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1 Kings 22: “At War With The Word”

I. Introduction

A. At War With The Word

Stretching all the way back to the Garden of Eden, when the serpent slithered up to Eve to tempt her, our history has been one of warfare between man and God’s Word. In every time and place, there is a fundamental conflict between man, in his spiritually dead state, and God, as he makes himself known in His Word.

This warfare takes place even today. This war—between man and God, as he’s made himself known in his Word—consists of countless battles. There are clashes happening throughout our city. This warfare is being waged even here, in the hearts of men and women, boys and girls.

We value our freedom. We don’t like being told what to do. We find ourselves deeply resistant to submitting ourselves to anyone else’s authority.

So we hear the protest, “Who are you to tell me what to do?” or the declaration, “My body, my choice.”

It’s why year-after-year Frank Sinatra’s anthem, “I did it my way” remains the number one most requested song at funerals in the United Kingdom, ahead of traditional hymns like “Amazing Grace.”¹

We are resistant to coming under authority and so, when it comes to the Bible, God’s Word,

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/may/02/hymns-drop-off-top-10-funeral-music-choices-in-favour-of-ed-sheeran>;
<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20190520-why-my-way-is-the-most-popular-funeral-song>

which makes authoritative claims upon human beings in all areas of life, we find ourselves—all of us—naturally resistant.

Romans 8:7 instructs us why, “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.” Men and women are, by nature, truth suppressors and resisters. Though God makes himself known plainly, man refuses his testimony. He is at war with God.

Our passage tonight is a most vivid illustration of this conflict between man and God’s Word. While our account speaks to events that happened 2800 years ago, halfway around the world, little in this warfare has changed.

There is not a person here that is outside this conflict; **therefore, we should pay close attention to this passage as it warns God’s enemies that God, by His Word, will destroy all who remain his enemies by their refusal to humble themselves in true repentance before him. What is more, for those who, by his grace, have humbled themselves beneath his Word, we should draw comfort from this same truth: it is God, by his Mighty Word, that will triumph over his enemies and yours to keep his promises of salvation.**

Our approach to the story will consider two realities concerning God’s Word:

First, God’s Word is rejected. Man is prone to twist, resist and malign what God has spoken.

Second, God’s Word is sovereign. It’s power is complete, all-encompassing. His Word, the articulation of his will and purpose, is what shall actually come to pass. Though rejected by some, God’s Word will triumph.

B. Setting

Ahab was what you would call a lame-duck king. We've noted previously in our studies that the book of Kings is looking for the Promised King who would rescue God's people and it's clear that wicked Ahab is not this king. Twice already God had spoken a word of judgment on Ahab and so we're waiting for the proverbial axe to fall.

In 1 Kings 20:42, a nameless prophet of God says to Ahab, that because he disobeyed God and entered into an alliance with the enemy, "...therefore your life shall be for his life, and your people for his people."

Then, in 1 Kings 21, after Ahab robs and murders Naboth, Elijah tells Ahab, "'In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood.'" Words that will come back in our passage today.

God, however, in a display of his merciful character, responded to Ahab's remorse by withholding the full brunt of his judgment during Ahab's lifetime (vv. 25–29). Yet what is clear is that God's Word still stands and Ahab's time is running out.

For three years, Israel and Syria had been at peace,² but Ahab now saw an opportunity for reclaiming some lost land and sought the help of the righteous king of Judah, Jehoshaphat.³

Jehoshaphat agrees, but then tells Ahab they should consult the LORD first.⁴ Ahab accommodates his ally's request which sets up our story.

II. God's Word is Rejected
A. God's Word is Twisted & Resisted

² They had even been allies in a coalition of forces against Assyrian force to the east.

³ 2 Chronicles 18:1, "Now Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor, and he made a marriage alliance with Ahab." See also 2 Kings 8:18, Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son, had married Ahab's daughter.

⁴ Proverbs 21:31, "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the LORD."

Ahab calls together 400 prophets. While we have seen that Ahab kept prophets of other gods on the royal payroll, these men it appears at least claim to be speaking for the LORD (v. 11). They are not overtly pagan, but they are also not true prophets of the LORD.

When asked by Ahab what the outcome of a campaign at Ramoth-Gilead would be, these religious spokesmen quickly give Ahab the answer he was looking for: victory is yours!

It doesn't sit right with Jehoshaphat, who was actually acquainted with true religion; so, he asks for a second opinion. "Is there a prophet *of the LORD* of whom we may inquire?" he asks.

"Yes," huffs Ahab, "there is one other: Micaiah. But he never says anything good about me. I hate him. He's almost as bad as Elijah. He's not supportive in the least. If you insist on hearing him, you'll see for yourself." While Micaiah is being fetched, the kings hold court and hear more from Ahab's prophets.

One of them, Zedekiah, made a particular impression with the iron horns he used as props, saying, "Thus says the LORD, 'With these [horns] you shall push [or gore] the Syrians until they are destroyed.'" Though our passage will go on to make clear Zedekiah was absolutely wrong, he wasn't making stuff up entirely. It seems likely that Zedekiah was prophesying or preaching from Deuteronomy 33:17. There God says that some of the northern tribes of Israel, with the horns like a wild ox, would "gore the [nations], all of them, to the ends of the earth."⁵

"See," Zedekiah says, "it's right here in the Bible, O King. Victory is yours!"

⁵ The Hebrew verb 'to gore' is used less than a dozen times in the Old Testament and given that Ephraim and Manasseh were at the heart of the northern kingdom there is a good chance that Zedekiah had this verse in mind.

While Zedekiah could perhaps point to chapter and verse in the Bible, he really didn't care whether that verse applied to this situation. He didn't flinch to twist the Scripture out of its context if it would tell the king what he wanted to hear.

Then we see another indicator of how Ahab's court resists God's Word. The prophet Micaiah is brought by a messenger to the royal court. On the way, Ahab's messenger wants to prep Micaiah.

"Look, Micaiah, you should know that *all the other 400 prophets*—reasonable fellows—have unanimously announced that Ahab would be victorious. As you can guess, this has put the king in a very good mood! And we all want that, don't we? Be a team player here and speak favorably about this campaign."

What a verse for our times this is!

It is a difficult and lonely place to be in Micaiah's shoes. There is no explicit threat or persecution at this point, but the subtle pressures: are you sure you want to be the *difficult, disagreeable one*?

The messenger's request, however, shows that he, like the rest of Ahab's court, completely misunderstands the nature of true religion. Micaiah cannot simply manufacture or massage a message that will endear him to the king. That's not how Biblical religion works! It's not how God's spokesmen the prophets work!⁶

⁶ Dale Ralph Davis, [1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly](#) (Focus on the Bible Commentary; Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 317–318. Dale Ralph Davis writes, "Whatever word Yahweh gives a prophet, that is what the prophet must speak. The prophet is not at liberty to massage or shape or bend, let alone pervert, that word. The word of Yahweh is a given and must be passed on as a given. *The true prophet of God is in bondage to an uncoercible word of God.* The word of Yahweh is free; the servant of Yahweh is in bondage to it."

To Ahab, Zedekiah, and this messenger, God’s Word—whether it was recorded in the law of Moses or came from the prophet—wasn’t something living and active and authoritative. Something that they had to come under. It was a tool that they stood over: useful to them for inspiring, affirming, motivating. So Ahab can grumble that Micaiah doesn’t say what he wants him to. Zedekiah can twist the Scriptures to support the new campaign. The messenger can prod Micaiah to simply decide to say something nice for a change. In this way, Ahab and his court were post-modern before it was cool. Their approach said you could select out of “religion” what “what works for you” or what will meet your emotional needs.

Their view of God’s Word reminds me of the toy which I won at school as a boy. It was one of those “Magic Eight Balls.”⁷ Perhaps you remember them. You would ask a question and shake this plastic oracle and then an answer would appear. “Does Suzy like me?” “My sources say no.” [Shake again] The beauty of the eight ball is that you would just shake it again until it gave you the answer you wanted.

How many of us treat the God’s Word in that way? We control it, shaking it until it appears to us it produces the message we want. We are masters over the Word, not mastered by the Word. We use the Word as if it were an instrument in our hands to accomplish our purposes, not an instrument in God’s hands to accomplish his. We pick out our verse or devotional reflection for the day to meet our need for love, peace, or some other emotional support.⁸ We base our evaluation of the sermon on whether we *liked* what the preacher said or not (not whether or not it was true).

⁷ Perhaps another illustration would be of the buffet table. Ahab stands over the Word like we stand over a container of fried rice at the buffet line. We are in a position over the Word to decide whether we’d pick it up or not.

⁸ Perhaps one of the more obvious examples of this in self-identified Christian literature is Sarah Young’s *Jesus Calling* products that actually are presented as new messages from God that fail to reflect the breadth and complexity of themes concerning God and his commands that we see in Scripture. See Randy Alcorn’s review for more: <https://www.epm.org/blog/2018/Jun/18/some-concerns-about-jesus-calling-and-thoughts-suf>

This is the assumption that underlies the messenger's not-to-subtle request. This is our warfare. We will not submit ourselves beneath the Word, but we seek to stand above it and make it repeat back to us what we think we need it to say.

III. **God's Word is Sovereign**

A. **God's Word Condemns His Enemy**

Well, our account shows us God's Word being rejected—twisted, resisted, maligned—by wicked men. In their attitudes toward the Word we see something of our battle against God's Word that rages around us, and in us. Even if you are truly a Christian today, you now engage in this battle *against* the remaining sin in you, not *with* your flesh against the LORD. Though you've been given a new nature and are being made increasingly holy, sin still remains at work in you and resists submitting to God's Authoritative Word (Romans 7).

Seeing this resistance to God's Word, note now the power of God's Word.

When Micaiah comes and stands before the kings, he surprises us by saying *exactly* what the 400 prophets of Ahab had said, "Go up and triumph; the LORD will give it into the hand of the king" (c.f. vv. 12, 15). You can hear the royal court clapping in approval!

But Ahab is not convinced. He notes the sarcasm in Micaiah's voice. It seems from his comments that Micaiah had this habit of starting his speeches to Ahab by telling him just what he wanted to hear. So Ahab presses him, "How many times, Micaiah, must I make you to swear to tell the truth?"

And Micaiah drops the acts and with dead seriousness says: You want the truth? “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, ‘These have no master [no king]; let each return to his home in peace.’”¹⁰ In other words, Ahab, I saw that Israel’s king was dead, but this actually let the people have some peace.

Frustration mounts, as Micaiah shares another vision that shows us just how vast the scope and great the might of God’s Word is.

Look at v. 19. This is the second time we’ve heard someone seated on a throne in this chapter. The first time was with Ahab and Jehoshaphat holding court with the royal prophets. This time the throne is in heaven and its God who sits on it, holding court with the heavenly multitude. We’re meant to see a contrast between two rulers: King Ahab vs. King Yahweh. Ahab continues to resist God’s Word. Who will win this contest?

The heavenly assembly is similar to the one we saw at the beginning of our study in Job when the “sons of God came to present themselves, and Satan also came among them.”¹¹ God is surrounded by these spiritual beings and he poses the question, “Who will entice—or seduce—Ahab to Ramoth-Gilead?”¹² Ideas are exchanged but ultimately an evil spirit comes forward and proposes that he will be

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ki 22:17.

¹¹ Job 1:6, Job 2:1

¹² R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., [Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament](#) (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 742. “The basic verb idea is “be open, spacious, wide,” and might relate to the immature or simple one who is open to all kinds of enticement, not having developed a discriminating judgment as to what is right or wrong.”

a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab’s prophets (v. 22). He would go and cause the prophets to speak lies to Ahab.

Wait, what? You might wonder: how can this be? Is God guilty of deception here? Isn’t God completely good and holy?

Yes, absolutely He is!

- Deuteronomy 32:4, ““The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”¹³
- James 1:13, “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.”¹⁴

So then how can the God of those verses be the God in these verses?¹⁵

I suspect this is a question that some of you will be troubled by and so we must ask it. We could easily spend an entire sermon on vv. 21–23, but today I’ll limit myself to making two important points.

1. God Does Not Hide The Truth From Ahab

First, notice that while the enticing spirit is sent and granted success by God, God himself does not keep the truth from Ahab. God tells Ahab through Micaiah the truth: the prophets are full of lies that will kill him. Ahab, however, hardens his heart and chooses to embrace the deception, even though the truth is made plain to him through the prophet.

2. “God Rules Over Sin and Sinners”¹⁶

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Dt 32:4.

¹⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jas 1:13.

¹⁵ Other verses worth noting here ar

¹⁶ Chad Van Dixhoorn, *Confessing the Faith*, 75. “Does God simply not interfere, and in that way permit sin to happen? The answer to that must be no. God permits sin, but it is the sort of permission that is ‘joined with... a most wise and powerful bounding’ or limiting. God rules over sin and sinners. God decides the extend to which sin will reign and the extent to which it will be restrained in his world, and in the life of every man, woman and child... SO these sins are ordered and governed by God in a ‘manifold dispensation’. That is to say, God sometimes limits our sin, and sometimes permits sin in a varied, complex administration or arrangement, and always according ‘to his own holy ends’.”

Secondly, the best shorthand explanation that I can give you of what is happening here comes from one of the summaries of Biblical teaching our church uses, *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. I'd encourage you to look up Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 5 on Google afterward. It's only a few paragraphs. Listen carefully as I paraphrase the fourth paragraph for you:

The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God show themselves in God's providence [that is, God's keeping and ruling over his creatures], that his providence extends itself even over the first fall into sin, and all other sins of angels and men; and he doesn't just passively allow it to happen, but he wisely and powerfully puts limits on sins, and arranges them, and governs them, in various ways, to accomplish his holy purpose; even still, the sinfulness of these actions comes from the creature that does them, and not from God who is holy and righteous, and is neither the author nor approver of sin.¹⁷

In other words, God's rule, which he exercises by his Word, extends even over sin and sinners, but he is not the source of or an approver of the sinfulness of the act. In our text, God decrees that the deceitful spirit should entice Ahab through his prophets, the spirit acts according to his own wickedness, the prophets act according to their own wickedness, and Ahab believes them according to his own wickedness, but God causes this to happen for holy purpose.¹⁸

We see the same idea—creatures purposing to do evil but God overriding their wicked purposes to accomplish his good design—taught elsewhere in Scripture:

¹⁷ https://opc.org/wcf.html#Chapter_05. "The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin."

¹⁸ The clearest and most accessible book on the topic of providence, free will, and divine/human responsibility that I know of is, Scott Christiansen, *What About Free Will?* Ligonier also has a short article on the topic of divine concurrence that some may find helpful. <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/divine-concurrence/>

- Job 1-2. Satan approaches God with evil purposes in his heart to afflict Job. God permits it and causes it to happen, but for his good purposes!
- Genesis 50: Joseph declares that the evil actions of his brothers, though meant for evil purposes, were at the same time caused by God for his good purpose— to rescue God’s people from famine.
- In Acts 2, Peter’s preaches that Jesus was crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men—the wickedest of sins—and yet this was in accordance with the definite, good plan of God.¹⁹

In each of these cases, wicked creatures acted out of their wicked desires to do wicked things, but the good God acted according to his good desires to bring about good things through those same actions.

So here, in 1 Kings 22, God ordains that this deceitful spirit, acting according to its own corrupted nature, would deceive Ahab, but God would use the deceitful spirit in the prophets to keep his Word: to bring promised judgment on Ahab.²⁰

a. **Warning for God’s Enemies: Defeat is Certain**

But Micaiah’s vision isn’t given to us to as a (potentially confusing) theology lesson. There is a very clear purpose to it. Remember our contrast: Ahab on his throne at Samaria, the LORD on his throne in heaven.

The veil between the earthly and spiritual realm has been pulled back momentarily so we can see a picture of God whose Word exercises power even over the forces of evil. By his Word, he makes even the unwitting and unwilling forces of evil accomplish His purposes of judgment and grace.

So let me ask you, knowing what we know now: God has spoken His Word, Ahab resists it. In a showdown between God and His Word and Ahab, who is going to win?

¹⁹ Acts 2:23. The example of David’s census is another illustrative case. In 2 Samuel 24:1, we’re told that “...the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and [the LORD] incited David against them...” but in a passage that speaks of the same event in 2 Chronicles 21, we read “Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel...”

²⁰ This good action by God also relieves the people from a wicked, destructive reign.

So long as Ahab resists, refusing to humble himself in repentance, he doesn't stand a chance.

The vision is meant *to warn the one who would refuse to submit in faith and repentance to God's Word* that this is a battle you cannot possibly win.²¹

B. God's Word Destroys His Enemy

Well, having peeked into heaven and seeing the commanding power of God's Word, and knowing that God had already spoken his Word of judgment against Ahab and that Ahab still refuses to humble himself under God's Word, we can anticipate what comes next.

Though he had been warned, Ahab takes the counsel of the 400 prophets and heads into battle. And while he didn't believe Micaiah enough to change his plans, he shows that he's nervous. Jehoshaphat, showing once again that perhaps his prudence didn't match his piety, agrees to go into battle in royal gear while Ahab disguises himself. Since the Syrians are targeting Ahab, it almost costs Jehoshaphat his life until the Syrians realize that he's not Ahab.

Ahab may have outsmarted the Syrians but he cannot outrun God.

Verse 34 is just a remarkable piece of storytelling: "But a certain man [who knows who he is?] drew his bow at random..." In other words, he's just a guy fighting. He strings his bow, he sends an arrow flying through the air, and *it just so happens* that the arrow buries itself in the one vulnerable spot in King Ahab's armor. It proves the fatal shot. Ahab dies that evening from his wound and his men—keeping with Micaiah's vision—leave the battle for the safety of home (vv. 35–36).

²¹ Another significant application of this passage—but one that time would not permit me to make here—is that this should prevent Christians from despairing when we see false teaching in the church. The church throughout history has constantly been confronted "by false sons in her pale"—Judaizers, Docetists, Antinomians, Arians, Modalists, Gnostics, Roman Catholics, Mormonism, Health and Wealth Teachers, certain Charismatic movements, Progressive Christianity, Critical Race Theory, Kinism to name a few. We do right to grieve as Paul did, writing with tears in his eyes about enemies of the cross. We should pray and speak truth clearly and firmly. We should warn others. But we should not despair. For even those who promote or believe false teaching do so under the providence of God.

Though the arrow seems random, we know from God's prophetic Word that it was actually hit its intended mark.²² God had spoken a Word of judgment against wicked Ahab. Then, to carry out that judgment, he had commanded that the deceitful spirit should work in the prophets to drive Ahab to the place of his ruin. And now with divine precision God brings his Word to fulfillment with a seemingly random arrow.

Ahab wouldn't submit himself *to* God's Word and he couldn't run *from* God's Word, so it means that Ahab would be destroyed *by* God's Word.

Our passage concludes in vv. 37–40 by highlighting the exact manner in which God's Word worked.²³ Just as God had spoken through his prophet Elijah, Ahab's shame was complete as the dogs licked at his blood and the prostitutes bathe in the pool his blood was washed off into.

IV. Application

So let's recap where we've been before we make some final applications:

1. Our chapter—and Ahab's life more generally—is a picture of man's rejection of, rebellion against, resistance to God and His Word.
2. The Word that men and women resist being subject to is God's powerful, sovereign Word which rules over all things, even the forces of evil themselves.
3. Since God's Word commands all things, the fulfillment of God's Word of judgment upon Ahab was certain.

²² Another example of divine concurrence. The archer shoots the arrow with his own purpose/intention (obedience to orders, self-preservation, trying to kill a general enemy). God has the arrow shot for his own purpose/intention (fulfillment of his word, death to Ahab).

²³ C.f. v. 38, '...according to the word of the LORD that he had spoken

What does this mean for us? Three points:

A. Rejection of the Word Will Destroy You

First, rejection of the Word will destroy you. Ahab was a powerful man. He controlled a significant army. He had unilateral power over his kingdom. He had wealth. He had every advantage that someone in his day might have.

With all this, his life was still a continual opposition to God's Word. How many times did God through his prophets warn Ahab to turn from his sin to God for mercy? Yet, at every point, he resisted. He did not want to be told what to do. How to live his life. He didn't want to be a man under someone else's authority.

If any of the oddsmakers in Israel were to give odds on who stood the best chance of resisting coming under God's Word, surely they would have said Ahab, wouldn't they? He was the most powerful person in the kingdom (next to Jezebel, perhaps)! And yet what happens to him?

To use the ol' sports cliché, Ahab runs into a buzz saw.

Dale Ralph Davis summarizes the message of our chapter this way, "*...the word of God destroys the man who defies it.*"²⁴ That's exactly right.

Friend, I wonder if tonight you've been fighting Ahab's fight?

Ahab wanted to be free from any restraining obligation to the LORD. He valued his personal freedom, his autonomy. I'm sure he'd agree with the Word where it was agreeable to him, but that wasn't submission. He would agree with the Word on his terms.

Is that how you live your life?

²⁴ Dale Ralph Davis, [*1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly*](#) (Focus on the Bible Commentary; Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 311.

If you're not a Christian—and by that, I mean someone who trusts only in Jesus work for your salvation and is seeking with his help to submit more and more to *His Word*—then this is a passage that should put the fear of God in you, friend.

If you've said that you're going to live life on your terms, engage with God on your terms (if at all), your heading for the same buzz saw that Ahab ran into.

And to be clear, you can be living a really good, moral life—or a life that gives every indication of success—and still be resistant to coming under God's Word which demands entire submission.

Or, maybe you'd consider yourself a Christian, but there are parts of your life that you are *willfully, persistently* refusing to submit to God and you're not grieved by that. Or, like Ahab, though you're confronted by the truth of God's Word, you're only going to comply with what you read in your Bible or what you hear preached from the pulpit when it is agreeable to you (2 Timothy 4:3). So you'll come to church, volunteer, maintain a certain appearance, but in certain other places of life, what you say with your mouth, what you watch with your eyes, what you do with your body, what you hear with your ears... you're still going to do things your way.

I would beg of you to look at Ahab!

In the 18th century, in England, criminals such as pirates were sometimes executed by public hanging. In a rather gruesome practice (which I am glad is gone), pirates such as Captain William Kidd were hung until dead and then their bodies were left to hang and rot over the River Thames in an iron gibbet. The purpose was to warn others that such lawlessness would result in a similar ruin.

I want you to think of Ahab's body, propped up and dying in his chariot, that way: his death is meant very publicly laid out for you to warn you. With all his power, Ahab defied God's Word and it destroyed him. And it will you too.

B. Belief in the Word Will Save You

But it doesn't have too. There is a way of escape.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, the apostle Paul, addressing concerns about the end of the world, speaks of the mystery of lawlessness that is at work as men resist God and his revelation. Paul there speaks of how there are those 'who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.' In their natural state, they reject God's Word and embrace the lies of the Evil One which are, at the same time, an act of God's judgment (vv. 9–11).

But not all will come under this delusion or suffer condemnation. The way of escape is found in 2:13, "But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the LORD, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, *through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

How then do Word-defiers, Word-resisters escape from plunging headlong into the buzz saw of God's Word? (1) God graciously chooses that he would show his mercy to you (2) which he does *through* his Spirit setting you apart as holy and you believing in the truth (3) which you hear through the gospel (4) that you may obtain the riches of his glory, not the fury of his judgment.

God, by his grace, has made a way for Word-defiers to be saved: believe in the truth which is made known to you in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For God, who spoke through the prophets, has spoken to us now by his Son (Hebrews 1:3). He, Jesus, is the Word of God, the Word-Became-Flesh (John 1:1, 14). In Jesus, the character of God was on display as the fullness of deity dwelt in him (Colossians 2:9). In Jesus, the commands of God were made known as Jesus taught and lived in full submission to His Father's Will (John 4:34).

Jesus, the Word, is offered to you now to embrace by faith, to humbly submit yourself so that you would not come under condemnation or be destroyed.

C. Belief in the Word Brings Relief

And while it is certainly true that even in Christians our sinful natures resist submitting to God's Word, and this passage challenges us to a more thorough submission, this is also a story that is meant to give us encouragement. For Micaiah, or the Jew reading the account of the Kings in exile, God fulfilling his Word in the judgment of Ahab was yet another confirmation that the LORD's Word is strong and true. When God speaks, by that same Word he is able to act and accomplish.

This story fortifies God's people because it reminds us *his mercies are as sure as his judgments*. What God says, he can and will certainly do.

It is a proof of what God says in Isaiah 55:11, "...[my word] *will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*"²⁵

²⁵ Isaiah 55:10–11 NIV. "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: *it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it*"

If God would not or could not keep his word when it came to his promised judgments, then you could not be sure he would keep his Word when it came to his promised blessings. But he does keep it!

And that meant, for the first readers, that God's promises to bring his people back from exile and into the land would be kept and that his promise to send a salvation-bearing king would be kept.

It means God's promises to you, Christian, will be kept: that he will never leave you nor forsake you (Heb. 13), that he will graciously give us all that we truly need, and that out of the riches of his grace he will give us an eternal inheritance (1 Peter 1:4).

That he who began a good work in you *will* bring it to completion (Phil. 1:6), that you *will* be sanctified completely (1 Thess. 5:23), that you *will* be raised in power at his coming (1 Corinthians 15:43), that on that day you *will* be found presented before your God without spot or blemish (Jude 24), and you *will* enter into His promised rest (Heb. 4:1).

Though the certainty of God's judgments are dreadful, the fact that his Word infallibly comes to pass means that our hope is sure, our confidence justified, and that He is worth trusting in.²⁶

So, beloved, see and tremble at the power of God's Word. Know that all who proudly resist it and defy it will come to everlasting ruin and ask God for his grace that you might submit to him and His Word more and more. And then know and rest in this: since his Word is powerful and true, you have reason to hope because God always keeps His Word. Let's pray.

²⁶ Dale Ralph Davis, [*1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly*](#) (Focus on the Bible Commentary; Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 326. For the writer of Kings, history is no accident but is directed by the word Yahweh speaks. Both the unwilling and the unknowing only fulfill it. Precisely here a bit of gladness reaches out of this dark narrative and grabs the people of God, for if Yahweh's word is certain (the writer's point), we know that Yahweh's words of hope must be as solid as his words of judgment. His glory word must be as sure as his gory word. The coming of a kingdom (Dan. 2:44) is as sure as the departure of a king (Ahab); 2 Peter 3:13 must be as certain as 1 Kings 21:19. This point will not resolve all your personal problems—but it will pour some concrete into the bottom of your pit.²⁶