



Downpour

Main Truth

The Bravehearted Way is... choosing to believe that God is who He says He is, whether or not He acts as we think He should act.

Passages to Study

1 Kings 18:41–46

Isaiah 55:6–13

Background

God brought Elijah on the scene to speak some daring words to King Ahab—there would be no rain or dew for the next few years. After Elijah dropped that bomb on Ahab, God took Elijah out of the presence of Ahab and into a place of hiddenness, where the Lord broke, taught, and trained Elijah.

Three years passed, and the Lord sent Elijah once again into Ahab's presence, this time to force him to choose a side—the Lord's or Baal's. The great showdown on top of Mount Carmel ended when God's fire fell from heaven and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the soil, and licked up the water in the trench around the altar. The people fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord—He is God! The Lord—He is God!"

Now we see Elijah order the death sentence pronounced by the Lord (Deuteronomy 13:12–18) on anyone who led the people of Israel astray by worshipping other gods. He sends Ahab off to eat and drink while Elijah climbs back to the top of Mount Carmel and prays.

The worship of Baal has been dealt a staggering blow in this showdown. The people of Israel have confessed that the Lord is God, and Elijah now prays that the curse of drought be lifted from the land of Israel. Seven times he prays. Seven times he has his servant check for clouds. On the seventh time—the number of completion—the servant reports that a cloud the size of a man's fist is on the horizon. Then, with the power of God within him and the storm-force of God behind him, Elijah outran Ahab's chariot and beat him to Jezreel.

Questions

There are many questions we could ask about this story.

If we could, we would ask Ahab:

- What were you feeling when you saw your prophets rounded up and killed?
- What were you thinking as you saw your entire religious system crumble before your eyes?
- Was there any part of you that rejoiced in seeing God's victory?

You didn't seem too terribly upset, since you went off to eat and drink, but you also didn't seem thankful. You seemed a bit dumbfounded.

- Did this event spark any hope of truth in you?

We see you running immediately (1 Kings 19:1) to Jezebel to tell on Elijah.

- Why did you not act as king, yourself?
- Why did you always defer to Jezebel?
- What was *your* heart telling you?

We would ask Elijah:

- As you removed all the prophets of Baal, did you grieve for these men who had so fully missed the truth of God?
- When you were directing the dumbfounded King Ahab, were you compassionate toward him? Frustrated with him? Fearful of him? Angry at him?
- After you had done all that God had asked you to do and the drought still was not lifted, were you frustrated with God?
- Were you angry with Him?
- As you prayed the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh times, was there any part of you that feared that God would not come through, that He would not be faithful to His word?
- Did you doubt that you had heard Him correctly?
- What were you feeling and thinking during that time of prayer each time your servant came back and told you there were no clouds on the horizon?

Reflection

After Elijah stood for God and for truth on Mount Carmel, after Elijah cleansed Israel of the prophet's of Baal, after the people confessed that the Lord is God...where do we find Elijah? Carried in victory by the people back to Jezreel? Thanked by Ahab for showing him truth? Leading the people in a song of praise to their God? No. We find that somehow the people have just dispersed. Elijah has had to tell Ahab what to do. And Elijah, himself, is found on

the ground at the top of Mount Carmel, his face between his knees begging God to relent from the curse of the drought.

The people had repented, Elijah had obeyed God. Everything that needed to be “done” was done for the drought to be lifted, but it was not. The rain didn’t come. Elijah prayed seven times for rain, and only on the seventh time did the clouds begin to form.

Making It Personal

Sometimes God does not act according to our thoughts of fairness. He does not “reward” us as we think we should be rewarded for our faithfulness. Painful events come into our lives. God delays in answering prayer. We can think of nothing left to “do” to please this God of ours. What do we do at those times?

- Think of a time when you did not understand what God was doing in your life (or the lives of others).
- How did that time not match up with your expectations of God? (Example: If God is loving, then why is my aunt dying an agonizing death from cancer?)
- How could God have been growing your knowledge of Him during that time?
- How could God have been stretching your faith during that time?

In those seasons, we have two choices. We can turn from God in frustration and anger that He has not met our expectations, or we can press into Him and plead with Him to help us understand, to help us know Him in a larger and deeper way. Which has been your response?

Application

On earth, we have an economy of give-and-take, but God’s economy does not work like ours. God’s economy is **give-and-reveal**. He gives the best, and He reveals Himself through it all. The problem is that we don’t understand God’s economy. When we *give* our best, when we obey, we truly expect a payout of some kind—we expect less pain, less heartache, and more “good” things. But God’s definition of “good” and our definition of “good” are not the same.

“The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” (Westminster Shorter Catechism)

In our earthly economy, we would state, “The chief end of man is to _____.”

But God’s ways are different. His goal is different.

Discuss how this statement could reframe your definition of “good.”

Tell a friend a story about a time when God did not meet your expectations. How did you respond to Him during that time? Ask your friend to share a similar experience. Did either of you find that your knowledge of who God is grew during that time? Did you find your intimacy with Him increased? Did you find your faith deepened?

Going Deeper

Isaiah 55:8–9, God says, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

The context of this passage is referring to God's desire to have compassion on those who will come to him and turn from their own way. In our economy, people are hurting and struggling and they are often slapped with statements like, “Well, you made your bed, so you can lie in it,” and, “You reap what you sow, buddy!” What a complete lack of understanding of God's compassionate nature these statements show!

God's economy is an economy of blessing, health, and life to us. However, when it brings us pain or confusion, we suddenly want to run back to the old give-and-take economy. How soon we forget that we would be choosing eternal death if we operated under that economy still!

Spend some time meditating on the *entire* passage—Isaiah 55:6–13—and praising Him for His grace and mercy, thanking Him for abolishing the give-and-take economy. Ask Him for the faith and strength to press into Him the next time you are faced with a situation that highlights an aspect or trait of God that you do not understand, and thank Him that you don't understand. There is always more to know and enjoy about God!