

I Kings 1# 2; James 4:1-10; A Dangerous Decision Part 2 I. The Captain's Dangerous Approach II. The LORD Unaltered Response

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, pride is one of the most pervasive sins in our society. When a person takes pleasure in boasting- in bragging about what they have done- their own power. Just this past week I heard the new re-election ad of our governor- and it was quite a list of accomplishments- noting everything that I have accomplished in this past term. But although our world may take pleasure in pride- may even praise those who toot their own horns- this is not a commendable trait in God's sight. As Prov. 16:18 says, Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Or as we read in James 4, Humble yourself before the Lord and he will exalt you! So as we return to our reading from II Kings 1, we find the pride of man evident and the quick response of the LORD to that pride. As we briefly heard last week, one of the main themes in our text is the sending of messengers. We have 2 groups- the messengers of King Ahaziah- and Elijah the messenger of the LORD God. But although Ahaziah has many messengers- the clear word of the LORD will be heard over the noise of the crowd. We consider this theme: Jesus Christ rebukes the Proud for refusing to humble themselves under His hand. Messengers who bring a good report- who have good news to bring back to the king- would often receive a reward from the king. There would be a prize given to this faithful messenger who carries good news to the throne. But what of a messenger who never brings that message to its intended recipient? Well, the messengers of v. 5 never make it to Ekron, as the messenger of the LORD cancels their trip and gives the king an answer to his question. Will I recover- the king's message reads. No- you will not the LORD replies. You will surely die! Ahaziah has put himself in a dangerous place- trusting in idols- looking to vain creations of man's hand for aid! Those who trust in false gods will receive all the help that a false god can give! And those who live in pride will find themselves opposed by the LORD.

### **I. The Captain's Dangerous Approach**

At the end of last week, we saw that Ahaziah's messenger sent to Ekron- to inquire of Baal Zabub- were turned around by the LORD and his messenger. The LORD interrupts Ahaziah's plan, and delivers a message to him in v. 6. So the LORD has made it clear to Ahaziah- you will not recover, but you will die on the bed upon which you lay. But Ahaziah is not satisfied with this answer- he wants to confront the LORD's messenger and intimidate him- to get the message changed. After finding out who it was that sent this message, Ahaziah sends his messengers- the captains of his army- to go and find Elijah and bring him back! So in v. 9 and following the king sends 3 separate groups to go and meet with Elijah the prophet. Note- Ahaziah does not send messengers or envoys, no he sends an armed band of 50 men plus their captain. This is an intimidation tactic- to force Elijah's hand- to compel Elijah to come to the king and change the message. He sends messengers- likely laden with gifts- to Baal Zabub- but a captain with 50 men armed with swords to Elijah. Notice a difference? So the first group comes to Elijah in v. 9. This captain says- come down by order of the king. He starts by making a command and basing that command on the authority of the king- Ahaziah. Elijah responds by saying- if I am a man of God, let fire come down and consume you. And since Elijah was a man of God- fire was sent. Again, we note that the prayer of Elijah is powerful and effective! God will not be bullied by this wicked king- and He protects his messenger and message by burning up this proud captain. Who is the True KING of Israel- and whose word and command will Elijah obey? Will he go and say whatever Ahaziah requests- or will he wait upon the LORD to send him. And when the King of Kings returns on the clouds of glory, all those who are proud will taste the same fire that these men experienced! With this first group gone, once again, Ahaziah's messengers prove unable to carry out their task- so Ahaziah sends another commander and his 50 soldiers. This man approaching in v. 11- come down quickly by order of the king- this captain demands. To this increased pressure and threat- the same response is given. If I am a man of God, let fire come down and consume you. And again, fire falls down according to the prayer of this man of faith. The messengers of Ahaziah have proven impotent- they can't get anything accomplished!

When these captains came to Elijah- it was akin to approaching God because Elijah was his prophet. And how will God be approached? As Heb. 12: 28 says, acceptable worship is offered with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire! So Ahaziah is forced to send another delegation- another group of soldiers and their captain approach Elijah in v. 13. Now this third captain is different- he has some wisdom in his heart and he has learned from the death of the proud captains before him. He states- O man of God, please spare my life and the life of these men. Let our lives be precious in your sight. Note that instead of pride there is humility- instead of demanding there is a request! This makes all the difference in the world, doesn't it!

Now we see this truth- how you approach God makes a huge difference! We also see, it does not matter who you are- if you humble yourself before the LORD- if you cry out for mercy- He will hear and He will pardon! Even if you are king like Ahab or a commander of the king's army like this 3rd captain in v. 13- the LORD does not despise the cry of the humble. The LORD does not despise the broken and contrite hearts as Psalm 51 puts it. The lesson is clear- this important truth must be seen! God delights in the humble- in the lowly- in those who trust not in themselves- who boast not in their own ability, power and works! No, the LORD resists these- He does not help them or listen to their cries! But of the lowly, contrite and meek- the LORD is near and present to provide help! Acceptable worship is with reverence and awe! That is really what true faith is- it is a humble confession of our need and a complete dependence on another- trusting in Christ alone for our salvation and refusing to look to the power and ability of man! Call upon me in the day of trouble Psalm 50 says- and I will rescue you! God's people are those who call upon the LORD and look to Him- as this 3<sup>rd</sup> captain came with humility and fell on his face before the presence of God's messenger. His plea was one of humility- please spare my life. That is what the life of faith is like- asking God to spare us from our just deserves- to deliver us from the pit of wrath- to save us from our sin and misery! God takes no pleasure in the pride of man- in the

boasting of His creatures. Or as Psalm 138:6 puts it, the LORD regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar.

## II. The LORD Unaltered Response

As we move through this passage, there is a clear refrain that Ahaziah should have been able to notice. It is found in v. 4, v. 6 and again in v. 16. The LORD gives Elijah permission in v. 15- go down and don't be afraid of this man. So Elijah goes and tells Ahaziah the exact same thing- you will not get up from your bed, you will surely die! It does not matter who delivers this message- Ahaziah's own messengers or Elijah- the message remains the same. It is consistent- it is an unaltered and unchanging message. You who have exalted yourself against me- you who have trusted in idols and delved in pagan cult practices- you who have fallen out of a window and now lay sick and dying in a bed. You son of Ahab, wicked king over Israel who walks in the way of Ahab and Jeroboam- You oh man will not recover- you will not get up- but you will die. You will surely die! And in v. 17 the word of the LORD is fulfilled, so he died according to the word of the LORD. Wicked King Ahaziah ruled a short 2 years- and he dies without son and without hope!

As we have considered in this chapter, the theme of man's pride runs deep. Not only in the proud demands made by these captains, we see the pride in Ahaziah's heart as well. Instead of listening to the Word of the LORD- he thinks He can demand an audience and command Elijah to come! As we saw last week, instead of looking to the LORD for help and aid- calling upon the God in Israel who is present for his recovery, he has chosen to trust in the idols of the nations. And when the message of impending death is received, how does Ahaziah respond? Not in humility- he does not humble himself as his father did! Remember that Ahab after learning of the curse upon him and his household proclaimed by the LORD and delivered by Elijah- Ahab humbled himself as his life was spared. God saw this humility- and Ahab lived to see another day. But Ahaziah- his son- does not humble himself. So what happens to this

proud, arrogant and demanding king? Well, he dies in v. 17! Note again, he dies according to the word of the LORD. The death of Ahaziah is a double fulfillment- not only was his death promised to him by Elijah- but the death of Ahab's son was promised to Ahab already back in I Kings 21. Ahab's house is being destroyed- his line cut off- his children and name will have no lasting place on the throne or even on the earth. As this sermon point states- The Word of the LORD is true- faithful- and does not change! God keeps his Word- judgement is coming on Ahab's line- but the son of Ahab will die for his own sins as well! God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble! Or as Hab. 2 says, the proud soul is not right with the LORD, but the just shall live by faith!

To conclude, II Kings 1 starts with a man falling from a window. The son of a wicked king falls down and is taken up sick- in his pride he hardens himself and God's justice is proclaimed upon him. You will surely die. There is another example of a son falling from a window and getting hurt- that one is found in Acts 20. The young man of Acts 20 was named Eutychus, he fell out of a window and was taken up dead after falling asleep during Paul's long sermon. But this young man's life returns to him- because he was embraced in the community of the saints! In the recovery of this young man, the power of Jesus to heal, restore and revive is again proven. In this we find a glimpse of our future, when Jesus will take up the dead and bring them back to life. When Jesus raises the humble and saves those who trust in Him alone for their recovery and their future! As our theme states, Jesus Christ rebukes the Proud for refusing to humble themselves under His hand. So may we humble ourselves before the LORD, knowing that He will raise and exalt us in His time!