

Hey dad The strength of our army is in horses and in chariots and those operate best on a flat You know fighting surface and so we shouldn't fight in the hills Which work more to the military Advantage of the Israelites. So next time let's provoke the battle. So it's in a situation.

That's better for us militarily But that wasn't the primary idea. There was it the primary idea was a spiritual one, wasn't it? What do you say? It's very interesting there in verse 23 Their God is the God of the hills and the God of the hills can't work so good in the valley So if we do that the battle in the valley will come out ahead The idea of the localized deity was very prominent in the ancient world they felt that particular gods had authority over particular areas and Because the recent victory that was won by Israel against Syria was won on hilly terrain The servants of the king of Syria believed that the God of Israel was a localized deity with power over the hills But not the plains not the valleys. I Want you to notice something here.

They're making a critical mistake, aren't they? They're thinking that the king of Israel is just like their pathetic little Molded gods that they make You know the gods that they worshipped were these localized deities Oh this God's effective here and that God's effective there and this God is effective in another place Mm-hmm. They don't understand that God is greater than that But it's easy for us to stand back and criticize them and think of how dumb they are But I'll tell you this We make the same mistake today Many people today think that God is a god of the hills but not of the plains They think that God is a god of the past but not of the present They think that God has a few special favorites But he really doesn't treat all his people the same They think that God is the God of one kind of trial or suffering but not a trial of another kind Listen, I think that Satan understands this thinking that we have so easily He thinks that we believe God can work more easily in one situation than in another It's kind of hard for me to explain this but I think you're catching on to the idea I mean, I think for example of the way that people think they think you know It would be better for the church if the church were persecuted, you know Look at how the church thrives in times of persecution and it would be better the work of God could go further If the church was persecuted I just want to say isn't that right there thinking that God is the God of the hills but not of the valleys That God can can bless and and protect his church in a time of persecution But God is somehow helpless to do it for his church in a time of prosperity You know God is the God of the hills but not of the valleys and you think of this good God can work in one Place but but he can't work in another place. How often have we heard that kind of thinking? Especially here when people start getting out and doing ministry in other places and in difficult places around the world They say well, you know This is such a tough place where I'm at and I agree that there are some places where ministry definitely seems tougher than others But far be it from us to drift off in this area.

We think God is the God of America, but but but not of the third world He's the God of Western Europe But but he's not the God of the Islamic world that God is God in one place But he's not the God of the other place We have to get this thinking that God is a localized the deity out of our head That's thinking like the

servants of the king of Syria not the servants of the Living God Matter of fact, they felt very bold about this. They said then we will fight them in the plane Surely we will be stronger than they they believed it and they said let's act upon this belief So what happens here verse 26? So it was in the spring of the year that Ben haddad muster the Syrians and went up to Apex to fight against Israel 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 Like the Syrians filled the countryside, isn't that a great description of this? You see this massive massive Syrian army filling hill after hill after hill you look at the you look at the Israelite army looks like two little flocks of goats on the hillside. Hmm There is it looked like lambs to the slaughter.

Don't they it doesn't look good for Israel Then a man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel and said By the way, Elijah Elijah no another anonymous man of God 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 now I Want you to notice this? When Ben haddad came back again to avenge the loss that he had the year before He came back with an overwhelming force He didn't want to risk another Humiliation and it also makes you wonder if Ben haddad really took this business of gods of hills and valleys very seriously They could said, you know, our God may be the god of the valleys, but we're gonna bring an awfully big army with us also But at least some of the Syrians really believe this that the Lord is the god of the hills He's not the god of the valleys and God says that because of this I'm gonna deliver all this great multitude Into the hands of the Israelites who are vastly outnumbered Now I want you to notice something here God took the bad theology of the Syrians as a personal insult We don't often think about that.

Do we? that bad theology Insults God We often as a matter of fact think just the opposite Well, I'm gonna say you know, look God's a big God and it doesn't really care what people think about What you think God's like on some insecurity trip and you know, he's worried about what people think about him No, no, that's not the matter at all Our God is a great God and when lies are told about him it bothers him When we hold and choose to hold in our mind wrong beliefs about God it insults him He has every reason to believe that you don't understand it you don't care to understand him It's just like this you wonder how God would say it in our mind You God would say you you think I'm a God of grace, but not of righteousness Instead of the hills in the valleys there you you think I'm a God of of a comfort but not of power Our wrong Understanding of God can be a grave insult of him It can take away from his glory and his majesty and it never adds to it God resented their blasphemy and he was determined to punish it He was going to show them my power is everywhere.

Don't you call me a God of the hills? I'm going to show you that my power is present in the valleys as well So I hope Ahab was feeling better about this with his little two flocks of goats there on the hillside so to speak But a message from the Prophet of God now Let me remind you of something before we look at verse 29 Do you think that's for some reason there had been great spiritual revival in the life of Ahab? No again We always want to think that if God saves if God blesses It's because you know, some leader is so spiritual and that's why God is doing it personally leaders Love to cultivate that idea, you know that you know, if God's really blessing it's because the the leader is so spirit I want you to think that you know of anything I'm associated with but if God's blessing is well Of course, it's because I'm so spiritual and isn't that why God blesses it?

But you know, it's crazy, isn't it? God's blessing or or the perceived lack of blessing may have nothing to do with the leader nothing You can't make rules about such things You can't think well all the good ones

are blessed and all the bad ones are cursed or or the other way around you can make No laws about this in these things many times the ways of God are past finding out Some some of the most godly pastors, I know I can think of some right I can think through the business cards in my mind Right now some incredibly godly pastors, man.

They just struggle and I don't know why I wish I had their care I wish I had their integrity. I wish I had their godliness and Yet I see and that man their ministry is just a struggle and I I know other pastors who seem to have great success One field or another and I look and I just say Man, you know what's going on with that, but how are you blessing it? But I want you to know this is carnal thinking when we think well, you know God's blessing all the good boys and he's penalizing all the bad boys You can't figure it out that way. You just cannot figure it out that way And so we see God showing great mercy and blessing to a have who was an unrighteous ungodly man But he's doing it for his name's sake and for his people's sake He's not doing it for Ahab's sake but for his name's sake and for his people's sake all right now verse 29 and They encamped opposite each other for seven days So it was on the seventh day that the battle was joined and the children of Israel killed 100,000 foot soldiers of the Syrians in one day But the rest led to a peck into the city then a wall fell on 27,000 of the men who were left and Ben.

Hey dad fled and went to the city into an inner chamber. I Think this is wonderful Because this was clearly a miracle Yet it was a miracle working through the existing Israeli army Which is like a flock of goats compared to the size of the Syrian army God wanted to show that as Unlikely as it seemed he could work through this Outwardly weak and ineffective instrument, but then God threw in a little bit of the supernatural after that after the great victory on the battlefield God moved another extraordinary Where he's like pushing over that wall on the 27,000 Syrians that had escaped to a peck and he he really wanted to show Look, I'm not just gonna let you think that Israel has beat you. I have beat you as well And so there was a tremendous tremendous Victory for Israel again, not just in the hills but in the valleys as well verse 31 Then his servant said to him look now we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel merciful Kings These are the advisors and the assistance to Ben.

Hey dad We've heard that the kings of the house of Israel merciful Kings Please let us put sackcloth around our waist and ropes around our heads and go out to the king of Israel Perhaps he will spare your life So they wore sackcloth around their waist and put ropes around their heads and came to the king of Israel and said Your servant Ben. Hey dad says, please let me live and he said is he alive He is still my brother Now the men were watching closely to see whether a sign of mercy would come from and they quickly Grasped at his word and said you're a brother Ben. Hey dad So he said go bring him then Ben.

Hey dad came out to him and he had come up to it And he had come he had him come up into the chariot So Ben hey dad 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 a have said I will send you away with this treaty. So he made a treaty with him and sent him away Isn't fascinating Not long before this Then hey dad spoke severe threats Against Ahab and all the kingdom is remember that whole, you know God do so to me and more if my servants can each get a handful of dust from the city of Samaria and all that kind of business Now he humbled himself as much as he could To win mercy and favor from the unexpectedly triumphant king of Israel By the way, I don't want to over spiritualize this too much. I Think it's a wonderful thing for sinners to come to God the king With the same manner as Ben.

Hey dad came to Ahab Come with sincerity come with humility come with surrender come with earnestness And come close. I love this Watching to see Winnie whether any sign of mercy would come to

them I love that the idea of a sinner coming to God humbly surrendered and then just looking to God Are you going to show me any sign of mercy? Do you have a sign of mercy for me? And of course God will show this kind of mercy, but unfortunately Ahab should not have shown mercy to the king of Syria. That's not what God wanted you to do wanted him to do I should say I think a Felt a kinship towards this pagan king with these very pagan ideas of God Perhaps a have wanted been hey dad in serious friendship and protection against other political Alliances that were building around the world if that's the case He was looking for friends in the wrong places and he had no business making the treaty that's described there in Verses 33 and 34 the victory was the Lord's the victory didn't belong to Ahab Ahab is Negotiating away the Lord's victory and I don't think the Lord's going to be happy with that So here he's doing what he should not do But now we come here to verse 35 and see our next anonymous prophet gonna speak here to Ahab Look at it here now 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 Stop you got to put a little pause right here Some things in the Bible are just kind of weird.

Okay, we admit that This is one of those just kind of weird passages. We're introduced to a prophet who goes up to it You can just imagine knocking on the door. Hello, you know, hi.

Um, I Suppose maybe this other guy is another one of the sons of the prophets We don't know for certain that maybe it's sort of implied in the text. Hi Can you do me a favor? Can you can you strike me, please? No, I'm not gonna do that. I Want you to notice again.

This is another Anonymous prophet another anonymous man of God who's here busy. Do you think God is trying to get a message through to us here? Elijah Elisha, we're not alone God had many others and God would work through many others. We have this tendency.

Don't we we look at ourselves We look at the people around us in our circle. We think well, that's where God's working nowhere else No, listen, God has many people who can do many great works beyond our own vision and we should be thankful for it But anyway back to this weird prophet strike me, please he says Now we're assuming and I think we have reason to assume this that this was directed by God I see this prophet that's mentioned here in verse 35. He needed an injury to show to King Ahab And I guess it's kind of hard to hit yourself hard enough to make an injury.

So he came over his old strike me, please What happened when his neighbor refused verse 36? All right, it's weird 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 Wow All right, if you want me to figure all this out for you, I can't all right all I can tell you is that Presumably this neighbor was not just another man in the kingdom of Israel The implication is that he was a fellow member of the sons of the prophets and that he should have been Sensitive to what God was doing and maybe that the Prophet prevailed upon him even more than what's in the text He should have known better It's not so clear in the New King James Version, which I'm reading to you from tonight but it's more clear in some other translations, let me read to you for example from the New Revised Standard Version. It says a certain member of the company of the prophets said to another In other words, the idea is it's another of his own company So it's not like he's just asking it's not like he's going to an anonymous man on the street. Hi Would you strike me, please? No.

Oh, well, then a lion's gonna eat you. No, that's not it He's going up to a fellow prophet one who presumably should have this sensitivity to the things of God What one who should know my fellow prophet

isn't going to come up and ask me to do such a weird thing Unless it's from God and at least I should do is I should pray about it and seek God about it before refusing him And because he wouldn't seek God Because he didn't listen to the Lord at all on this. Well We have to say I mean the lion came out and ate him and this doesn't seem to be a typical work here But it just seems to be something that happened on this occasion In any regard verse 37.

I like how this follows here and he found another man and said strike me, please and The man struck him inflicting a wound. We're happy about this You know, he'd hate to see this go through five or six people until he found somebody who was actually willing to hit him Verse 38 Then the prophet departed and waited for the king by the road and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes To get the picture here this weird prophet who wanted somebody to hit him He needed the injury to play act something for King Ahab In the following verses. So here he's laying by the side of the road.

It's got a bandage around his head Presumably there's some blood involved but you get the picture right now verse 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 While your survey was servant was busy here and there he was gone Then the king of the is of Israel said to him so shall your judgment be you yourself have decided it Okay, so you understand the story here, right? the story is I Was responsible to guard this man's life But I was unfaithful in it. You have to love the line in verse 40 While your servant was busy here and there he was gone You know a suitably vague description, right? Well, you know I just had a few things to do and it kind of got in the way of me guarding this guy before I knew it I looked up and he was gone. What do you know? You know real reason just I was busy here and there.

I know I let the guy escape He was unfaithful to the job that he was given to do and the guilty man's excuse his only excuse Was that I was busy here and there which was no excuse at all He should have paid attention to the job that he had to do I mean listen That it's an important responsibility to guard a prisoner on the field of battle, but he didn't take the responsibility seriously. I Find that this prophets made-up story with the fictional excuse Becomes real in the life of many people especially in many ministers of the gospel Let me read you a quote from G. Campbell Morgan on this he says if a man is called to preach the word and becomes busy over a hundred things other than that of his central work and So loses the opportunity to preach his failure is complete That which is our God appointed work. We must do if we fail in that The fact that we have been busy here and there doing all sorts of other things is of no avail Wonder I Wonder if that's how it's going to be with some of us You know when we stand before the Lord in judgment not judgment for heaven or hell, but judgment for reward Judgment where we stand before Jesus Christ, and he says I want to know what you did with your life And she said you know I had something I wanted you to do.

I had a calling I gave you gifts I give you a purpose in this life Did you do it? Was it well I was busy here and there It's not enough You know God God has a purpose for you in this world. He has gifts. He has talents.

He has calling that he's given you The fictional excuse of this prophet in this play acting story Tragically becomes a reality in the lives of many people and in the same way when the prisoner was gone He was gone Even as the fictional prisoner escaped so many opportunities escape us in the Christian life It's gone the prisoners gone you had your opportunity to fulfill your duty, but now it's gone sure you were busy here

and there But you didn't do what God wanted you to do Now When Ahab hears this story, what's his reaction there in verse 40? He says hey so shall your judgment be you yourself have decided it You see in the prophet's story He was unfaithful in guarding something that was entrusted to him and a have rightly judged That he should have been held responsible for it You know a have saying so what you want me to whine you want to whine to me now about the injury that you have You know you deserve it You were given a trust you were given a duty and you were unfaithful to it All right. Now we ready for the great finale here verse 41 And he hastened to take the bandage away from his eyes and the king recognized him as one of the prophets Now right there. It tells you why he wanted to disguise himself as a soldier If he just had his normal appearance the king would have said that's one of those troublesome prophets you ride straight by But he could only get the king's attention by disguising himself And so you can imagine the king's horror as the guy rips off the bandage Ah, it's one of those prophets that I've been avoiding So what happens? When 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 So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased and came to Samaria God Intended that Ben Hadad should be utterly destroyed But he also intended that it be done by the hand of the army of Israel Now let me ask this did God want Ben Hadad judged with death Yes Then why didn't God just do it himself? He certainly is capable of doing it, isn't he? Yes But God was also interested in the way that death came about and he called Ahab and the army of Israel to execute this righteous judgment Against this pagan king who had shed the blood of so many of the people of the kingdom of Israel But Ben Hadad excuse me But Ahab was more interested in making friends with Ben Hadad than he was in doing what God wanted him to do it's a a A painful excuse or painful experience in our Christian life, I should say to realize That when we don't deal with things the way that they should they come back and get us When Saul doesn't deal with a gag it comes back and it gets him you know when David doesn't deal with the things.

He should be dealing with it comes back and it gets him and here King Ahab Didn't deal with Ben Hadad the way that he should have and now he will pay a great price for it There's a great temptation always in our walk before God to simply be careless To not follow through on the things that God speaks to us about to do Maybe to do it halfway, you know God told the Israelites to go and fight against the Syrians and did they fight? Yes, they did. They even won a great victory But they stopped short of the complete victory that God wanted him to have and this is a great temptation for us You know, we don't want to stay out of the battle completely But on the other hand, we're oftentimes very content with something short of complete victory That was Ahab's sin Are you struck there by the very last sentence in the same way I am verse 43 So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased and came to Samaria Well, yeah, he was sullen He was displeased Was he repentant? No He had the sorrow of being a sinner and knowing the consequences of his sin without having sorrow for the sin itself and So what happened, excuse me, we'll see what happens with Ahab in the last two chapters here, but it's a Tragic thing that's going to come before Alright, just a couple applications for us to grab away from this great chapter first Kings chapter 20 before we conclude number one We tell God use these anonymous prophets. There's no wonderful Yeah, I mean even when you have these bright shining lights and maybe you feel like that sometime in your own Christian service of the Lord You think that there's bright shining lights in God's kingdom, you know And those are the ones that listen God uses the anonymous just as well.

Sometimes even greater. You must admit that So here God uses these anonymous ones The other thing we have to admit is that here we see in this chapter that God is the God of everywhere of every circumstance Of every position not just the hills not just the valleys but of everything and we need to

regard him as so But the third thing we learn and the final is the great importance of fulfilling what God has given us to do a Finishing the race. It's not enough to Go partway and then quit if God has called you to do it then you fulfill it with all of your strength and beware of the temptation of almost finishing of Almost completing the work.

I would say that you would think listen, we killed. What was it? A hundred and twenty five thousand or something like that Syrians isn't that enough? No because you didn't kill the one I wanted you to also Ben, hey dad Something for us to learn to not stop short of the full victory that the Lord would want to give us Lots for us to think about to meditate on to ask the Lord about tonight before we go to bed So let's pray and ask him to remind us of these things father. That is our prayer We are so struck at the way that you use these great servants of yours these Anonymous men of God it shows us Lord that we don't have to have a big or a notable name to be used by you We thank you Lord for knowing that you're the God of everywhere.

Not just the hills not just the valleys But of every place of every circumstance of every situation of every life age. You are the God of it And finally Lord give us a diligence we don't want to lose having almost won the victory Having won the battles, but yet failed in that last critical place Give us diligence Lord give us wisdom But give us diligence to apply the wisdom that you give us We thank you so much for your word and for the captain of our faith Jesus Christ Who finished the work that you gave for him were so happy so grateful for the finished work of the cross And as that you fill us with a greater and greater appreciation of that great work for us We pray it Lord in Jesus name thanking you for your word Amen

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