

Ahaz's Faithless Response While In Distress

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in the Lord and living by faith, using the life of King Ahaz as an example of how not to respond when in distress. It highlights the dangers of seeking solutions outside of God's Word, which may seem helpful in the moment but ultimately afflict and weaken one's faith. The message encourages listeners to remain faithful to the Lord in times of trial, to avoid compromising their trust in God, and to seek strength and guidance through faith in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Hebrews 11:6, James 1:6, Colossians 2:20, Luke 8:13, 2 Chronicles 28:22, Isaiah 7:9, Matthew 6:30, Romans 15:4, Psalm 119:105

Topics: "Trusting in God", "Faith in Trials"

Description

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Transcript

First off, I do have every intention, as I mentioned, to continue speaking on the matter of the spiritual gifts at some point in the future. That's not going to happen this morning. I want to share something that I got devotionally.

So first, turn to Isaiah chapter 7. Isaiah chapter 7. We're going to look at life lessons from the life of King Ahaz. You could call it, how not to respond when in distress. Trust or bust.

How not to respond when in the midst of a trial. You either have faith in God, or you decline and don't trust the Lord. And again, why should we even consider and be concerned about these characters recorded in the Old Testament and areas of the Scripture that could be called historical narratives where you see these men making decisions? Because you and I are making decisions in our lives today as well.

And what are some verses that show us the importance of considering what's written in the Old Testament and what happens in these men's lives? What are some of the first passages that might come to your mind? Romans 15, quote that for me. Where things were written beforehand were for our instruction. Yeah, 1 Corinthians 10 says these things, meaning what happened to Israel and the wilderness.

It happened to them as an example, but they were written down for what purpose? For our instruction upon whom the end of the ages have come. And then he gives an application. He says, let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

And so we read of those men's failures. Oh, we didn't turn the sign around. Those men's failures, and it is a warning to us in the present that we not make the exact same mistakes that they made.

And then you have 2 Timothy 3.16, right? All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training. In righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. And so what we find in the Old Testament, there's instruction there.

There's teaching there. As you see these men, the decisions they make, as you see God and how He responds to those decisions that those individuals make, there's instruction there. And the God of the Old Testament is the same God we have today.

And so how He interacts with those individuals back then can give you and I insight into His interactions with us today. So, we learn from their decisions, whether to imitate those decisions, to flee from their decision making, and we see the Lord's activity in how He treats those individuals. So, we're going to read a few passages about King Ahab's.

And I don't want to bog us down by reading too much, but I don't want to read too little to where you just don't feel like you've got a good perspective on King Ahab's. So bear with me as I try to find the right balance here. So in a moment, we're going to read from Isaiah 7. But here are three questions I want you to think about as we dive in.

Question number one, are you aware how essential it is to trust in the Lord and to live by faith? Not by sight. Not by feelings. But by trust in God and His Word.

And when facing major trials in your life, there's going to be other options of places you can trust. Do you see how essential in the trial it is that I've got to take God at His Word? So we're going to see that in Ahab's life. We're going to have a negative example of someone who doesn't do that.

Second thing to think about, do you remain faithful to the Lord in the times of your distress? When you're in a severe trial, does it actually produce steadfastness in your life? Or is it an opportunity for you to grow unfaithful to the Lord? Does the affliction of the trial lead to greater trust in God or unfaithfulness to the Lord? And then the third thing to think about as we read some of these passages, are there decisions that you make in the midst of your distress believing it's going to help you, but you look back and you realize it only actually weakened you in the end. It wasn't a help for you. But in the moment, you didn't realize the negative effect it would have on your spiritual health, but you look back at a later date and you realize, man, that really weakened me, that decision.

Rather than trust God, I did this. I trusted something else. And in the end, it greatly weakened me spiritually.

So, Isaiah 7. Let's read there verses 1-17. In the days of Ahaz, son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah. So he's the king of the southern kingdom.

The kingdoms are divided. Rezin, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, the king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it. But he could not yet mount an attack against it.

When the house of David was told, Syria is in league with Ephraim, the heart of Ahaz, so here he's got a trial right here, the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as trees of the forest shake before wind. That's not a good thing, right? That speaks of instability. Verse 3, The Lord said to Isaiah, Go out and meet Ahaz.

So the Lord's concerned about Ahaz. He's wanting to help him here. This is really kind of the Lord.

Verse 3, The Lord said to Isaiah, Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shir Jezebub, your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper field on the highway to the washer's field. Apparently, Paul the washer had a field back then. And say to him, be careful, be quiet.

Do not fear. Do not let your heart be faint. Then he gives a reason why not to let your heart be faint.

It doesn't just say don't fear. Because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Resan in Syria and the son of Ramaliah, because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Ramaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, let us go up against Judah and terrify it, let us conquer it for ourselves. We'll set up the son of Tabeel as the king in the midst of it.

Thus says the Lord God. It shall not stand. It shall not come to pass.

You've got a clear word. Trust God right now. What you fear, don't worry.

This isn't going to happen. Those kingdoms are going to be destroyed. For the head of Syria is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Resan.

And within 65 years. So imagine going into a trial. There's some distress.

And God cares enough. He sends Isaiah. You have a clear word.

You don't have to trust in your feelings. You've got a clear word from God Himself through a prophet. Within 65 years, they're going to be shattered from being a people.

And the head of Ephraim is Samaria. Verse 9, the head of Samaria is the son of Ramaliah. And then the end of verse 9, if you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.

Then verse 10, again, the Lord cares so much about us here. He's given Ahaz something else. He's already said one thing.

So we're seeing the character of God in here. He cares about helping us in the midst of our fears. He doesn't just throw us to the wolves as children.

He protects us. He's given us a chance to obey Him. Verse 11, again, the Lord spoke to Ahaz, ask a sign of the Lord your God.

What kind of sign? Let it be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven. He's saying ask a miracle. Ask something supernatural.

Something crazy here. A sign, and I'll do it and I'll show myself to be true to you. Now look at Ahaz's response.

But Ahaz said, I will not ask. I will not put the Lord to the test. Which ironically, he's now putting God to the test by not doing as the Lord said and asking for a sign.

Verse 13, he said, Hear then, O house of David, is it too little for you then to weary men? That you weary my God also. Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel.

That's the context of where that is spoken about. That text is referred to in the New Testament. Talking about the Lord Jesus.

He shall eat curds and honey when He knows how to refuse evil and choose the good. For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose those two kings you dread will be deserted. The Lord will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah, the king of Assyria.

I'll stop right there. But you see a man facing distress and trial. You see how he responds.

You see how God, the same God that we have today, He still is in His term. His term never ends. He rules and reigns forever.

You see His response to His people. So we saw people afraid to the extent where what was the imagery He used? He painted them as people. They were doing what? Shaken like trees.

When you watch those videos of the hurricanes coming, the trees aren't just shaken there. They're getting ripped right out of the ground. They're terrified at the power that comes.

So we see the fear of man. There are the men being afraid. And then we saw the Lord wants to encourage Ahaz.

Why fear two people who are just going to be removed? Why be intimidated by two stubs of some smoking logs? They might look great and powerful now, but I'm going to cut them down and burn them. So why be afraid of them, Ahaz? See, it takes faith to believe that. In the present, the enemies are right there.

They're really real and they're present. But faith looks beyond that to a future result, something that's yet to come to fruition. And it's trusting God that result will come to pass.

And He says they're 65 years. They're gone. And then even in this prophecy, by the time the Lord Jesus comes, everything's changed.

And then we saw the Lord wants to encourage Ahaz. He says ask for a sign. So the Lord was willing to go to the deepest depths or the highest heights in order to give a sign to Ahaz that He might what? Just have faith and trust Me.

You remember years ago, I did that sermon on the Lord's kindness to fearful Gideon. And you see the same thing. Some of these characters in the Old Testament, you see them afraid.

And you see the Lord seek to bear with them in the midst of their fears to give them encouragement to trust in Him. So that should encourage you, Christian. And the Lord really wants to help us in the midst of our fears.

And then we saw right here in Isaiah 7, Ahaz misapplied Scripture. I would say he misapplied it to protect himself from getting a word from God. He referred to Deuteronomy 6. You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.

But he should have obeyed the Lord, asked for a sign, and that very sign was something that God was giving him that he actually needed, but he rejected it. And then we saw Isaiah 7. Right there, verse 9. If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all. If you do not believe, you won't endure.

That's the idea. You and I are facing the same thing. This statement here, it's not just to Ahaz.

You could say it's addressed to the entire Davidic family. And all of them, all these kings, all these rulers who come, it's a true statement for all of them. If they're not firm in trusting God, taking God at His Word, believing Him, but they go trust in false gods, false idols, false experiences, false altars, they're not going to endure.

They're not going to have any firmness in their life. The same thing could be applied to us as Christians. Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

You and I can't please God in our lives if it's not a life that is by a trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and a trust in God and His Word on a daily basis. Can you and I trust God for what's going to happen in the future and therefore find present confidence right now in the midst of our trials? Faith is what's going to take away fear. Didn't Jesus deal with this exact thing in Matthew 6? And He talks about, look at the birds and look at how I provide for them.

How much more will I not provide for you, O you of little faith? I mean, little faith, a little trust in God, doubting God, not taking Him at His Word. That is something that is incredibly detrimental to us as Christians. You've got to realize, it is trust or bust.

If you and I don't keep trusting God, if trials lead us to not trust the Lord, and here Ahaz is facing a trial, he has two clear encouragements from the Lord, and you could put yourself in Ahaz's situation and say, you know what, if that was me, I would have trusted God. Let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. It's easy for you and I to say that today.

It's more difficult when you've got these two kings who've come together with their army to wipe your nation out. What are you going to do then? That's when push comes to shove. So, is Ahaz in Hebrews 11? By faith? By faith? He's not there.

Because he didn't live a life by faith, by faith, by faith. Maybe this will help as far as making sure. I've tried to use some synonyms for the word faith.

Faith is trusting God, taking God at His Word, believing God. Richard Owen Roberts has an acrostic poem for faith. You've had F, focusing on the facts.

A, active obedience based on what is real. I, intimacy with the Lord. Faith isn't just there's no relationship.

There's a relationship, right? T, tenacious valor for the Lord. So faith produces this zeal, this valor. And then H, is hope in the Lord.

All of those are true in the midst of a life of faith and trust in the Lord. So, now let's go to 2 Kings 16. We're going to read two more sections and then I'll give some observations and applications.

2 Kings 16, 1, In the seventeenth year of Pecha, the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, began to reign. Ahaz is twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord as God, as his father David had done, but he walked in the way of the kings of Israel.

And look at the extent of his wickedness. He even burns his son as an offering according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. I mean, he sacrificed a son on the altar.

That's terrifying. And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree. You can see this man was not a man living a life of trust in the Lord.

Then Rezin the king of Syria and Pecha the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to wage war on Jerusalem. They besieged Ahaz, but they could not conquer him. You know why they couldn't conquer him? It doesn't say it right here.

I don't believe it does. But the next chapter we're going to look at, they couldn't conquer him because Israel raiding Judah killed 120,000 people, took 200,000 of them captive to make them slaves. And God was angry with Israel for taking their own relatives, brothers, and sisters to be slaves in such a way.

So then God's anger was toward Israel. So you had both sides of the kingdom having God angry at them for their injustices and unrighteousness. And that's why they couldn't win.

He didn't get taken out because of some greatness of his own part. It was God being angry at the opposing side for their wickedness. Verse 6, at that time Rezin the king of Syria recovered Elath for Syria and drove the men of Judah.

Maybe we'll skip a little of this. Verse 7, so Ahaz sent messengers to Kilglaz Pizer, forgive my pronunciations, brethren, king of Assyria, saying, I am your servant and your son. Come up.

Rescue me. Why not take that to the Lord? Rescue me, Lord. Why go to this guy? The king on earth.

What's he going to do? He does do something. That's our problem, right? There's places we go on earth. And we get help.

So we automatically conclude, hey, I've got help. It must be a legitimate source to go to for help. No, no, no, no.

Look at the long-term result if it really helped or not. So he goes to him. Come up.

Rescue me from the hand of the king of Assyria and from the hand of the king of Israel who are attacking me. Verse 8, Ahaz also took... Oh, you're going to take silver and gold from the house of the Lord in order to pay for this pagan person to come in and defend you rather than go to God? This is not good. So he took that out in the treasures of the king's house and he sent a present to the king of Assyria and the king of Assyria listened to him.

I mean, gold and silver, why not, right? Make some money. The king of Assyria and get some power over this nation. The king of Assyria marched up against Damascus and he took it, carrying its people captive to Kerb.

And guess who he killed? Rezin. So Rezin, the very one he's afraid of, what happened to the guy? Dead. But, it came at a cost.

What was that cost? Taking gold away from the altar, not trusting the Lord, not seeing God deliver you, going and relying on a pagan king and look at v. 10. When King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pizer, king of Assyria, he saw the altar and he sent to Uriah the priest to get a model of the altar and its pattern and all its exact details. I mean, he's basically asking the engineer, download that CAD file to my computer.

I want to go home and do a 3D print of that and duplicate that altar. Because apparently it worked. Apparently it worked for them.

We're going to do what works, right? Forget the Word of God. Let's just do whatever works. Even if it doesn't have good long-term results.

See, that's the mind of unbelief. That's the mind of the false teacher. And look what he does in v. 14.

The bronze altar that was before the Lord, he removed it from the front of the house. You go take that altar, you stick it in the garage. You go take your Bible and you stick it in the closet.

You don't have access to it. You're further and further in a trial while moving away from the Lord. And you lead others astray.

V. 16 is actually a very sad verse. Uriah the priest did all of this as King Ahaz commanded. So if I get deceived, I could deceive others.

Now, last place, 2 Chronicles 28. 2 Chronicles 28. And this is the passage where there's two verses that have really stood out to me that I want to draw some application from his life along with Isaiah 7 and 9 that we already looked at.

If anyone is not firm in his faith, he will not be firm at all. We're looking at a man who is not taking God at His Word in the midst of his trial. He's going to other sources to deliver him, and we're seeing the outcome of his decisions.

He might have not seen it in the moment, but we're seeing it now from the Word of God. It was to His room. It was to His room.

2 Chronicles 28. Let's skip those first four verses. Verse 5, it's something to take note of.

The Lord His God gave Him into the hand of the king of Syria. You see that? Why did Israel come? Why did they get victory? Who allowed that to happen? God. God did that.

Why? Is a judgment meant to do what to Him? Humble Him. Do you respond to God's humbling in your life with acknowledgement and repentance or trying to go to some other source to find relief? Verse 6, Peccah the son of Ramaliah killed 120,000 from Judah in one day. Why did all this happen? Because, end of verse 6, they had forsaken the Lord.

You see, you forsake God. God brings a judgment on in order to wake you up. God even then brings in certain signs or certain things to get your attention.

He wants you to trust Him. What do you do? Do you trust Him? Do you abandon Him? The men of Israel, they took these captives. Verse 9, a prophet of the Lord was there whose name was Oded, and he went out to meet the army that came to Samaria.

And he said to him, Behold, because the Lord the God of your fathers is angry with Judah, He gave them into your hand. And okay, we don't need to read all that. But it's an interesting verse.

In verse 10, he says, Have you not sins of your own against the Lord? Judah and Israel, they all have their own sins. That's very applicable in all of our lives. When we make a judgment on another nation, we've got to get the log out of our own eye.

And then verse 16, at that time, King Ahaz sent to the king of Assyria for help. You wish you would have sent to the Lord for help. It just breaks your heart, verse 16, even in the Bible.

Because people are invading. Verse 19, for the Lord humbled Judah because of Ahaz, the king of Israel. Now let's look at these verses.

Verse 19, for he had made Judah act sinfully. They didn't have the strength. And had been very unfaithful to the Lord.

So remember, he's already being unfaithful. Verse 20, so Tilgath-Pleaser, king of Assyria, came against him. Now look at what the end of verse 20 says.

This is very interesting to me. Because what we already read in the other place was Tilgath came and what happened? He killed the people invading Ahaz, and it led to Ahaz having victory. Which you would look at that and say that's a good thing.

Wouldn't you agree? But it wasn't. Having victory is not always a good thing. Look what he says here.

He came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him. Now you'd almost think when you read that, that that king came in to demolish Ahaz. He was the one who listened to him who came in for the gold and silver to protect him.

But here, the author makes the observation that it actually led to him being afflicted and not to be strengthened. So we're going to consider that. That's one thing I want to consider.

And then there's a conjunction. Verse 21, some explanation. For Ahaz took a portion from the house of the Lord.

So if you take from the truth and compromise in order to be delivered over here, the deliverance looked like a good thing in the moment, but long term, because you forsook the truth, there wasn't a real genuine deliverance. Your decision afflicted you. The momentary victory leads to a greater affliction and a greater ruin later on.

He took a portion from the house of the Lord and the house of the king of the princes and he gave a tribute to the king of Assyria, but it didn't help. He thought it helped. We got victory, it helped.

Didn't help. You see, he looked at things wrong. He left by faith trusting God.

He thinks he sees things clearly. He doesn't. He doesn't.

And then look at verse 22. This is the second place that there's really something here for us. In the time of his distress, brethren, every one of us will have times of distress in trial in our life.

Look what happened to this man in the time of his distress. In the time of his distress, we're all going to become something in a trial. He became yet more faithless to the Lord.

And then look what it says after. This is sad too. What's the very next statement? What's the very next statement that says? This same King Ahaz.

Why does it say this same King Ahaz? You see what he's saying? He's saying it's the same guy. The guy who was already faithless. Yeah, I'm talking about the same guy.

It's not just another guy with the same name. It's like he wouldn't even expect it. That this man, again, is going to be more and more faithless in his distress to the Lord.

This same King. This same King, yet again, doesn't trust the Lord in the midst of his distress, but he becomes more and more faithless to the Lord. And then you have another explanatory verse, verse 23.

For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had defeated him. Remember? He got those blueprints and he went and he built an altar and Uriah compromised rather than confronting him. He said, yeah, he built the altar.

Before Ahaz even got back, the altar was done. They had an all-night building party. And then they took the old altar, the altar of the Lord, and they put it out of the front of the house.

And you know what's crazy? It says that Ahaz was offering sacrifices on that altar, but you know what altar he'd go to to inquire from the Lord? He'd still go back to the bronze one that wasn't in the front anymore. You see, he had one foot in paganism and one foot with Christ. Terrifying reality.

Again, these compromises we're seeing in this man's life. Look at the end of verse 23. But they were the rune of him and all of Israel.

So all these things, you see a man who doesn't trust God and it leads to his rune. Pretty simple, right? The same thing's going to be true in our lives. We're going to have distresses and trials.

We're either going to take God at His word or slowly compromise like Ahaz does in different ways. Not trust the Lord, but just focus on what we see with the physical. How are you going to respond in a trial? How do you respond in a trial? So there's these three lessons here that I've kind of already pointed out, but let me just state them again.

Number one, we see in Ahaz's life, just as everyone listed in Hebrews 11, that our great need in life is to by faith trust the Lord. That's the main thing wrong with Ahaz. He didn't take God at His word.

He didn't believe the word of the Lord. He had two clear signs and words and prophecies from God. And that wasn't enough.

If you're not firm in the faith, you're not firm at all. So we see this basic principle, trust in the Lord. Don't minimize it.

Don't get so used to the Christian life is by faith trusting God. We just get to the point where it's just kind of this thing where you're saying it, well, I'm living by faith. Am I actually living by faith in the trial, trusting God in the midst of it, and His care and concern for me? All of the destruction in the life of Ahaz could have been totally avoided if he would have just taken God at God's word.

And he had really clear words from God about his situation. Two specific armies coming to seize and the Lord talks about those two armies being destroyed. You don't need a clearer word from God than that.

Right? Okay. And I mentioned, we have a God who seeks to encourage us, to help us. You read Hebrews 3, take heart lest an evil, unbelieving heart comes about in any of you.

Well, do you know who's taking heart to help you not have an evil, unbelieving heart? The Lord. The Lord's on your side, brother, sister. The Lord prayed for Peter that his faith not fail.

The Lord really wants to help us in this area of having faith and trusting God in our lives. Okay, the second lesson that we've briefly looked at that I want to think about a little more. In the time of your distress, in trial, you can make matters worse than they already are.

But, you can think you're making matters better. But you actually make them worse. But you don't realize that until a later date.

So you think you're making everything better. You think it's going to be a strength to you, but in the end, it only afflicts you and you become more faithless to the Lord. He got the blueprints out.

He was basically a pragmatist. You know, I'm going to do what's going to work. The lost man becomes less and less religious as they're in a trial.

Isn't that what Jesus even said in Luke 8, verse 13? The ones who hear the Word and the seed falls on the rock and it sprouts up, what happens to them? When they hear the Word, they receive it with joy. I mean, they're excited. They have tears.

They're crying. They've got joy about what they've heard about Christ. But what happens? They have no root.

They believe only for a little while. And then in a time of testing, what happens? They fall away. They prove that they weren't true.

The initial joy, this expression of joy, it was some genuine joy apparently, but it wasn't really founded in Christ. There wasn't a truth in Christ. So trials, like what happened there in Luke 8, they either lead you to trust more in the Lord or to doubt God and abandon Him.

So trials didn't produce steadfastness in Ahaz's life, right? They produced greater degrees of darkness and compromise. So how do you respond in a distress? Where do you go? When you're in a trial, whatever trial you're in right now, where are you going? Who are you looking to? Who are you trusting in? What promise of God's are you laying hold to? In distress, a young single person, they marry an unbeliever. They don't trust God to provide.

I mean, there's so many situations. You could look and just see people in a trial and you see the decisions they make and you can't believe it. They're drifting from a resolve to trust in God.

And so lesson two that we see here is we're all going to be in distresses and what's going to become of us? We're going to become more faithful to the Lord? More steadfast? What does it say in James? Blessed is the man who remains steadfast when under trial. For when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to all those who love Him. And so a trial is an opportunity to believe God, to trust God, and it's going to lead to a crown of life.

And then the third lesson again, which is all rooted in this bigger issue of unbelief and not taking God at His word. They all kind of overlap here under that one reality. We must trust the Lord.

But verse 20 again, "...the king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him." And as I mentioned, you could read that and think that means the king turned on him and attacked him. That's not what happened in the passage. Did they start to come under his reign because of his help? Yes.

Did they lose some of their sovereignty as a nation? Yes. But Ahaz went to the king for help. We saw that he listened.

We saw that he got a physical victory from Tilgah Parish. They got a victory in the moment. But this help being sought actually only led to Judah being afflicted more and more.

And again, it's just this idea. You can win a battle. There's certain military groups.

They put so much into winning one battle that what happened with the war? They lost the war. I mean, they won a battle, but they lost so many men, they ended up losing the war. And so the same thing can happen in our lives.

You could win some battle, you think, spiritually speaking, but because you compromise and don't trust the Lord in the midst of it, it comes at the cost of you losing the spiritual war. We take a portion of the house of the Lord. You take an altar you should be going to and inquiring to the God of the Bible about.

You take that and you get rid of part of that to go and hire someone else to get a momentary victory rather than trusting in the Lord. And so when in our distress, we go elsewhere for the help than the Lord, not realizing we can be blinded by thinking our decision made things better. Put in actuality, we only weakened ourselves.

I mean, as in the moment, this looks like it worked out. Nope, it didn't work out. It didn't actually help.

It's like trying to quench your thirst with salt water. The more you drink it, the more dehydrated you become. Anytime that we don't trust God, anytime we don't go to His Word and find promises and lay our hope upon that Word, we get lured away by false teachers, false ideas, unbiblical thoughts.

That's just going to happen. You might feel for a moment when the water's coming down your throat that it's going to satisfy you. But you get all that salt water in your gut, you're not going to feel satisfied.

You're going to feel dehydrated. It's going to mess you up. So we might have a firm victory over an enemy, but not be firm in the faith.

And if you're not firm in the faith, He says what? You're not going to endure. You're not going to be firm at all. You want to be firm where it counts.

So Ahaz's vantage point was we had victory. But in reality, his forsaking the Lord was one more step into further and further apostasy. So think of that in your own life.

Is there some area from your perspective it looks like things are getting better? It looks like it. But the quote thing getting better was only brought about because of compromises in your life and not trusting the Lord. And it's actually the enemy having victory over you, and in the end, you're going to look back and say, whoa, that had the opposite effect.

I thought it was strengthening me, but verse 20 says it only afflicted me. It ended up afflicting me rather than strengthening me. But you don't see it in the moment.

You don't see the opposite effect. And brethren, we've got people, situations, decisions that we make, and from our vantage point, it's strengthening us. But it's actually an affliction upon us for our spiritual health that we don't recognize in the present.

And you realize, if you say, well, how do I discern one or the other? You know what the real cure in all of it is? A life of trusting God, right? It's faith. Taking God at His Word. Not doing everything based on sight or feelings.

In the exemplary husband in the leadership chapters, one of the things that hits on was men leading their wives well. And the example Stuart Scott gave for how he mentioned the wife has a danger of being led too much by subjective feelings. And the husband as the leader has to recognize that in his wife and help direct her again and again to the Word of God.

You've got situations like that. I'm not saying that Stuart Scott's right about every woman who's in the room here, but he's just making an observation. So you're learning that.

You see, how do people go away from faith and trust in something else? And we've got to help them there to realize this won't help you in the end. Hebrews 11, without faith, it's impossible to please God. For whoever would draw near to God, you must believe He exists and He rewards those who seek Him.

So, some more applications, some thoughts on all of this. And I know I've asked this question like five times. I don't know why it's in my notes for a sixth time, but let me ask it again.

How do we respond in distresses and trials? Right? How do you respond? Do you become more faithless? What happens when you're afraid? Do you look for some instant comfort? And by doing so, you make a decision that's actually relying on the arm of the flesh and it leads to further affliction in your life, but you think it's a positive thing right now? How do you respond when others around you ignore the Word of God and compromise? Are you like Uriah? Well, you know, he got these nice plans and look how fancy this altar is. Apparently it worked. You read that article, right? Apparently they had a victory, so this must be right.

Our God's not doing much right now. So maybe it's time for a good switcheroo. Maybe this word has just gotten a little old, right? Let's try something new.

The world's doing that right now. Professing Christendom is doing that a lot. Don't be like Uriah.

Don't capitulate and give in to people who want to neglect the Word of God. And most people, there are false teachers who can appeal to the Word of God in such a way it will make you feel like you don't

understand anything. They're that smooth.

They're that manipulative. I remember being saved and running into a Church of Christ person who believed baptism could save. That guy didn't lack Scripture.

He was using Scripture all over. But what does the Bible say? They twist it to their own destruction. The Bible talks about false teachers sneaking into houses and capturing women who are unaware and leading them away into error.

There's a real danger here. We've got to be on guard. So yeah, are there decisions, people, certain thoughts, programs in your life that you think is actually strengthening you, but it's actually only afflicting you? And I'm not condemning all accountability software and programs, but that to me is one thing that came to my mind.

I've seen a lot of people who their whole hope now is not by faith in Christ, not making a covenant with God like Job did. Job didn't have an accountability partner. He had God.

That was where his covenant was with. People go and they make their covenant with a person. They make their trust in a person.

This person's got to hold my life up. They're going to get the emails. They're going to see what I'm going to look.

Again, I'm not saying there might not be a benefit in that, but what if that's afflicting you and not allowing you to walk with God and find you can have victory by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? He can give you strength. And you end up feeling like there's victory in your life, but it's only leading to afflict you. In some cases, I've seen that happen to people.

You could ask this, what in my life is opposed to me walking by faith? What's opposing me trusting in God? What's actually in opposition to that? Brethren, someone can be helping protect you like King Tegelhazel or however you pronounce that. They can be protecting and helping you and they're actually afflicting you and at war with you and weakening you. And that just makes me think about the garden.

The devil presented himself to Eve in what way? Was he against her or for her? For her, right? If you're Eve, you think, this guy's got the wisdom I've been waiting for. I've ran into the video that explains it perfectly. Finally, right? Did that strengthen Eve by taking the fruit? She thought it would.

What did it do in the long run? Afflicted her. Afflicted her. It led to ruin.

Led to destruction. So your enemy can attack you without attacking you. Your enemy can attack you by helping you and their help drives you away from a life of faith in Christ.

You get what I'm saying? This is subtle, the way this can happen. Because in the moment, you think we've got victory, but it actually afflicts you and does not strengthen you in the end. So there are matters by which for the moment you and I can get victory, but we really secure no help in the long run.

And this made me think about Colossians, right? It says it in a similar way, Colossians 2, if with Christ you die to the elemental spirits of the world, why as if you were still alive in the world do you submit to regulations? Right, don't handle, don't touch, do not taste, basically a sense of legalism, imposing a standard on people that you can't really interpret and prove from the Bible. You put that standard on the

conscience. What's their goal of that standard? It's going to produce what in your life? Holiness.

It's going to strengthen you. It's going to make you more holy. What does it end up doing? Afflicting you.

You end up biting and devouring one another. And as it says in the text, these things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity in the body, but they are of what? No value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. It appears like if I give this gold and silver to this king and we get a victory and we don't die, it appears like that's going to help.

We're going to get victory, right? No, you are being afflicted by that decision because it's not trusting in the Lord. Well, I want to get holy. So I'm going to make all these laws and all these things.

That's going to be the way. Law, law, law. I'm going to focus on that.

I'm going to emphasize on that. It sure appears to make me holy. And it actually worked for three months.

I kept all the laws and I wrote my journal and I did this and I did that. And then one day, because you're so focused on that, you're not beholding the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ by which you're transformed to one degree of glory to the next. You find out you haven't been transformed this whole time.

Since you weren't glaring at Christ for those three months, you're glaring at your list of rules. Guess what happens? You're all the more wicked. And you realize, it just afflicted me! I thought it was helping me.

I thought it was producing holiness. And it wasn't. It wasn't.

And all the legalists, they promise greater holiness by all their dogmatic laws. For the moment, it seems to work. But in the end, it just makes a two-fold son of hell.

That's using the Bible's words about those Pharisees. So, in time of your distress, you know what one distress many of us face? Our children. That's the trial.

Our kids. In the time of my distress in my parenting with my, let's say, teenage children or younger than that, what do I do? What do I do? Are there a number of people out there offering the solution on what you should do to solve all your problems with your parenting? Is their number one solution conversion in Christ and by faith trusting the Lord? Does that tend to be the solution? Not the one that I've heard from most. You know what? Some people say there's a new system.

It works. Man, if you start implementing that, all your kids are going to end up in a certain way and it's just going to look great and we've got magazine covers with that whole family and you want your family to be like that. Just do X, Y, and Z and it's going to happen automatically.

One of those men was Bill Gothard. But you know what? It's 2023 and the stock market has busted and the stocks that people put, the value they put in the shares of that stock, they realize it was bad. It overall was bad.

And in 1984, Conrad Murrell wrote Bill Gothard a letter and I have that letter and it's interesting to me. If you don't know who Gothard is, sorry if that's, basically a man who seemed to have all the answers for parenting and what to do with children. Conrad said this, 1984, two years before I was born, now Gothard says these things in the setting of the most attractive to a fundamental Bible believer or at least to people inclined in that direction because he's using so many verses.

Again, the same tactic as the devil, this time against the Lord in the desert. He said, it is written to the Lord. Gothard's doing the same thing he's saying.

Just as the enemy of our souls makes a wrong use of Scripture, so does Bill Gothard. He makes the holy Scriptures promise something they in fact do not. They no more guarantee the results he promises than they assure angelic deliverance for those who jump off of pinnacles.

No wonder people came out of the seminars with such confidence. His many stories which all end in the desired result. When the Word of God is applied, this is what you're going to get.

It's precisely what they've been searching for all their lives as religious people, and now they finally found the answer in 1984. Conrad goes on. God has been pushed and suppressed to a faint outline in the deep recesses of these people's minds where He will remain until they become disillusioned by the failure of the seminar's cure-all to produce what they claim.

And they once again realize the creature's utter dependence on His Creator. You hear that? Back to a life of faith. Anyone takes you away from trusting God.

Anyone says, I found a system that works. Brethren, it might have the appearance of man-made wisdom and stopping the indulgence of the flesh, but it will not do that. It will not produce that.

There's tons of this. If Conrad said all of that in 1984, and now in 2023, he's been proved entirely right by all these things happening, all these scandals within the movement, because that's what it produces, right? I would ask myself this, what now in 2023 will people look back on in 39 years and realize it didn't produce the results they promised? Because that's the world we're in right now. And there's different people with different emphases, systems, ways to do things that they can't dogmatically prove from the Bible.

And we could say, well, it looks like it produces help right now. You know what my concern is? What if that actually afflicts someone in their faith and their personal walk with Christ rather than strengthen them in the long run? Because that's what you and I need. We're not firm in the faith.

We're not firm at all. And this partnership with Tiglath-Plizer afflicted him instead of strengthening him. That's a scary thought.

Brethren, how do you handle fears, anxieties? Do you take a route that might actually afflict you more in the long run? There's people that go to other things rather than trusting the Lord and they think they find relief. But you know what? In the end, it greatly afflicts them in ways they couldn't perceive in the moment when they went to that route. In some people, it's with certain teachers they listen to.

Owen Strand commented on the 30-plus students and two staff who left the seminary. They went from being reformed evangelicals to being Catholics. And he commented, the seminary started to teach the general philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.

And by introducing that into the seminary, they thought it was going to do what? Strengthen all our seminarians? No, they're going to have better thoughts about who God is and who man is. It led 30 of them to be Catholics. Two of the staff.

They thought it was strengthening them and it wasn't. There might be some teacher you're listening to and you think that that's strengthening you, but there's a subtlety in what they're teaching and they're saying where it's actually only going to affect you in the end. I've seen it in another church where all these people, they started changing their views on creationism, right? And then they ended up, many of them, in theistic evolution.

Do you think that's where they're going to stop is believe in theistic evolution? Do you think that's where it's going to end? Do you think that's a minor issue? No, it's not. I think they're being afflicted. They think they're being strengthened.

They think they're following the Word of God. So, is there somewhere you're taking the gold and silver from? From God's house? From His altar? From His Word? You're taking it and you're replacing it with something else. You might still, like Ahaz, go back to the back room where you put the altar and you might still inquire the bronze altar.

But some compromise is entering in. And so brethren, that's a question. I don't have the answer in your life where it might apply, but what in your life is actually working to afflict you and not strengthen you? And this is something that happens in the midst of a trial that in your distress, rather than trust the Lord, you don't trust Him, you run to some other source, you think it strengthens you momentarily, but in the end, you're going to look back and see it only led you to being afflicted.

And you'll be able to look back and realize it took you away from faith in Jesus Christ, faith in God, faith in His Word, not taking God at His Word, believing God's a liar, believing God's holding out on you. We've got to believe God's not holding out on us. God is not a liar.

God controls all things. We just read in Isaiah 7 about a prophecy of Immanuel. Guess what? That happened.

700 years or whatever later, it happened. It got fulfilled. God cannot lie.

He has not lied. He is truth. We've got to trust Him.

In our distress, verse 22, in the time of His distress, He became yet more faithless to the Lord. I want to hear, in the time of my distress, in the time of your distress, you yet became more faithful to the Lord. More faithful to trust Him.

I mean, are you asking the Lord for help in a time of trouble? The Lord said, I'll give you a sign. Now, I don't want to put you to the test, Lord. He just said, I'm going to give it to you anyways.

We should go to Him. Ask Him for help. So what do times of distress in your life lead to? Do you realize what's on the table when a trial comes? You being more faithful to God or more faithless.

May it be more faithful to the Lord. Be like Joshua, Caleb, Daniel, Joseph, and the many more who in the midst of their distress, in the midst of the Word of God testing them, they only grew stronger in their faith and trusted in the Lord. Well, amen.

That's all I've got. Okay, let's pray. Father, Lord, I pray You would search our hearts.

Lord, if there's someone here, one of Your children, one of Your sheep who You've told to fear not, for You will give that child of Yours the kingdom. Lord, if somehow in their trial, in their distress, Lord, like Ahaz

did, if somehow in that they are going to something other than You, and they think they're being strengthened, they think, oh, they're being helped right now, but You know, Lord, it's only afflicting their faith. It's only causing harm.

Lord, I pray You'd show that to them. Lord, I pray You would expose that to them. Lord, that they could abandon that.

They could put the gold and silver back on the altar and put it right at the front of the house and burn the other one to the ground. And Lord, that they'd trust Your promises and trust Your Word. Lord, secondly, I do pray You'd help us in our distresses.

Lord, there's different people right now in the church. They are in distress. They are in a trial.

Lord, we pray You would help them. You would sustain them. You said, Lord Jesus, You prayed for Peter, that his faith not fail.

Lord, we too want to pray, like You're praying for their faith. Lord, help their faith not fail. Lord, help them to take You at Your Word and to not be deceived by the lies of the enemy.

And Lord, we read about Eve. We read about Adam. We read about those at Colossae, those at Galatians.

Lord, we read our Bibles. We read about Ahaz. And Lord, we do pray, Lord, let any of us who think we stand take heed lest we fall.

Lord, give us a greater humility that we would realize these horrible decisions that people in our Bibles have made that are written for our instruction. Lord, we could make some of the similar blunders in our lives. And Father, we don't want to do that.

And so I pray You'd keep us from that. That You'd supernaturally uphold us. That You would show us our blind spots.

So Lord, help us today to walk by faith, trusting You. Lord, yes, being tenacious in valor as we look at Your Word and we go on believing it. We pray all of this in Christ's name, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/48hBTxD1tfw.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/james-jennings/ahazs-faithless-response-while-in-distress/>

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