



On The Frontier



“For The Glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel”

Vol XVI No.3

May/June 2008

All Scripture presented is from the Authorized King James Version unless otherwise noted. Comments and notations by this author within Scripture text will appear in brackets.

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Swimming Against The Current

Without controversy, many of the great men and women recorded in the annals of God's Word are found to be at odds with popular opinion. Neither social acceptance nor popularity have ever been the goal of those who love and serve God.

Consider these words, given by revelation to the great Apostle Paul:

Galatians 1:10

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Peter, John and the other apostles were of the same mind in this regard as Paul:

Acts 4:19 & 20

But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Acts 5:29

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Perhaps the following verse best conveys the heart behind this great truth:

I Thessalonians 2:4

But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

The sentiment expressed in the above seems all but lost on those who take this wonderful Word of God for granted. Perhaps, like so many other things in life, some have grown accustomed to these privileges to the end that gratitude has been replaced with a sense of entitlement?

In any case, it is a GREAT honor to be privy to even the tiniest glimpse of the Scripture. Clearly, this is the

attitude behind these verses and the many others like them.

We may love people, and truly we are commanded to do so, but it is God and His Word which must remain central. We dare never compromise His Word nor the Truth of it.

It is my ardent desire to reach as many as possible with the Truth. However, it is manifest that the Truth must not be adulterated in any way for any reason. If it is rejected then so be it. But woe be unto any who would alter it to suit the tastes of the masses, gain popularity, garner support or boost attendance. Political electioneering has no place in the fellowship of God.

Since the devil is the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4) it is no wonder that the things of this world are antithetical to the things of God. Consequently, those who endeavor to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom will often find themselves at odds with the world, i.e., “swimming against the current”.

This same truth will be prevalent when comparing the practical out workings of Christianity with religion. Thus, the man or woman striving to walk God's way may find themselves “swimming against the current”.

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II Chronicles 18:1-3

Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab.

And after *certain* years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that *he had* with him, and persuaded him to go up *with him* to Ramothgilead.

And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramothgilead? And he answered him, I *am* as thou *art*, and my people as thy people; and *we will be* with thee in the war.

Ahab is the same man who tolerated the evil influence of Jezebel and her worship of Baal. He is the king who attempted to slay the Prophet Elijah and due to his idolatry, lust and covetousness is the biblical type for a wicked king.

Obviously this collusion is not what God wanted for Jehoshaphat. Neither does He want this sort of thing for any of us as testified to by the following passage:

II Corinthians 6:14-ff

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath

he that believeth with an infidel?

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you,

And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

The world and that which the world approves is generally steeped in unbelief. It stands to reason therefore, that when we walk God's way we are not walking the world's. Conversely, when we are walking the way of the world we are not walking God's way. Certainly any serious attempt at being godly shall find us "swimming against the current".

Getting back to Jehoshaphat and Ahab:

II Chronicles 18:4-ff

And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day.

Therefore the king of Israel gathered together of prophets four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramothgilead to battle, or shall

I forbear? And they said, Go up; for God will deliver *it* into the king's hand.

But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him?

And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, *There is* yet one man, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah the son of Imla. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

It seems Ahab was not a fan of Micaiah or the Truth.

And the king of Israel called for one of *his* officers, and said, Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Imla.

And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah sat either of them on his throne, clothed in *their* robes, and they sat in a void place at the entering in of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.

They must have looked quite imposing on their thrones all decked out in "royal garb."

And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith the LORD, With these thou shalt push Syria until they be consumed.

And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramothgilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.

All these “prophets” forecasted victory and success. But what of the true prophet of the Lord? What did he have to say?

And the messenger that went to call Micaiah spake to him, saying, Behold, the words of the prophets *declare* good to the king with one assent; let thy word therefore, I pray thee, be like one of theirs, and speak thou good.

There you go! A direct admonition to “get in step.”

And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak.

And when he was come to the king, the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And he said, Go ye up, and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand.

And the king said to him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou say nothing but the truth to me in the name of the LORD?

Then he said, I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master; let them return *therefore* every man to his house in peace.

There’s the truth! How different from the general consensus! But did they heed it?

And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would not prophesy good unto me, but evil?

Again he said, Therefore hear the word of the LORD; I saw the LORD sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and on his left.

And the LORD said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one spake saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner.

Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will entice him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith?

And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the LORD said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so.

Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil against thee.

More detail on the demise of Ahab and Israel. This further establishes the reality of what is to be, should they go up to battle.

Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote Micaiah upon the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee?

And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see on that day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.

Then the king of Israel said, Take ye Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king’s son;

And say, Thus saith the king, Put this *fellow* in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I return in peace.

Such a disgraceful way to treat God’s man. It shows clearly what Ahab and his “prophets” thought of God and His Word.

And Micaiah said, If thou certainly return in peace, then hath not the LORD spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, all ye people.

When this comes to pass they’ll surely know what he spoke was from God. This is his endorsement.

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramothgilead.

And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and will go to the battle; but put thou on thy robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself; and they went to the battle.

To quote the great heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis, "You can run but you can't hide." No man-made disguise will ever be capable of nullifying the revelation of God.

Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots that *were* with him, saying, Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel.

And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him; and God moved them *to depart* from him.

The grace of God shone upon Jehoshaphat and he was saved.

For it came to pass, that, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back again from pursuing him.

And a *certain* man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: therefore he said to his chariot man, Turn thine hand, that thou mayest carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.

And the battle increased that day: howbeit the king of Israel stayed *himself* up in *his* chariot against the Syrians until the even: and about the time of the sun going down he died.

Jehoshaphat was saved but his actions brought about confrontation and consequence which otherwise would have been avoided.

II Chronicles 19:1-4

And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.

And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore *is* wrath upon thee from before the LORD.

God is not a fan of helping the ungodly which is why His righteous judgement was brought to bear upon Jehoshaphat.

Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.

And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beersheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers.

The good in Jehoshaphat's life did not abrogate the bad but it certainly wasn't forgotten.

Let Jehoshaphat's error be a lesson to all of us. When it comes to the

Word we must not worry about whether or not we are in harmony with others. If they are in harmony with God's Word they will be in harmony with us. Never bring the Word down to the level of popular opinion. It remains the Word and must never be watered down or blunted to suit others.

II Corinthians 2:17

For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

The Apostle Paul was connecting with his audience in a cultural manner by way of an Eastern custom. This he did to emphasize the truth God gave him.

The colloquial understanding of the day is as follows:

In the lands and times of the Bible the Greek tavern owners in the areas in and around Corinth were often guilty of watering down their wine. To increase profits after selling some wine they would add water to the flasks. Although the wine might still look good it would no longer be of the same strength and quality. It is said that some saloon owners are guilty of similar practices to this day.

The truth God wanted communicated by way of Paul is simple. We do not water down God's Word for any reason.

Perhaps this translation is more helpful:

II Corinthians 2:17

for we are not as the many, adulterating the word of God, but as of sincerity—but as of God; in the presence of God, in Christ we do speak. - *Young's Literal Translation of the Bible*

We are admonished further in this passage:

II Corinthians 4:1 & 2

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

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.

John the Baptist is a great example of a man "swimming against the current."

John 1:6-8,15-18,22-27

There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John.

The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all *men* through him might believe.

He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.

John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.

And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

John spoke in reference to the record in Isaiah 40. There the prophet foretold of this ministry that John was to carry out. What I would like you to note is both these records (and others) indicate the voice of ONE not of many.

And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

For his "popularity" and straightforward presentation of truth and the coming Messiah, John was cast in prison and beheaded. You see John did not "go with the flow."

As we study God's Word we find that the majority, if not all, of God's messengers were "swimming against the current."

This was not because they were trying to be contrary. Rather, those around them (especially those in positions of influence) chose to resist the Truth.

At the end of the Apostle Paul's life he met with an alarming amount of such individuals.

II Timothy 1:15a

This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; . . .

II Timothy 2:18a

Who concerning the truth have erred, . . .

II Timothy 3:8

Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

Look at the deterioration!

1. They turned from the man who was teaching the Truth
2. They then erred concerning the Truth.
3. They began to resist the Truth.

Since none live in a vacuum, the Truth was replaced with fables (myths).

II Timothy 4:4

And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Paul and a small contingency of followers were all that were standing for the Truth. The bulk of those who once believed had chosen different paths.

This was not peculiar to Paul's experience any more than it was to John's. We know from the records in God's Word that many of His men and women faced overwhelming opposition in the discharge of their responsibilities.

Consider Elijah and the prophets of Baal:

I Kings 18:21 & 22

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

Then said Elijah unto the people, I, *even* I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets *are* four hundred and fifty men.

Four hundred and fifty to one! I'd say Elijah was "swimming against the current." And an angry one at that.

What boldness in this man! What clarity of purpose! It didn't bother him that his course wasn't the

easy or popular one. He stood his ground and challenged God's people to make up their minds.

The outcome of course was victory for Elijah. Numbers do not matter, Truth does.

When the empty prayers of the prophets of Baal failed to ignite the sacrifice, Elijah offered this simple prayer:

Verses: 36b-39

. . . LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant, and *that I have* done all these things at thy word.

Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* the LORD God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.

Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench.

And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God.

Whenever you or I speak and do God's Word we can expect victory. And it will NEVER be because we are going the way everyone else is going. If that happens, it will be because everyone is going in the right direction and NOT because of numbers. General consensus will most likely not choose God's Way, even though it could. Let me say it

another way. It is possible but not probable (highly unlikely) for general consensus to agree with God's Word.

In other words, we consider God's Word and ONLY God's Word as the standard for our words and deeds. If we are joined by multitudes, HALLELUJAH, GLORY BE TO GOD! But if not, HALLELUJAH, GLORY BE TO GOD!

Our believing acceptance of His Word does not make it true. In like fashion, no amount of unbelieving rejection makes it untrue. It's true because it's His Word and for no other reason.

II Timothy 2:12 & 13

If we suffer [endure], we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us:

If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

We don't deliberately go against the grain. Nor do we moderate the Truth for acceptance sake. The Truth must not be altered, for once it is you no longer have the Truth.

Sadly, the world at large has chosen to "march to the beat of its own drummer." This is not the fault of God nor the concern of His messengers. Jesus said:

Matthew 7:13 & 14

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

In the walled cities of the Jesus' time the main gate was broad and open daily for commerce and heavy traffic. It would be closed in the evening to protect the inhabitants of the city. The straight gate was a small obscure entrance that was always open, i.e., walking with God is based upon choosing the right path not the popular one.

One Solitary Life

by James A. Francis

Here is a Man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He never did one of the things that contemporary society would consider a sign of greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. He had nothing of this world, only the power of His divine manhood. While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him, another betrayed Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While He was dying, His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on Earth——His coat. When He was dead He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today He is the centerpiece of the human race, the greatest source of guidance and divine inspiration. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as that one solitary life!——Jesus!