

Hating The Prophet

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All through the history of sinful man the word of God has always had two effects upon man: it makes him repent and turn to righteousness, or it makes him hate the message and the prophet who brings it. When Ahab was king of Israel, he followed a very wicked course and gathered about him many false prophets who would prophesy as he desired. This is very much like religious conditions in the world today. The preacher who dares to speak what God has revealed on all matters, especially when it condemns the general practice of people, becomes the object of hate.

"And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, let not the king say so" (1 Kings 22:8).

Ahab was not the last man to hate a prophet because he did not speak good concerning him. This attitude was characteristic of Israel all through their history. Stephen concluded his discussion with the Jews of the Synagogue with these words: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" (Acts 7:52). For these words Stephen was killed by the mob.

The setting of the statement in I Kings 22 shows that the king of Israel had designs against another king and wanted the help of Jehoshaphat in the effort. He had the death sentence passed against him by Elijah because of his crime of greed and murder. His evil wife Jezebel had developed a plan which he carried out to have Naboth killed because he wanted his vineyard. When Elijah told Ahab that "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine" (1 Kings 21:19). Ahab replied to Elijah: "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

Paul inquired of the Galatians, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16).

Why is it that a man can be corrected: told the truth about many other matters, but makes you his eternal enemy for telling him the truth about God's word? A stranger can be stopped on the street and told that he is going into danger if he keeps on in the direction he is going, and he will thank you and take another course. But your best friend can be sinning against God and if you tell him about it, he will, in many cases, become your enemy.

Maybe the answer to this strange behavior lies in the nature of religion itself, and in the fact that most people do not like to be considered ignorant of such important matters. Most people think of religion as a thing so personal that it should not be changed. They think of it as a sort of heritage that belonged to their ancestors. For this reason it is an insult to tell them that they are wrong.

Men do not like to appear uninformed in the basic and important matters of life and eternity, but the terrible truth is that the great majority of this age is ignorant. To try to tell one the truth when he considers himself informed enough to know, is an insult.

But neither of these reasons appear in the case of Ahab's hate for Micaiah. It was a clear case of a man wanting to do a thing but not wanting to reap the consequences. He wanted to be told that he would be victorious in spite of the fact that he knew a prophet had told him he would die. Those today who want to hear "good" about themselves when they are doing those things that are wrong are in the same class with this evil king.

It will be observed that the truth was not changed because several hundred prophets spoke "good" of the king, nor was it changed because the king hated the prophet and had him put in prison. It is the same today. The truth remains the truth whether we believe it or not, and even if we hate the preacher.

The religious population of the world, whether actively practicing the precepts of their religion or not, will cry out against the man who has the conviction and courage to speak out against error in doctrine and practice. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" they will cry. Many will say or think: "but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil," Do not confuse the *message* with the *messenger*. ***You will not destroy the truth by killing the bearer of that truth!*** "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16).

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Preacher of the Word (Vol. 1, April 7, 1996, #15)
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