

DEFENDERS OF THE WORD GOD'S PREACHERS??

By G. M. RAYL, D.D.

Text: 2 "And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak."

These are the words of a preacher that didn't mind shooting straight from the shoulder, one that took dead aim at sin, neither did he care whose toes he stepped on. A few weeks ago I was visiting with another preacher, we were talking about how so many people were back-sliding or growing cold in spirit right in the churches. He asked me why this terrible thing was happening? Well, I have just one answer and only one, "What is it preacher?"

It is nothing else except that the majority of the preachers have sold out to the devil, and have compromised with the world, they are afraid to condemn sin and preach the full Gospel because of someone in the church who might get their feelings hurt, or get mad and not come back anymore. This would never work for they are the ones who helped build up the weekly budget. Makes me think of one night not too long ago I was preaching in a church where a woman preacher was one of the steady members. I preached on sin and the torture and torment of hell, she told some of the other members that my preaching made her scared and nervous. It should of made her more nervous and scared, maybe then she would of repented and lost her old nicotine habit. God give us preachers like old Micaiah, who wasn't afraid to tell the king what God had laid on his heart, whether it suited him or not.

Micaiah wasn't afraid of being out of a job because he took dead aim at the influential sinner on the front seat. His empty bill-fold and patched clothes did not make him think that perhaps he had no call to preach. His only anxiety was to please God whom he served and trusted with all his heart. He didn't doubt his calling, DO YOU?

It was not his habit to sugar-coat and soft-soap so that there was no power or punch left in his sermons. He didn't have to put on a self-anointing to make people think he really had power and push in his sermons. He didn't care anything about making a reputation for himself, or getting his name in the headlines as a great speaker or a good mixer, neither did he lose any sleep because his preaching was not popular. He didn't throw up his hands and quit because the star preachers who stood in with the king knocked him. How soon there would be a stampede in the devil's ranks if every preacher who goes into the pulpit to preach the Gospel had the courage to do it even if it cost him his life. Nothing makes the devil more angry than to come face to face with a man of God who cannot be frightened.

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, entered into an alliance with Ahab king of Israel, against the Syrians. While Jehoshaphat was visiting Ahab in Samaria, Ahab proposed a battle against Ra-

mothgilead. Ahab was one of those chaps who thought he was a big-shot. He didn't care who he hurt or how many souls was involved, neither was he concerned who he might destroy or what the outcome might be, just so he got what he wanted. We have the same kind of people today, trying to gain the whole world and lose their own souls.

When Jehoshaphat came over the hill into Samaria, he looked as good to Ahab as a fried chicken does to a preacher, "I'll hand him a line and get him to take part of the punishment," thought Ahab. It was one of the first entangling alliances. Jehoshaphat's trouble did not happen all at once. He began to let down the bars gradually, nothing is more dangerous than to compromise with God's enemies, associating with false prophets, (Matthew 7:15: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.")

Jehoshaphat fell for Ahab's scheme, for Ahab sweet talked him, told him how happy he was to see him, asked about the family back home, and finally came to the question saying, "I'm having trouble with these Syrians, and you have come just in time to help me teach them a lesson." Jehoshaphat consented, but purposed that they first inquire of the Lord to learn His will. There was the difference between these two kings. One wanted Divine guidance, the other did not. Ahab cared nothing about God; all he wanted was to advance his own selfish interests. Jehoshaphat was honestly trying to serve the Lord. He didn't want to go into battle unless he knew it was God's divine will.

What was true of those two kings is still true of every member of the visible church. Some want to know God's will while others are never the least concerned about what God would have them do. They are in the Church only for the loaves and fishes, not because of their love for Jesus Christ. They never pray before they undertake; they never try to find out what God thinks of their cursing, lying, cheating, stealing, drinking, gambling, worldly jokes, and their late hours at night with some other man's wife. Let a preacher go into his pulpit and pull the lid off of some of their sins, and they are almost shocked to death. They begin to raise a howl, and want to run the preacher out of town. Let him mention things as vulgar as hell and they are thrown into hysterics and nervous fits. A sermon by a preacher filled with the Holy Ghost bores them almost to death. The kind of preaching they want is that which allows them to go to church on Sunday and then live like the devil through the week, without losing their self-respect. They do not mind hearing about the sins of Adam, David, Judas or their neighbor, but they want nothing said about their own low-down ways. They will agree with any one who proves there is a devil in the slums, but they fall out with the preacher who proves there is a devil on the boulevard. They will agree with the preacher who proves there is a devil in the pool-hall and the gambling den, but will scoff at the man who proves that it is of the devil to have card games in the church basement to raise

money for their societies, or to take a few drags off of a cigarette, or to sit and watch their shoot-em-up pictures on their televisions.

"Have you a prophet who will make known the will of God?" asked Jehoshaphat. "A Prophet?" said Ahab, throwing out his chest. "Why, yes sir, we have plenty of preachers." No doubt old Ahab thought he would leave the impression that he was very religious. So old Ahab sent for his preachers, (four hundred of them) and it wasn't long before they were all lined up. The leader of this crowd of false prophets was a fellow named Zedekiah. It seems that he had gone to a blacksmith shop to have a pair of horns made to fit his head. With these he gave a performance of how he could push the unarmed men into the ground. Zedekiah said to Ahab, "With these thou shalt push Syria till she be consumed." He advised Ahab to call out his army and send them marching at once. Somehow Jehoshaphat couldn't feel just right about the whole thing, so he turned to Ahab again saying, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him?" "Oh, yes," said Ahab, "There is one, but he is a peculiar kind of preacher. A prophet of ability and good in some ways but he is a fanatic." Old Ahab had billy-goat religion—did a lot of butting. There is still some billy-goat religion existing today. They say that fellow Rayl is alright in some ways, BUT . . . , but he believes like old Peter, that Christ is the SON of the living GOD . . . but, he believes that only through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord can we be saved. . . . But, he doesn't believe in all of these so-called NEW REVELATIONS that there is no Bible to back them up. . . . And, but he believes that the soul that sinneth and dies without repenting and making things right with God, will burn forever in the lake, of fire and brimstone.

Ahab said, "This fellow never prophesied anything good for me in his life. So in order that brotherly love might prevail and that some very rich, influential, and highly connected people might not withdraw their support, I had to have him locked up. But to give you a chance to see for yourself the kind of hot-headed fanatic he is, I will have him brought out." So he sent for him. In a moment the way was opened and Micaiah was led before the kings. Jehoshaphat no doubt noted as this faithful man of God walked to the front, that it was with firm, steady steps. His knees didn't tremble at all, and there was something in his eyes that would make a lion take a second look before he leaped. Micaiah didn't come out bowing and scraping, or acting as if he were tickled to death to have a chance to preach before such a distinguished congregation. He stepped forth like a man who knew he had a message from God. He was not dressed in fine raiment, but there was something about him that convinced Jehoshaphat that this man knew more about God than all the rest of that bunch put together.

Ahab inquired whether the march on Ramoth-gilead would be successful. It so happened that the messenger who went to summon Micaiah had told him what the prophets had declared, and

had advised him to make his message agree with theirs if he wanted his head to stay on his shoulders. Ahab asked, "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou say nothing but the truth to me in the name of the Lord?" What he really wanted was a preacher who would tell him it was all right for him to have his own way. Micaiah did not fail to give Ahab the truth as God had given it to him, although he knew he would suffer for it. As soon as he delivered the message, old Ahab ordered him thrown back into the prison.

Then Ahab started out on the forbidden expedition. But getting rid of God's messenger was not getting rid of God's truth, and the battle to which Ahab marched with flying banners was his LAST. Micaiah had said, "If you ever come back in peace the Lord has not spoken through me. This is your finish." And it was. In an unexpected way he perished as the Prophet said he would. A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of his harness; and as the sun was going down, he died. Remember, the wages of sin is death.

Every age has had its true preachers: They have left us a pattern of what we as God's preachers, should be like, John the Baptist; Matthew 11:7: . . . What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" Let us be steadfast not shaken with every wind of doctrine but let us abide in sound doctrine. Peter, as recorded in Acts 3:6: "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee. . . . "Let us not look upon riches such as silver or gold, but let us give our best that we have in the Lord. Let us also remember Apostle Paul, and remember his writing in 1 Corinthians 9:18-27: "What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as **without** law, (being not without law to God, but **under** the law to Christ.) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Let us LIVE THAT WE PREACH, that we might PREACH WHAT WE LIVE.

God is looking for a PREACHER that will stand in the gap, in this critical hour, and declare the **WHOLE COUNCIL OF GOD, WILL IT BE YOU?**