

# Bible Studies for Life: July 25

*Serve with Courage • 1 Kings 16:29-33; 17:1-6*

*By Clay Anthony*



Anthony

One of the most useless phrases in the English language is, “It can’t get any worse.” We know that it can always get worse, whatever your “it” happens to be at the moment. Be it sickness, grades, or car troubles, there seem to be no bounds as to how news can always seem to go to new levels of bad.

Today’s text begins with just this idea. 1 Kings 16 reads as a list of kings who seem to be attempting to outdo the evil of the king who preceded them. There are power grabs, deceit, and even murder running through these verses. Just when you get the the point of using that useless phrase mentioned above, we find at the end of the chapter that one king is worse than all the rest combined.

So, indeed things can always get worse. If that was true in the early days of Israel, can we not agree that it is also true for present day as well? In other words, do you pay attention to the news? How do we as Christ followers respond?

**With Recognition (16:23-33).** We realize that good people make mistakes. We understand that all people sin (Rom 3:23). What we might be slow to see is when some disobey God they are

doing it in an unrepentant manner. Christians are not perfect, but we are broken over our sin. We fight it daily, and this is a fight that ends only when Christ returns or calls us home.

When Christians watch the nightly news and wonder why this person or group of people are acting so contrary to Godly principles, we have an answer: Those people do not know Jesus. How else should we expect them to act? This difference in behavior must be recognized by those of us that know the truth and peace of God.

**By Standing (17:1).** Once this recognition is grasped, our work is not complete. Actions that are contrary to the teaching of Scripture must not be simply recognized but also called out. If chapter 16 reads as road map to disaster for Israel, then chapter 17 begins with the insertion of a hero.

Elijah steps up and courageously speaks truth to power by confronting a king who was viler than all the others who had come before.

His words are steeped in courage. Note that he is facing a king that comes from a line of killing to get what he wants, and yet God's prophet makes it clear: Elijah is speaking to the evil king but only after standing before the Holy God (1).

**In obedience (17:2-6).** Ever wondered what certain behind-the-scene conversations were like for God and His people? "Moses, go to Pharaoh." "Esther, go to the king." "Jonah, go to Nineveh." "Paul, go to the Jews." We are not privy to what was said prior to Elijah speaking to the evil king.

It is not hard to image the look on the prophet's face in responding to God, *"Who me? Go and talk to that crazy king? God, do you know what he's like?"* In all these moments, God knew exactly what was going to happen. That fact alone must be our reserve for obedience. Elijah knew precisely what this evil king was capable of doing, but greater still was the fact that he also knew exactly what God was capable of doing.

We dare not leave this scene without mention of the fact that true prophets of God are correct 100% of the time. If a drought was pronounced and it occurred, then Elijah should be revered. Yet, do not lose this fact – the brook dried up (17:7). Just as God's people are not free from sinning, there is no guarantee that the consequences of the sins of others or even entire nations will not be endured by God's people as well. Elijah faced down a king and then faced the very drought he predicted.

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is no guarantee that the consequences of the sins of others or even entire nations will not be endured by God's people as well. Elijah faced down a king and then faced the very drought he predicted. On this side of Eden, we see sin and live under its ramifications. Yet, we know that something better than Eden awaits us after the drought is over. This fact allows us to see sin for what it is and be sickened by what it does to lives all around us. From this fact, we draw courage to stand against sin, be it in our leaders or in our own hearts. That is our news for the world.

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