I. Introduction
   a. In 1 Kings 20, Israel has a problem
      i. Ben-Hadad is offering to be Israel’s overlord
         1. “Living in the chaotic environment of the ancient near eastern world, with despotic rulers and rampaging armies everywhere you turn, how can a second tier ruler of a minor nation avoid being steamrolled by a major world power?”
         2. “Ben-Hadad and his Syrian minions provide personalized overlord services. He will spare no trouble to ensure that you are not oppressed, pillaged or extorted by anyone else.”
      3. He demands wives, children, gold and silver
      4. Ahab agrees
         a. They did not have the power to resist
         b. Weakened by three years of drought and famine
         c. Syrian military is vastly superior
   ii. This overlord makes housecalls!
      1. “Why go through the hassle of collecting and sending your tribute and slaves? For your convenience, Ben-Hadad and his Syrian minions will come collect them personally, all for just a small additional charge.”
      2. Ahab refuses: He is looking for trouble!
   iii. Ben-Hadad’s threat: You are toast!
      iv. Ahab’s reply
         1. “Let not him who puts his armor on boast as he who takes it off.”
         2. This statement of Ahab is a message I want to sink into our hearts and minds
   b. Finishing well
      i. It is good to begin well
      ii. It is better to continue well
      iii. But it is essential to finish well

II. Key Thought – In this chapter, King Ahab lives out the consequences of not finishing what he started in following after God

III. Ahab Begins Well (20:13-21)
   a. God offer to partner with Ahab: I will do this for you (20:13)
      i. It is an offer to partner with Ahab in accomplishing God’s purposes
      ii. Does he deserve it? NO!
         1. Evil-practicing Ahab (1 Kings 16:30)
         2. Jezebel-marrying Ahab (16:31)
         3. Baal-worshipping Ahab (16:32)
         4. Prophet-hunting Ahab (18:10)
         5. Nation-troubling Ahab (18:18)
iii. Has he done anything at all to earn a second chance? NO!
   1. It’s not much different with us, is it?

b. Ahab’s response is exactly right
   i. How must I act in order to receive this blessing? (20:14)
   ii. He not only finds out what the conditions are for this blessing, he
       acts upon them (20:15-19)
   iii. God rewards his faithfulness (20:20-21)

c. He has started very well!

IV. Ahab Continues Well (20:22-30)
   a. A warning from God (v. 22)
      i. Strengthen yourself
      ii. Consider what you must do
      iii. There is more fighting ahead
   b. Ben-Hadad makes a fatal strategic mistake (v. 23-25)
      i. He belittled God
      ii. All our enemies do this
         1. Goliath
         2. Assyria
      iii. And that is why it is inevitable that they should fail and fall
         1. The faithful know this
            a. Caleb & Joshua
            b. David
            c. Hezekiah
         2. Our job is just to clean up what is leftover when God
            defeats the unrighteous
   c. God will fight for Ahab again
      i. It doesn’t look good (v. 26-27)
         1. But race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong
      ii. God will fight for Ahab (v. 28)
      iii. I will give them into your hand
      iv. A second success (v. 29)
      v. They can’t get away from God (v. 30)
   d. Ahab has continued well

V. Ahab finished poorly (v. 31-34)
   a. God has delivered Ben-Hadad into Ahab’s hand
      i. The one who said;
         1. Everything you have is mine
         2. I will come take every thing from you that makes you
            happy
         3. There won’t be anything left of Samaria
         4. Their gods only have power in the hills
         5. He has been judged by God
      ii. The only way he is going to escape to judgment of God is if Ahab
          lets him go
         1. But that is what he does
            a. He could have killed him
b. He could have enslaved him
c. But he ended up taking a present from him and forming an alliance with him!

2. He partners with Ben-Hadad instead of God!
3. Unbelievable!
4. Mercy is good
   a. But we must not be merciful to evil
   b. We must destroy it in our personal lives
      i. Our besetting sins want to rule us and destroy us
         1. We may overcome them once or twice, but they keep coming back
         2. In Christ, we gain the power to have complete victory over them…
            BUT…
      ii. Our besetting sins say to us, “please let me live”
      iii. “Just keep me around and I won’t interfere with your service to God”
      iv. “Have pity on me!”
      v. But our old man must be crucified, put to death, and buried (Rom. 6:4-6)
   c. We must defy evil in our homes, families, churches and communities
   d. And we must never, ever come to terms of peace with evil

b. God rebukes Ahab (v. 35-42)
   i. First demonstration – Wound the prophet
      1. One companion will not – dies
      2. Another companion does
   ii. Second demonstration – Keep the prisoner
      1. Ahab judges rightly
      2. He is guilty
   c. There is still an opportunity to finish well
      i. Accept correction
      ii. Repent
      iii. Finish what was left undone
      iv. But instead Ahab mopes (v.43)
         1. I just can’t please God
         2. Why even try?
         3. He was undefeated on the battlefield
         4. But totally defeated spiritually
         5. He and his people will pay the price for King Ahab’s failure to finish well

VI. Conclusion
   a. “Let not him who puts his armor on boast as he who takes it off.”
b. It is good to intend well
   i. But let us make sure that we are partnered with God
   ii. Strengthen ourselves
   iii. Consider what we must do
   iv. So we can finish well

c. What do we need to finish?
   i. Making a commitment to Christ
      1. This is not a 30 day trial, with a money-back guarantee
      2. It is a lifelong commitment
      3. He WILL show himself to be Lord, whether we acknowledge and fight with him or not
   ii. Raising our family in the nurture and admonition of the Lord
      1. We need to get the job done
      2. Keep our focus
      3. Otherwise, while we are busy here and there our children will be gone, gone from our homes, gone from faithful service to the Lord, lost into the world.
   iii. Whatever we do, do it with all our might
      1. Even the smallest tasks deserve our faithful attention
      2. Anything worth doing is worth doing well
      3. And anything worth doing well is worth finishing well
      4. EXAMPLE: My Greek study
      5. It feels REALLY GOOD to finish well
   iv. Finishing the Christian race
      1. He who endures to the end will be saved
      2. If you are faithful unto death I will give you a crown of life
      3. 2 Tim. 4:6-8
      4. What finishing well sounds like: “Well done good and faithful servant, you have been faithful in a little, I will make set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.” (Matt. 25:23)