

#147 “The Man Who Went Against the Grain”

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One of my interests is economics, and I have been very involved in watching the current crisis unfold throughout the world, though particularly in America. Many have opinions on how to fix the problem, but I find that most are wildly in error. In fact, out of the many voices that speak to the issues in the media, it is only a very small minority who I believe understand even the basics of what makes an economy thrive and grow. At one point, one such economist spoke the truth at a conference only to be told by the moderator that he needs to realize that he is going against the grain of the entire economic establishment, as if that was reason alone to change his views. I found this economist’s experience to be a great illustration for the predicament of the Christian in this life. The fact of the matter is that according to the Bible the vast majority is wrong about salvation, about God, about Christ, and about His Word. The way to destruction is wide, but the path to life is narrow (Matthew 7:13-14). Even though we know we are right, nearly the entire religious, societal, scholastic, political, and philosophical establishment tells us that we are wrong. In some places this stand against the grain can cost believers their lives, or at least their freedom. All of this reminded me of the account in 2 Chronicles 18 and its parallel account in 1 Kings 22 of Micaiah the prophet.

Micaiah was a man of God, a true prophet in a land where the rest of the prophets had sold out to the pagan enterprises of King Ahab of Israel. All of the king’s prophets were deceived and telling the king only what he wanted to hear. Yet an incident unfolded where Ahab was forced to summon Micaiah one last time and to be irked again by his condemning and negative prophesies concerning him. This incident was of Ahab’s own concocting. He had wooed good king Jehoshaphat of Judah into joining him in battle against the king of Aram (2 Chronicles 18:1-3). But before Jehoshaphat was ready to go and fight, he wanted to seek the Word of the Lord (v. 4). Ahab brought in his own prophets, all four hundred of them, who in perfect collusion and conformity, told Ahab that Israel would win and succeed in battle (v. 5). Jehoshaphat wasn’t convinced by these pagan impostors (v. 6), and Ahab was forced to call upon the last man of God in the land, Micaiah (v. 7).

So Micaiah was summoned before Ahab in the presence of all of the 400 evil prophets. But before Micaiah was to enter before the king, the messenger who was sent to bring him in told him the following in 2 Chronicles 18:12: “Behold, the words of the prophets are uniformly favorable to the king. So please let your word be like one of them and speak favorably.” This messenger knew the kind of man Micaiah was and his track record with the king. He knew Micaiah would likely say something bad about Ahab, and, though his motives are not given, either he didn’t want to see the party stop or Micaiah get hurt, or both. But it is not for the man of God to look out for his own welfare or to concern himself with the happiness of those to whom God has brought judgment. Micaiah responded to the messenger by saying, “As the LORD lives, what my God says, that I will speak” (v. 13). This is the heartcry of the true follower of Christ. We are not to be concerned with the results of our preaching, only that we preach the Word of God. It

doesn't matter if our opinion stands alone or if we, like Micaiah, are outnumbered 400 to 1. We must be so confident in the authority of the Bible that we choose to cling to it and preach it even in a hostile environment. Satan may try to convince us that we must be wrong given that there are so few who stand by our side, but God's Word renders the only verdict that counts. Others might call us "arrogant" for believing that we know the truth while they are wrong, but we must stand firm. If we believe God's Word and obey it, we can expect to be in the minority and to have persecution. Being a spokesperson for the Lord has never been a popularity contest or a glamour job. Just ask Jesus Himself. The crowds left him, and only the twelve stuck with Him (John 6:66-68). But He did the will of Him Who sent Him (John 4:34), and that was the only thing that mattered.

Micaiah told Ahab the truth that Israel would be defeated and that Ahab would be killed in battle (v. 16,19). One of the evil prophets struck Micaiah across the cheek for having the audacity to claim that he was being deceived (v. 23). Ahab also reacted angrily to the prophecy and commanded that Micaiah be thrown into prison with minimal food and water (v. 26). Yet Micaiah didn't back down or regret his decision to speak the truth. He wanted the people to remember what he said and to listen, for he was confident that the future events would prove him to have been the true prophet of God (v. 27).

Ahab tried to thwart the prophecy from God by disguising himself in battle and setting up Jehoshaphat as a target (v. 29). But God protected Jehoshaphat (v. 31), while a "random" arrow pierced one of the joints of Ahab's armor, killing him (v. 33). God's Word always comes to pass, even if we try to thwart it. Nothing can change about God's Word, for it endures forever (1 Peter 1:25). This is why, in the long run, we will always be better off standing with God than with man. In the end, we will be honored, rewarded, and proven right. But in the meantime, we must be willing to believe, to speak boldly, to stand for truth, to obey, and to never compromise the Word of God. The call of the Christian is to do as Jesus did, obeying the will of God no matter the cost and no matter the loss, being mindful of the reward and gain to come. May God give us the strength, perseverance, and boldness to go against the grain, even if it requires us, like Micaiah, to stand alone.