

LESSONS LEARNED TOO LATE

1 Kings 13

Have you ever been in a situation where things did not go as planned? You look back at to learn from the experience and declare, “If only I knew then what I know now, I would have done things differently”. But NOW it’s too late to make those changes. I think this is something we can all relate to. But let’s make a spiritual application to this.

We begin by talking about a Biblical prophet we have mentioned in times past. We do not know his name because it is not given. The account is recorded in 1 Kings 13. The occasion is after the kingdom of Israel divided into 2 kingdoms (Israel and Judah). Jeroboam, the first king of Israel (North) has created a false religion that consisted of 2 calves that he encourage the people to use as they worshipped God instead of going to Jerusalem. This violated so many of God’s commands including the 1st and 2nd of the 10 commandments (Exodus 20:1-5) as well as other sins. 1 Kings 13 records a man of God (a prophet) sent by the LORD to go from Judah to Bethel to condemn the altar and calf worship. After interacting with King Jeroboam, the king invites him home but the prophet refused. Note vs. 8-10 where he makes his declaration. After this he head home by a different way. Then in vs. 11 we read of another older prophet who hears about this man of God, goes to him to invite him to his home. The man of God headed home replies with the same answer (vs. 16-17). However, the older prophet lies to him, saying that he too was a prophet and that an angel had spoken to him and said to bring him back to his house to eat and drink. The (young) man of God returned to him thinking the LORD had changed his mind. However, while eating, the older man of God declares that because the young prophet had not kept the LORD’s commandment, that he would die before he reached his home. The young man of God saddles his donkey and on his way home is attacked by a lion and dies (but the lion stays by his donkey and did not eat the corpse. The report comes back to the older prophet who goes and retrieves his body and buries it in his own tomb. He then declares that when he died, he wanted to be buried with the man of God because what he prophesied was going to take place.

How does this relate to our title? Consider some lessons that we learn that he learned too late to do him any good. These are some fundamental (first principle) lessons for us to consider.

I. God does not contradict Himself

- a. The directions given to the man of God was the total opposite of what the deceitful prophet lied about. And while it might have sounded convincing (perhaps the man of God was hungry or WANTED what the older prophet said to be true), God does not contradict Himself like that.
 - i. Numbers 23:19 as Balaam speaks God’s word he says, *“God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”*
 - ii. 1 Samuel 15:29, *And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.”*
 - iii. James 1:17 declares, *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*
 - iv. 2 Timothy 2:12-13, *If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*
 - v. Many other verses could be added to these.
- b. Yet many today reject the Bible because they say it is full of contradictions and God does contradict Himself. Some advocate the Bible is outdated and that what God’s word said 2000 years ago does not apply today. But the principles He has outlined apply just as much today as ever.

- c. Many in the religious world teach contradictory doctrines and declare that different beliefs are not important, yet profess that the same God is revealing Himself differently to them.
- d. Is this different from God changing His mind? Yes. As you study the prophets, often judgment is being declared because of sinful rebellion. However, most prophets declare that if you repent, God can “repent” or change His mind about the punishment. But that is about the guilty turning/returning to Him. That is NOT the same thing as God giving specific directions to this man of God and then relaying to someone else totally contradictory instructions. 1 Corinthians 14:33 tells us God is not the author of confusion.
- e. This is why we must study His word to learn what we are to do – whether dealing with our salvation, His church or even our faithfulness. God means what He says and says what He means.

II. Religious leaders don’t always tell you the truth

- a. The older prophet was thinking about himself and what he wanted. We are not given reasons, but I imagine him to be frustrated and discouraged at what he observed. He was craving to visit with someone. And he was willing to lie to get his audience.
- b. When you ask why there are so many different churches believing different things today, you may not know all the answers in detail. But one thing is sure, most are based on men who are teaching their beliefs – the doctrines of men. And worse, some of them do so with dishonest motives. Anything to gain a following.
- c. The Bible warns of the methods false teachers will use. 2 Peter 2:1-3 warns of false teachers who by covetousness will exploit you with deceptive words.
- d. 2 Corinthians 11:12-15 describes some of these “false apostles” and Paul notes that it is no wonder because even Satan will transform himself into an angel of light.
- e. We must understand that Satan does not always attack directly. That is the nature of bait (cf. James 1:14-16). He deceived Eve with smooth, flattering words (2 Corinthians 11:3, cf. Genesis 3:4-5). Romans 16:17-18 warns us to note (mark) those *who cause divisions... they serve their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.* 2 Peter 2:3 notes that false teachers will *exploit* you.
- f. Why do such things work? Because often man is not prepared. Satan will not go after and persuade someone who is well grounded in truth. He can’t! So the answer for us is to stay firmly grounded in truth. Ephesians 4:11-15 notes that when we are grounded in faith and truth we will not be “*tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.*” Acts 17:11 the Bereans were commended because they searched the scriptures to verify the teachings of Paul.

III. Sincerity is not enough

- a. I do not question the sincerity of the man of God. In fact, he seemed to be very convicted by the way he answered Jeroboam and even the older prophet. He INTENDED to do the right thing. But sincerity can be deceitful.
- b. We often mention Paul as an example – Acts 26:9, 1 Timothy 1:12-13 – in sincerity AND ignorance he persecuted “the Way” and followers of Jesus. But he was wrong.
- c. The sincerity of Uzzah as he steadied the ark and was struck dead is not questioned (2 Samuel 6). But the truth is sincerity can be misleading.
- d. Matthew 15:14 Jesus made the observation that when the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the ditch.
- e. THAT is not to say that sincerity is not important. We must be sincere in our faith (unhypocritical, genuine, with integrity, from the heart, etc.). All these show the importance of sincerity. 1 Timothy 1:5 speaks of Timothy’s purpose was love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience and a sincere faith. 2 Corinthians 1:12, *For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we*

conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.

- f. WHAT could the man of God had done? 1 John 4:1-2 – he should have tested what the prophet said. 2 Timothy 2:15 calls for us to study God's word so that we can handle it accurately. We have examples of those who inquired of God to verify the truth – Gideon (with the fleece) – Judges 6:36-40, Joshua should have verified Ai (Joshua 7) and the Gibeonites (Joshua 9), 1 Kings 22:5 – king Jehoshaphat of Judah sought to inquire of the LORD before joining Ahab in battle, etc.

IV. Past obedience does not atone to present disobedience

- a. All the good the man of God had done prior to confronting Jeroboam and heading home had no bearing on the consequences of his present actions.
- b. Some believe that when we stand before God He is going to weigh our good deeds and bad deeds and whichever one is greater will determine our destiny. But that is now how judgment works.
- c. When we stand before God it will be based on where we are when we leave this earth. IF we have been guilty of sins and have taken care of those sins we will be forgiven (Acts 8:22, 1 John 1:9).
- d. Conversely, we may live a faithful life, but if in the end we walk away from Him we may forfeit our salvation. 2 Peter 2:20-22 speaks of one who has returned to his old way of life – he is worse than it was in the beginning (when one obeyed the gospel). Hebrews 10:35-39 warns us not to cast away our confidence and its rewards. Revelation 14:13 also notes that he who dies in the Lord is blessed.
- e. As we consider this, it is not reason to put off making oneself right with Him, nor is this reason to dismiss good works (which we have been prepared for – Ephesians 2:10). Because you do not know what your future holds – James 4:14 – our life is a vapor. Hebrews 9:27 notes that it is appointed to die and then we face His judgment. That is why we must ALWAYS live our life as if it the end.

V. Partial obedience is NOT obedience.

- a. Similar to our last point, you may do much or even most of what God tells you to do, but if there is some area in your life that refuse to submit to, the Jesus is NOT truly your Lord. You are not His devoted disciple.
- b. The man of God in our account did many things right. Even in the account, he went TO Bethel, cursed the altar and condemned Jeroboam the king, refused his offer of hospitality and headed home, all while obeying the LORD's instructions. But he did NOT complete the task.
- c. Again, many today, some for reasons we have discussed (sincerity, past obedience, etc.) will declare that since they are doing most of the things God want in a right way that they are ok. But there is something in their life they are unwilling to change or give up. Maybe it is a relationship, or some habit or behavior – but they refuse to give that up to God. Or maybe there is something they refuse to do to complete their responsibilities. They think that God is going to overlook such faults.
- d. But consider:
 - i. 1 Samuel 15 – King Saul partially obeyed God as he destroyed the Amalekites. BUT he spared the king and some of the best of the flocks. He CLAIMED they were for sacrifices – but in so doing he disobeyed God and was rejected as king. 1 Samuel 15:22-23 – to obey is better than sacrifice.
 - ii. The rich, young ruler – Mark 10:21 – he lacked “one thing” (his wealth stood in his way).
 - iii. James 2:10 notes that whoever keeps the whole law, yet stumbles in one point is guilty.
- e. If we are to be disciples of Christ it means complete surrender to Him – Matthew 16:24 describes the disciple as one willing to deny himself, take up his cross (be willing to suffer/sacrifice) and follow Him. When we obey the gospel we are to make Him Lord – Romans 10:9-10. Romans 12:1-2 – we present ourselves a living sacrifice to Him; Galatians 2:20, etc.

I suspect that if that man of God had a chance to do things over again, he would have ignored that older prophet and we would not have read of his tragic end on that occasion. But that was a lesson learned too late. BUT

for us, you are still here today. And that means that no matter what your past is, you have opportunity to make yourself right with God. If there is some way that we can help you, let us! Please take care of whatever your needs are now, BEFORE it becomes a lesson learned too late. Think about it!