

Transformed – teen devotion – August 18, 2019

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From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some boys came out of the town and jeered at him. “Get out of here, baldy!” they said. “Get out of here, baldy!” He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. And he went on to Mount Carmel and from there returned to Samaria.

2 Kings 2:23-25

Elisha the prophet

In the short three verses of our reading, a number of things happen. A bunch of boys made fun of Elisha, a prophet and leader of Israel. Elisha called down a curse on them for their sin. Then bears came out of the woods and mauled the children. Afterwards, Elisha goes on his way without another word.

What is the lesson from this story?

When I was young, I thought this lesson from God’s Word was to teach us not to mock those God has placed over us—those serving the Lord in their lives to the best of their imperfect ability—otherwise you will be punished like those who were mauled by bears. But there is more to the story.

Think about the words of Hebrews 13:17: “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”

(NIV 2011) The lesson of Elisha is more than a lesson on punishment that we deserve for not respecting and honoring those in authority over us, it is a powerful reminder of what God *wants* us to have—joy in loving, obeying, and having confidence and trust in those God has given to take care of us.

That's not always easy. When a parent completely embarrasses you in front of your friends, you may feel like calling them names or saying bad things about them to your friends. When you are frustrated by your teachers' high expectations of you in school, you complain about them to fellow classmates. When people in charge of us do things that bother us or seem unfair, all kinds of names, phrases, and disrespect bounces through our brains and comes out of our mouths.

But God has given them to you so that you might honor and obey them. God has given them authority over you for your benefit. And he wants you to see him when you see them. These authorities that are over you—teachers, parents, pastors, government—these are his representatives. He has put them there to exercise his authority. When you honor them, you honor him! And when you dishonor them, you dishonor him. So when these boys called Elisha “Baldy,” they were disrespecting God.

Learn from this strange story. Apologize for your disrespect. Confess it to God. Confess it to the one you disrespected. See that these people over you are standing in for God. See those authorities differently and give them respect that is due them.

Thank you, God, for the authorities that you have placed over me. Thank you, Father, for forgiving me when I forget to show them respect and giving me a new day to show it again.

#PGFWABF ALWAYS!

Prayer:

All that I am and love most dearly—
Receive it all, O Lord, from me.
Let me confess my faith sincerely
And help me your own child to be!
Let nothing that I am or own
Serve any will but yours alone.
(*Christian Worship* 294:4)

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