

=====

<sup>21</sup>Then his servants said to him, "Look now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Please, let us put sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life." <sup>22</sup>So they wore sackcloth around their waists and put ropes around their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said, "Your servant Ben-Hadad says, 'Please let me live.'" And he said, "Is he still alive? He is my brother." <sup>23</sup>Now the men were watching closely to see whether any sign of mercy would come from him; and they quickly grasped at this word and said, "Your brother Ben-Hadad." So he said, "Go, bring him." Then Ben-Hadad came out to him; and he had him come up into the chariot. <sup>24</sup>So Ben-Hadad 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 Ahab said, "I will send you away with this treaty." So he made a treaty with him and sent him away. <sup>25</sup>Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor by the word of the LORD, "Strike me, please." And the man refused to strike him. <sup>26</sup>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. <sup>27</sup>And he found another man, and said, "Strike me, please." So the man struck him, inflicting a wound. <sup>28</sup>Then the prophet departed and waited for the king by the road, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes. <sup>29</sup>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.'" <sup>30</sup>While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone." Then the king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it." <sup>31</sup>And he hastened to take the bandage away from his eyes; and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. <sup>32</sup>Then he said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have let slip out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.'" <sup>33</sup>So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria.

=====

# 1. Ahab's misguided mercy

- a. Ben Hadad had threatened to take Ahab's wives & children & all that was in his household
  - a1. He vowed to reduce Samaria to dust
  - a2. After his humiliating defeat he attacked Samaria again
- b. Ben Hadad was brutal & cruel
- c. After BH's 2<sup>nd</sup> defeat where he lost 127,000 men, BH hides in an inner chamber in Aphek
- d. Normally, after such a defeat, the king & all his officers would be put to death
  - a1. BH, who so readily took life, expected that his life would be taken
  - a2. Justice demanded that BH should die
- e. BH's servants state that the only way to possibly save their lives would be to beg for mercy
  - a1. BH would have given no mercy
  - a2. The servants heard that the kings of Israel were merciful
- f. So, BH's servants dressed in sackcloth & tied ropes around their waists & heads
  - a1. They approach Ahab & plead for BH's life
  - a2. There is no reason to expect mercy

g. Ahab's declaration that BH is his brother is beyond belief & utterly incongruous

- a1. BH had caused the death of thousands
- a2. BH sought to destroy Ahab & Syria

h. Ahab apparently had a high regard for BH's power and admired his kingdom

i. The stunned servants play on Ahab's words

## 2. The pugnacious treaty

a. BH is so relieved that he promises to give back the cities of Israel taken by his father

- a1. He will allow Ahab to set up a market place in Damascus as BH's father had done in Samaria
- a2. BH even sits in Ahab's chariot as an equal

b. Ahab treats BH as an honored guest

## 3. Divine rebuke

a. God had given Ahab a great victory

- a1. God used Israel to judge Syria
- a2. Ahab does not ask God what to do with BH (Joshua had killed conquered kings & Saul was supposed to kill King Agag)

b. Mercy is usually reserved for the repentant

- a1. BH shows no sign of repentance
- a2. BH is fearful, but not humbled

c. A prophet is told to rebuke Ahab

- a1. He desires a man to strike him, but when he does not, he is eaten by a lion
- a2. A second man strikes the prophet hard

d. The prophet bandages his eye & tells Ahab a story of how he let a prisoner go at risk of his life

- a1. Ahab pronounces he will pay with his life
- a2. Like Nathan (2 Sam. 12), the prophet after revealing himself, says Ahab is guilty of it

e. God had determined that wicked BH should die

- a1. Ahab was to be the instrument of his death
- a2. Since Ahab let him go, his life was forfeit
- a3. Ahab returns to palace distraught

f. Holy judgment is vital (Rm. 13, 1 Cor. 5)

g. Mercy is for the repentant & humbled (Lk. 15)