



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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JUMP START #252

1 Kings 13:18-“He said to him, ‘I also am a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, ‘Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.’ But he lied to him.”

Our verse today is found in the midst of a long story involving two prophets, one young and the other old. We are not told the names of these prophets. It is a sad story that has puzzled me ever since I first read it many years ago.

Jeroboam, in the chapter before, changed everything that God had established. Jeroboam was the king of Israel. They had just split off from Judah and became a separate nation. Fearing the people would return to Judah when they went there for the annual sacrifices, the new king built idols, appointed priests from different tribes and made two cities within Israel as designated places to worship. His desire in keeping his new nation together, led him to destroy the pattern of worship that God had authorized.

In chapter 13, where our verse today is found, God appoints a young prophet to go and rebuke Jeroboam for these sins. The rebuke was severe. God was going to destroy all the false idols that Jeroboam built. The king was angry. He stretched out his hand to hurt the young prophet. God immediately made the king’s hand to dry up. The altar split. All the ashes fell out. The king was terrified. He begged for mercy. He offered the young prophet a reward, up to half his kingdom. The young prophet refused.

The young prophet had been told by God before his journey started to eat nothing, drink nothing, and not return the way he came. I can’t imagine what he felt as he approached the king by himself and denounced the sinful practices. It is an example of extreme faith and courage and obedience to God.

It seems the story ends. The young prophet goes on his way, the king is turned from his wicked ways, a good day! Then our verse! An old prophet hears all these things and sends for the young prophet. When the young prophet refuses, stating God’s command to him, the old prophet lies. He tells him that an angel spoke to him and told him to come. Innocently, the young prophet goes, eats a meal, and as he leaves, he is killed by a lion. The old prophet buries him.

I don’t like this old prophet. First of all, he lives in Bethel where the king is. Why doesn’t he speak out against the idols? Why does he let all these things go on? He doesn’t seem to be much of a prophet in my book. Then he lies. That fries my bacon when someone lies. I don’t care if they are covering their tracks, trying to sell a car, or get out of trouble....deceit, dishonesty and destruction live side by side. Now, it’s bad enough that he lied, but he tried to make it look like the truth by saying, “an angel spoke

to me.” This story happened centuries ago, but even now smoke comes out of my ears because of this old prophet. Using God to get what you want.....how empty headed and heartless.

The spirit of the old prophet lives on today. In the name of religion many have lied to build a personal fortune, to fund colleges, to defend doctrines, and to justify behavior that God does not allow. The common thread today, especially in books, is to simply list a Bible verse. Somehow using a verse makes everything right and it gives the appearance that what is being done is taught in the Bible. So many verses are misused, misquoted and misapplied to make God say things he never said. Some are using verses to make it seem that God approves of homosexuality, fornication, and lewd behavior. He doesn't. How about using the verse the way God did? How about keeping the verse in context? Just finding a verse and then using that to justify what you want is not much different than a lying old prophet who claimed an angel spoke to him. Misusing God doesn't make wrong things right!

How was the young prophet supposed to know? He took it on good faith. The old man was a prophet. He claimed an angel spoke. The young prophet is in the same spot we are today. First, God doesn't contradict himself. Second, he knew what God said. The old prophet sounds very similar to the serpent talking to Eve in the garden. Someone who changes what is found in the Bible is not speaking the truth. Paul told the Galatians that if “we or an angel “ preach a different gospel than what you have received, they were to be cursed.(**Gal. 1:8,9**) The Bereans were commended because when they heard things, they searched the scriptures daily to see whether they were true or not. (**Acts 17:11**) God's word is final. God's word defines. There is no changing God's word. Anything that differs from the word of God ought to raise red flags within us. We need to know what God says. We need to be able to recognize things that are false.

Religious people can lie. They can say, “God said” when God hasn't said. If the folks in the pews opened their Bibles and checked what the preachers were saying and made them toll the line with the Bible, there would be many changes. Preachers get away with things because “they are preachers and they wouldn't lie.” I'm a preacher. I know better than that.

I don't like how this story ended. I understand that the young prophet disobeyed. He was tricked, deceived and lied to. It wasn't rebellion. He thought he was obeying a new message of God. Didn't matter to God. A lion came and killed him. I wish the lion ate the old prophet. That would make my day. I think God had worse things in store for the old prophet. But there is a lesson for us. Disobedience, even when you are told that you are not disobeying, is still disobedience. God hates that. God will hold us accountable for these things.

This chapter speaks volumes of lessons for us. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, that's what we find in Romans. (**Rom. 10:17**) A faith apart from what the Bible teaches is shallow and not going to be right with God. Anything less than the Bible, is not enough. Anything more than the Bible is too much. We must stand upon the word of God.

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