

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK SERIES

Ronny F. Wade, Speaker

Lessons Learned Too Late

1Kings 13:1-3

There are many lessons that we all learn in life, too late. Someone has said we are too soon old, and too late wise. Many have said "if I could only live my life over I would do things differently" People often make decisions regarding marriage, vocations, finances etc. that later turn out to be a disaster. They then lament "if I had only known."

This chapter tells the story of a "man of God," nameless to us, but possessed of great courage and devotion to God. At least this is true in the early part of the chapter. Yet, in the latter half, it relates how this brave and devoted man's failures brought on his death. This is a difficult incident for most of us. In fact it is hard for many of us to keep the whole picture in focus: we tend to look at one side or the other. Probably there would be few among us who would credit ourselves with the apparent fearlessness of this man who gave no thought to the power of the king to put him to death. The devil could never have won him on that front. Yet, this man fell into sin, God's displeasure, and God's wrath. Satan defeated him on another front. He always attacks us on our weakest flank.

I'm sure that if this prophet had it all to do over again, he would do it very differently. But, sadly, none of us gets to go around in life more than once. We are like a craftsman who cuts a precious jewel: he must plan his cut with the utmost care, and when he finally makes the cut it must be according to plan. If not, the jewel is ruined. He may only speak of "what might have been." We want to look at some of the lessons that the man of God learned too late to do him any good; but perhaps they will help us avoid making the mistakes he did 1Cor. 10:11 "Whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our learning..."

I. God Does Not Indulge In Self-Contradiction.

God had told the young prophet not to eat or drink on his journey. When the old prophet told him that it would be all right, he believed him and went to his house to refresh himself, even though God had not confirmed such would be acceptable. God does not contradict himself. This man was unable to convince himself of that fact. (Likely the reason was his hunger and thirst) 1Kings 13:16-18. But whatever the reason, he allowed himself to be deceived into believing that God told him one thing directly, and something entirely different through the old prophet. Had he only realized that such would place God in a position of self contradiction, perhaps he would have seen the "red flag" that should have presented itself. God does not indulge in self-contradiction today either. Some, however, act as though he did.

1. Some today say, love is all that matters---(As long as we love God and one another, that's what really matters. Love conquers all). Does God ever say that? Do we ever read that in the bible? No we don't. What we do read is "If ye love me keep my commandments..." John 14:15. Unless we keep the commandments of God, love will do

us no good.

2. The Church is unimportant, some say. (As long as you are sincere, it doesn't matter if you are a member of the church or not. Church membership never saved anybody) Is this how God values the church? Does the bible every say the church is unimportant? Eph.5:23 "For as the husband is the head of the wife, even so Christ is head of the church, and he is the savior of the body." Does that sound like the church would be unimportant? Acts 20:28 tells us that the church was "purchased with His own blood." Surely something that cost that much, must be important.

3. There are many churches, and it doesn't matter to which one you belong. Did you ever read that in the bible, of course not. If it were true, we would have God contradicting himself. We are told that there is one body in Ephesians 4:4, not many.

4. Baptism is not essential. (Baptism does not save anyone. No such thing as water salvation.) 1Pet.3:21; Mk.16:16; Acts 2:38. Baptism is essential according to these passages. To deny it is to deny the bible.

II. Religious Leaders Don't Always Tell The Truth.

One major fault this prophet had was his gullibility. He did not realize that the devil does not always make a frontal attack. The devil often uses guile and deception Note v. 18 "He said to him, I too am a prophet as you are, 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." (He was lying to him.)

This should make us all more cautious. Acts 17:11 "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

1. The old prophet took the word of God and turned it around making it say the opposite of its intention.

2Cor.4:2 "But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Unfortunately there are religious leaders and preachers today who do the same thing. They twist the scriptures. They try and make them say what they do not say.

2. He claimed to have a more up-to-date revelation. John 16:13 Haven't you heard preachers claim that God has spoken to them? That is what this old prophet said. But the bible says "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak and he will show you things to come." If the apostles were guided into all truth, there is no new truth into which one can be guided. Preachers who claim that are not telling the truth.

2Pet.1:3 "According as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain..."
Yet preachers today are always claiming that "God has appeared to them or talked to

them”

3. He claimed to have seen an angel, but he lied. 2Cor.11:14 “And no marvel for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light...”

Heb. 1:1-2 “God who at sundry times and in divers manners in time past spake unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.”

a. Mormons accept a gospel allegedly delivered to Joe Smith by the angel Moroni. This “gospel” departs from that of Christ” Gal. 1:8-9.

b. Adventists say Ellen G. White saw in heaven the Sabbath commandment inscribed in gold. So it should be kept. Note: Col. 2:16 “let no man judge you in respect of Sabbath days...” We are to hear Christ not angels.

Sadly, this good man learned too late that you cannot always depend on what some preacher tells you. A lesson many need to learn today.

III. Sincerity Is No Excuse

Surely none would doubt the sincerity of a man who had shown such boldness and dedication to the cause of truth and right, as he did in the early part of the chapter. (crying out against the altar, refusing to eat with the king etc.) However, notwithstanding his sincerity, he died. Being sincere is not an excuse for being wrong.

Mt.15:14 “Let them alone for they be blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch.” Mt.7:21-23 “Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that have we not prophesied in thy name...And then I will profess unto them depart from me I never knew you.”

Today many are heartfelt and sincere both about what they believe and practice.

Sincere but wrong. They will learn too late that being sincere will not in itself insure that they are right.

IV. Yesterday's Obedience Will Not Atone For Today's Disobedience.

The fact that we cannot rest upon yesterday's achievements is nowhere taught more plainly than here. The young prophet was true to God at the first, but departed later on. As a result he lost his life. This point is emphasized regarding our salvation today.

Gal.6:9 “And let us not grow weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” Many unfortunately turn away after years of successful service. Such service, however, cannot atone for sins in later life.

1Cor.15:58 “Therefore by beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Rev.2:10 “be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.”

The first part of this man's mission was successfully completed. But his mission also included a return trip, and he knew that, because he repeated God's instructions exactly on two previous occasions (1 Kings 13:9,17).

An example of partial obedience is seen in the life of the Galatians:

Gal.5:4 “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the

law; ye are fallen from grace.” v 7 “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? The brethren in Galatia had been turned away from the truth of the gospel by the influence of the Judaizers. The phrase “ye did run well” literally means “you were running well” in other words “what happened.” “Who did hinder you?” The word “hinder” literally means “to break up a road” and referred to an army that did so in order to impede the progress of the enemy. “Who tore up the race track in front of you?” In the same way these false teachers were impeding the progress of the Galatians, resulting in no obedience at all. Note v. 8 “This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.” In other words their disobedience that came as a result of their fooling around with Judaism, did not come from anything that Christ, who had called them through the gospel, had taught them. They had stopped in their obedience. How? Perhaps by neglecting the Lord’s Supper or those things which had been distinctive of the Christian life. Unfortunately this is a lesson that some will only learn, at the judgment. Note Mt.25:33-46 He will divide the sheep from the goats. To those on his left hand he will say “Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered and ye gave no food....” They learned the lesson too late.

There are many lessons today that we seem to learn too late. We are often “too soon old and too late wise.” One lesson we often learn too late is:

The High Cost Of Putting God And The Church Second In Our Lives.

Mt.6:33 “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...”

Some give the kingdom or their spiritual welfare little thought when they marry: they select a wife or husband never asking “will this person help or hinder me in serving the Lord? Will they make me stronger or weaker? Many select companions based on looks, financial security etc. Paul had a right to lead about a wife, a sister. Necessarily implying he had no right to a wife who was not a sister., that is a Christian. Selecting the wrong mate which results in heart break and ruined lives is a lesson learned too late.

Some select a vocation never considering whether it will contribute to their spiritual welfare or interfere with it. Perhaps keeping them from services. The wrong job has caused many to lose their children. High income, but low spiritual rewards. A lesson learned too late. Some select a college based solely on academics or recreation rather than providing a situation where their spiritual welfare comes first. A good education, perhaps, but a lifetime out of the church and away from Christian influence pays poor dividends. Some select the wrong friends. And they learn too late the horrible consequences of their actions. 1Cor.15:33 “Be not deceived...”

Look about you and think carefully. Never learn from your own experience what you could have learned from the mistakes and misfortunes of others.