

Speaking Truth to Power:
The Prophet Elijah, #7

“Is There No God in Israel?”

2 Kings 1

--CEFC 2/23/20

(Read 1 Kings 22:51-2 Kings 1:18)

After several weeks focusing on the failed rule of King Ahab,
this morning we return to the prophet Elijah.

Elijah—do you remember what his name means in Hebrew?

“My God is the LORD, Yahweh.”

Elijah--“My God is the LORD.”

His name almost shouts out with the question—

“So who is your god?”

This is the question that Elijah’s ministry posed to the people of Israel in his day,
and it is the question it poses to us in our day.

Who is your god?

I’m sure most people here this morning would say, “Oh, that’s easy.

My God is the God of the Bible.

My God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

My God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And that’s a good answer.

That's the right answer.

Yes, that is the answer in our heads,

but is it really the answer in our hearts?

“My God is the LORD,” may be easy to say,

but is it true?

And how would you know if it's true?

Martin Luther addressed this question in his *Large Catechism*

which begins with a reflection on the first commandment:

“You shall have no other gods before me.”

“That is, you are to regard me alone as your God.”

Luther asks, “What does this mean, and how is it to be understood?”

What does “to have a god” mean . . . ?”

Luther's answer is this:

“A “god” is the term for that to which we are to look for all good

and in which we are to find refuge in all need.

Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one

with your whole heart.”

“As I have often said” Luther writes, “it is the trust and faith of the heart alone

that make both God and an idol.

If your faith and trust are right,

then your God is the true one.

Conversely, where your trust is false and wrong,

there you do not have the true God.

For these two belong together, faith and God.
**Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say,
that is really your God.”¹**

So how do you know what you trust in for your good,
and what you look to as your refuge in time of need?

It is really hard to tell when all is well—
when life is good—when your health is no problem
and all your bills are paid.

But all of life is not like that—
and for none of us will life be like that all the time.

The question is, What will you trust in then?
What will you look to when you encounter a real need—
when your nice, secure, stable life starts to fall apart?

Where will you put our trust when your health fails,
or you lose your job,
or your family falls apart,
and the fragile nature of your life is laid bare?

Who is your god?
Is it the LORD, the God of the Bible—
or is it something else?

That’s the question raised by Elijah’ ministry in Israel
and that question comes to the fore once again in our passage this morning,

¹ Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*, “[The First Part: The Ten Commandments],” *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert; trans. Charles Arand, et al.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 386.

as we pick up the biblical narrative at the end of 1 Kings 22.

1 Kings 22:51.

King Ahab is gone, and some might say, “Good riddance!”,

but in his place is his son Ahaziah.

And our writer clues us in from the start about what to expect from him

in the story that follows—

1 Kings 22:51—

“Ahaziah son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria

in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah,

and he reigned over Israel two years.

52 He did evil in the eyes of the LORD,

because he followed the ways of his father and mother

and of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin.

53 He served and worshiped Baal

and aroused the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel,

just as his father had done.”

He was, as they say, a chip off the old block.

Ahaziah “did evil in the eyes of the LORD,

because he followed the ways of his father and mother.”

Parents, just consider this for a moment.

Now hear me carefully when I say,

it is certainly not always the case

that children follow in the footsteps of their parents,
but it is a pattern that occurs often enough

to make us take stock of our own lives.

Are you living in a way that you want your children to follow?

Little eyes are watching, more than you may realize—

They see the way you relate to your spouse—

is it kind or is it harsh?

Are they seeing a healthy, loving marriage

or one that is fractured and full of friction?

And those eyes see the way you relate to your god—

and they see what your god is—

in the way you spend your time and your money—

and where you go in times of need.

Are you serving and worshipping some idol,

or it is the Lord, the one true God of the Bible?

Ahaziah “**served and worshiped Baal**

and aroused the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel,

just as his father had done.”

Parents, the stakes are high, so beware.

Ahaziah followed in the footsteps of his father and mother—

Ahab and Jezebel--

and so the behavior our writer describes in what follows

will not surprise us.

But before we get to that,

our writer inserts one point of interest regarding international relations—
2 Kings 1:1—**"After Ahab's death, Moab rebelled against Israel."**

Nothing else is said about this insurrection,

and we may wonder why it is even mentioned.

Israel's relationship with Edom will be picked up again in chap. 3,

but why it is referred to here?

I suspect that it is simply further reinforcement of the failure

that results from following false gods.

Earlier, back in v. 47, we are told that King Asa's relatively righteous son Jehoshaphat,

king of the southern kingdom of Judah,

was able to maintain his control over Edom,

but here Ahab's Baal-worshipping son Ahaziah loses that control.²

The Biblical writer underlines wherever possible that we live in a moral universe,

and a refusal to give the Lord God the worship he is due

will have its tragic consequences.

We dare not forget that.

But in v. 2 we get to the main story illustrating that truth,

a story involving a tragic fall—

a tragic fall in more than one sense.

² So Provan.

**“Now Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria
and injured himself.”**

Falling from a second story window is no small matter.
In the book of Acts we read of a young man named Eutychus
who fell asleep while Paul was preaching,
and he fell from a third story window, and he died.

Only a miraculous act of God saved him (Acts 20:9)
(which should be a warning to anyone
who even thinks about falling asleep during a sermon!).

But Ahaziah only fell from a second story,
so he didn't die, but suffered severe injuries—
injuries that were, as we'll see, life threatening.

This is the inciting incident of the story.

So what is Ahaziah's reaction?

Does the king of Israel cry to the LORD, the God of Israel, for his mercy
to save his life?

No, he doesn't.

Instead, Ahaziah **“sent messengers, saying to them,
“Go and consult Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron,
to see if I will recover from this injury.”**

Ahaziah in his time of need appeals to **“Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron.”**

Ekron was one of the five cities of the Philistines

located on the coast.

Ekron was foreign territory.

And the gods of the Philistines were foreign gods.

The name of the particular god Ahaziah wants to inquire of

may sound familiar.

It's found in the Gospels,

but with a variant—either as Beelzebub or as Beelzebul.

And there, this god is referred to by the Pharisees as the “**prince of demons,**”

and by Jesus as **Satan** himself (Mt. 12:24f).

Baal-zebul, which means “lord prince” may have been this god's Philistine name,

but Baal-zebub, which means “lord of flies”

may have been the name given to him by the Jews--

a kind of degrading, even mocking, corruption of the name

to better express their opinion of him.

In any event, as Ahaziah lay in bed, in desperate straits,

this is the god, this is the power, he looked to for help.

“he sent messengers, saying to them,

“Go and consult Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron,

to see if I will recover from this injury.”

This is the king of Israel, remember—

he was the king of that nation chosen by God to be his light to all nations—

Israel was his covenant people to whom the Lord had revealed his holy law

and whom he had rescued from slavery in Egypt

with a mighty hand in parting the Red Sea.

And this king of Israel, in his moment of crisis,
is spurning the LORD and turning to some pagan god. /

What happens next is just what we expect—
for it underlines a truth that is central to the ministry of Elijah—

3 But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite,
“Go up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them,
‘Is it because there is no God in Israel
that you are going off to consult Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?’

4 Therefore this is what the LORD says:
‘You will not leave the bed you are lying on.
You will certainly die!’ ”

The LORD God is a jealous God.

He demands our exclusive worship.

“Jealous” as a description of God may sound petty and spiteful,
but that is only because our human jealousy can be, and often is,
petty and spiteful.

We are jealous of other people’s success or their power or their wealth.

Our jealousy often flows out of our own insecurities and sense of entitlement.

We are not grateful for what we have,
and we covet what God has not given to us.

But jealousy doesn’t have to be small-minded.

Is it wrong for a husband to be jealous for his wife’s affections?

I don’t think so.

Should a husband not care if his wife goes after other lovers?

How could you think that?

There is a proper jealousy,
and the LORD is rightly jealous of our affections,
and our loyalties.

And here the LORD is rightly jealous
of the proper loyalty he should receive from this king--
this king whom he doesn't even refer to as the king of Israel,
but disparagingly as the king of Samaria. //

**'Is it because there is no God in Israel
that you are going off to consult Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?'**

Three times we hear those words in this chapter—

I think our writer is trying to make a point.

And it is a point we should all take to heart,

for it comes down to that central question:

Who is your god?

Who do you look to for comfort, for strength, for help,
for saving power?

Is it Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?—

who, of course, could be represented by those manipulators of spiritual power
and of human gullibility
who display their wares

in those store-front parlors—

I'm thinking of the fortune tellers, mediums, and crystal-gazers,

who deal in tarot cards and palm reading and the like.

Those folks who claim to tap into the deep mysteries of the occult.

These dispensers of spiritual guidance are very much alive in our modern America.

Yelp lists over forty such psychics within easy driving distance of this building.

Is that where you go?

Do you read your horoscope before you plan your day?

In other cultures, it might be the village witch doctor who is called in

when the sick child is hanging on to life,

and nothing else seems to be working.

These are the Baal-zebubs, the gods of Ekron, that people turn to.

Don't do it—

you are dabbling with the demonic when you do such things. /

But there are much more sophisticated forms that Baal-zebub can take

in our enlightened Western world.

I think of the words of former professional cyclist

and cancer survivor Lance Armstrong.

When he was once asked if a belief in God helped him overcome cancer.

His response was: "Everyone should believe in something,

and I believe in surgery, chemotherapy and my doctors."³

Is that your god—modern medicine?

Is that where your hope lies?

³ according to *The Guardian*,

Is that what you will depend on for life and health and happiness?

Many do.

Just one more test, one more drug, one more surgery—

surely, my doctors will save me.

Modern medicine can function as Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron,

a foreign god.

That's not to say that we don't call a doctor when we are sick.

No, good medical care is one of the ways that the Lord can work

to take care of us.

The Lord can heal miraculously,

but that is not his ordinary mode of operation.

That's why, when it happens, we call it a miracle.

But the Lord's usual practice is to heal people

through the ordinary means of his providence,

both through the healing powers he has built into our human bodies,

and through the help our bodies can receive

through medical intervention.

There is nothing wrong with seeking the best medical advice,

and the most advanced medical treatment.

But where does your ultimate hope and confidence lie—

in the medical doctor or our divine Lord?⁴

“For his reason,” writes Phil Ryken,

prayer is indispensable to every Christian's health plan.”

He continues:

“Someone who says, “I am at peace about this operation

⁴ cf. Ryken, *2 Kings*, p. 9,10.

because there is a 95 percent chance of success,” is not trusting in God.
It is much better to say, “I hope this operation will be successful.

But whether it is or not, I am at peace

because my trust is in God and in his Son, Jesus Christ.”⁵

The Lord cares about our bodies—

he created our bodies as an essential part of who we are.

And in his earthy ministry, Jesus healed bodies

as a visible sign of the in-breaking of his kingdom—

that kingdom which will result in our ultimate healing

when we are raised bodily with Christ in glory.

Only our God can give that ultimate healing,

so only our God can be the ultimate source of hope and trust and peace

when our bodily health is threatened.

Ahaziah doesn't get that.

By sending for Baal-zebub, he is implying that the LORD Yahweh

is either non-existent or irrelevant and inadequate—

isn't this what idolatry means?⁶

As he lay clinging to life,

“Ahaziah chose to dance with the devil rather than walk with God.”⁷ /

So we have this prophetic proclamation given to the prophet Elijah—

“Go up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them,

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Davis, p. 19.

⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

'Is it because there is no God in Israel

that you are going off to consult Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?'

4 Therefore this is what the LORD says:

'You will not leave the bed you are lying on.

You will certainly die!' "

We assume that Elijah meets those messengers of the king,

and they return to the king.

And he is surprised they have returned so soon.

They then convey that prophetic message.

v. 7—"The king asked them,

"What kind of man was it who came to meet you and told you this?"

What did he look like?

8 They replied, "He had a garment of hair and had a leather belt around his waist."

There was no doubt—he knew exactly who they were talking about.

The king said, "That was Elijah the Tishbite." /

It is now decision time for the king.

This prophetic word, as harsh and as condemning as it sounds,

was, in fact, an act of mercy.

A prophetic word of condemnation in the Bible

often comes with an element of contingency.

It offers in implicit opportunity for repentance.

We see often that—

there is a hidden contingency clause—

this judgment of God is what will happen—*unless* . . .

unless you recognize your sin,
humble yourself,
and seek the Lord's mercy.

You stand under the judgment of God

unless you turn away from your sin and toward the God of grace.

The Ninevites did this at the condemning prophecy of Jonah,

and the Lord's wrath turned away.

And didn't we see the same thing to some degree

even in Ahab's life.

He humbled himself before Elijah after the murder of Naboth

and God's judgment of him and his family was delayed.

And we will see it again in King Hezekiah's life in 2 Kings 20.

In the words of one commentator:

"If . . . Yahweh is severe, he is at the same moment merciful.

His nasty interruption of Ahaziah's mission is,

if the king could only see,

a last opportunity.

Yahweh did not allow Ahaziah's idolatry to proceed in peace

but invaded his space and rubbed his face in the first commandment again.

Again, we see our uncomfortable God:

Yahweh is furious, not tolerant;

holy, not reassuring;

loving, not nice.

But there is love in his fury.

He won't let you walk the path to idolatry easily;

his mercy litters the way with roadblocks.

That is a wonder considering [how] he so detests our idols.”⁸

The LORD God is full of mercy—

and he delights in showing that mercy

to those who come to the light of the truth

and call out to him.

And here Ahaziah has that opportunity,

he needs to respond to the prophet Elijah as his father once did (21:27-29).

But that is not to be—

In his time of need, Ahaziah not only consults the devil,

he also confronts God.

We see this in v. 9, where the action of the story takes a new turn—

“Then [Ahaziah] sent to Elijah a captain with his company of fifty men.

The captain went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill,

and said to him,

“Man of God, the king says, ‘Come down!’”

What was Ahaziah doing in sending a captain with fifty soldiers to get Elijah?

Was this a guard of honor,

⁸ Davis, p. 19.

that would provide a royal escort

to an adoring reception in the king's presence?

I don't think so.

[No, this] "was an open declaration of hostilities.

and Elijah treated it as such."⁹

In fact, the LORD treats it as such.

You see that as the LORD later, under changed circumstances,

has to assure Elijah that he no longer needs to be afraid

to go see the king.

Sending this troop of soldiers was a hostile act.

They had come to arrest Elijah.

Make no mistake,

Ahaziah perceived the prophet of God as a threat that had to be silenced.

King Ahaziah believed what those challenged by the word of God often believe—

that the word of God could be restrained by the restraint of his messenger.

We saw that last week, didn't we—

when Ahab tried to get rid of the prophet Micaiah

by locking him up (22:26).

Somehow, he thought that that would lock up, and neutralize,

the divine message.

It doesn't work that way.

In the New Testament we read of another king, King Herod Agrippa,

⁹ Ellison, cited in Davis, p. 21.

who tried to do the same thing.

Acts 12:1 we read—the king “arrested some who belonged to the church,

intending to persecute them.

He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. . . .”

But listen to the way that chapter ends--

Acts 12:21 “On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes,

sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people.

22 They shouted, “This is the voice of a god, not of a man.”

23 Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God,

an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

24 But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.”

“But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.”

Herod couldn't stand over the power of the word of God

and neither could Ahaziah—

and neither can any kingdom, or throne or ruler or president.

Nothing can extinguish the witness of the word of God in the world.

It can't be stopped—

prophets and preachers can be imprisoned and even killed,

but the word of God can't be silenced.

For it is from God—

and to think that you can fight against the power of God

is the height of folly.

It is true in places like China and Saudi Arabia today

or even in America,

just as it was in Israel in Ahaziah's day.

The powers of this world may seek to silence its messengers,

“But the word of God will continue to spread and flourish.”

Back to the story—

“The captain went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him,

“Man of God, the king says, ‘Come down!’”

10 Elijah answered the captain,

“If I am a man of God,

may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!”

Then fire fell from heaven and consumed the captain and his men.”

Now, lest we miss the point,

this episode is repeated—

the king sends another captain with another company of fifty men,

and the king ups the ante this time, heightening the demand—

“Man of God, this is what the king says,

‘Come down at once!’

But the result is the same—

“If I am a man of God,” Elijah replied, “

may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!”

Then the fire of God fell from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men.

So what are we to think of this?

Once again, we are confronted with an episode that many find offensive.

The Lord God just incinerated 102 men—

men who were just carrying out the orders of the king.

You may be offended by it—

but I don't think the biblical writer was offended at all.

I think the key for understanding why that's the case

is found in the expression that occurs in both instances—

“Man of God.”

That's a term previously used of Moses (Dt. 33:1), and Samuel (1 Sam. 9:6),

and even of angelic figures,¹⁰

all of whom represent the authority of God as he speaks into the world.

How you treat this “**man of God**” is how you treat God.

Hence, Elijah's response—

“If I am a man of God,” Elijah replied,

“may fire come down from heaven and consume you”

Here, with this consuming fire,

it is not Elijah, but the Lord who is protecting his own honor.

This is the Lord God again demonstrating that he is God—

and just as at Mount Carmel, he is using fire from heaven to do it.

Moses had warned the people when they were entering into the promised land--

“Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God

that he made with you;

do not make for yourselves an idol

in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden.

¹⁰cf. also the mysterious “man of God” in 1 Kings 13.

For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God” (Deut. 4:23,24¹¹).

To oppose God is the very epitome of evil in the world.

Consuming fire is what flows from God’s holiness

which stands against all evil.

Consuming fire depicts God’s wrath

toward those to do not treat him as he deserves.

And it’s not just in the Old Testament that we find this image—

In the New Testament letter to the Hebrews, we read,

“If we deliberately keep on sinning

after we have received the knowledge of the truth,

no sacrifice for sins is left,

but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire

that will consume the enemies of God.” (Heb. 10:26,27).

“It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (10:31).

And Hebrews urges us to **“worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,**

for our “God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28,29).

Reverence and awe—that’s what God deserves from us—

that’s what God expects from us,

and from that captain and his men—

as they approach this **“man of God.”**

The Lord God will protect his honor.

¹¹ cf. Dt. 9:3; Isa. 33:14.

It appears that we're about to see yet another display of this consuming fire,
when a third captain and his men arrive to apprehend Elijah.

But this guy knows better—

in his fear, he pleads for mercy.

v. 13—"This third captain went up and fell on his knees before Elijah.

"Man of God," he begged, "please have respect for my life
and the lives of these fifty men, your servants!"

Sometimes fear is the very instrument God uses to bring us to faith.

What does the hymn say?—

"Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved.'

Remember, "**It is a dreadful thing**

to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). /

This third captain plead for mercy, and receives it--

"So Elijah got up and went down with him to the king.

16 He told the king, --face to face this time--

"This is what the LORD says:

Is it because there is no God in Israel for you to consult

that you have sent messengers to consult Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?

Because you have done this,

you will never leave the bed you are lying on.

You will certainly die!"

Then we read in v. 17—

"So [Ahaziah] died, according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken."

There it is again—

that phrase we keep hearing—

Ahaziah died “**according to the word of the LORD.**”

Once again we are reminded that

The Lord Is Faithful to His Word.

This is a major theme of these books of Kings, isn't it.

It is not the kings' word that rules;

it is God's.

What the Lord declares can be counted on.

And as we said last week,

that counts both ways—

What Yahweh declares can be counted on

that's true both of his threats

and of his promises.

“King Ahaziah experienced one side of the certainty of God's word,

but, as one writer described it,

“that sure word can shield as well as shatter you,

it can support you as well as smash you.”¹²

Either way, the Lord Is Faithful to His Word.

¹² Davis, p. 25.

“So [Ahaziah] died, according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken.

Because Ahaziah had no son,

Joram succeeded him as king . . .

As for all the other events of Ahaziah’s reign, and what he did,

are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?”

That’s it—

This is all the biblical writer had to say about this king of Israel.

Think about it—

He reigned for two years, yet this is the only incident in his life

that the biblical writer recorded.

“Curiously,” as one commentator observed,

“the writer recounts not how the king ruled but how he died.”¹³

For as he lay dying,

in his moment of greatest need,

he spurned the LORD, the God of Israel,

and, instead, he called on a pagan god—a God of Ekron.

That’s the one thing that is recorded in this divine record

by which King Ahaziah would be forever remembered.

And I think it’s true—

in God’s eyes, and in the light of eternity—

that will be the single most important thing about your life and my life—

¹³ B. O. Long, cited in Davis, p. 25.

How did you respond to the God who created you
and who called you through the gospel to himself?

That's it—nothing in your life will be more important than that one single thing.

Not your net worth,
not your professional achievements,
not your children or grandchildren—

That won't matter compared to this one thing—

how did you respond to God? /

I don't know about you,

but I sometimes reflect on death—my own death, in particular.

Maybe that's because I am now in my 60s,

maybe because I have been with people in their dying moments,

and those moments have a way of sticking with you,

or maybe it's just because I attend a fair number of funerals.

But I think about death a good bit.

And when I think about my death,

I wonder what will be going through my mind when I will lie dying.

Who or what will I look to in that moment?

Will I find real comfort and hope in the Lord?

Will I call upon the Lord Jesus to receive me to himself?

Will I look forward to being welcomed into his presence?

I hope so.

What about you?

Who will you call on when you lie dying?

In my experience,

people die as they have lived.

If you want to die well—

if you want to die in faith,

secure in the mercy and love of God—

then you must live that way—right now.

What's going to count when you lie dying?

Will you wish you had spent more time with your family?—probably.

But maybe you will wish that you had spent more time

getting to know the Lord. /

Elijah—his name means “My God is the Lord”

So who is your God?

Prayer

Closing Song:

Now Unto the King Eternal

Benediction:

Our Father, send us out secure in your love,

and as instruments of your grace,

displaying the character of Christ

by the indwelling power of your Spirit.
for your glory. Amen.

Speaking Truth to Power:

The Prophet Elijah, #7

Feb. 23, 2020

“Is There No God in Israel?”

2 Kings 1

The prospect of death can give focus to our thinking, and in King Ahaziah’s case, it demonstrated where his true loyalties lay. Our passage reveals a God who will not be sidelined, dishonored, or shown to be false. He demands our worship; he protects his honor; and he is faithful to his word.

I. The Lord Demands Exclusive Worship (vv. 1-8)

*‘Is it because there is no God in Israel
that you are going off to consult Baal-zebub,
the god of Ekron?’ (v. 3)*

II. The Lord Protects His Honor (vv. 9-15)

*“If I am a man of God,
may fire come down from heaven
and consume you and your fifty men!” (v. 10)*

III. The Lord Is Faithful to His Word (vv. 16-17)

*“So Ahaziah died,
according to the word of the LORD
that Elijah had spoken.” (v. 10)*

Who will you cry out for when you lie dying?

Sermon Response:

“Is There No God in Israel?”

2 Kings 1

- Do you ever think about your death? What thoughts will you want to fill your mind as you lie dying? How should you live so that that will be true?
- What do you think of Martin Luther’s definition: “Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say, that is really your God.” What are the things that function as “gods” to people in our world?
- Reflect on the central question: Who/what is your god? What evidence do you have in your life to help you answer that question.
- What does it mean to say we live in a “moral universe”? How do you hold on to that conviction when so much in our world seems to count against it? What difference does this truth make in the way you view your life and the world around you?
- In times of illness, how can we seek the best medical care without allowing medicine to be our god?
- What is your response to the word of the letter to the Hebrews: “It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (10:31) and “worship God acceptably with reverence and

awe, for our “God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28,29)? How does this connect with your understanding of the gospel?

- How is the fact that the Lord is faithful to his word an encouragement to you?

- Take some time praying about the lessons of this passage and praise the God it presents. Pray also for “gospel conversations” with those God puts in your path this week.