

Which Voices Are You Listening To?

Scripture Focus

2 Chronicles 18:6-7 But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might inquire of him? ⁷And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, by whom we may inquire 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.

Background

There are three characters in the story told us in 2 Chronicles – Ahab, Jehosaphat and Micaiah. Let me tell you a little about they are connected.

The first time we read about Jehosaphat he is the bodyguard to David. He began to work his way up the ranks until under Solomon's rule he became a state officer of very high rank. Eventually he became the king of Judah and WOW what a king...he sent priests out to instruct the people in the law but he made a disastrous mistake. He made an alliance with Ahab the king of Israel.

Ahab was a wicked and perverse king of Israel...his wife was Jezebel – need I say more!! The way these guys are connected is through their alliance, which led them to a battle in a place called Ramoth-Gilead. But before going to battle Ahab wanted to consult his 400 prophets. These prophets prophesied great victory in the upcoming battle even though they knew there was no way to win.

Jehosaphat wasn't quite sure about trusting these prophets and ask Ahab of there was another prophet of the Lord around. Ahab tells him that there is one other prophet in Israel named Micaiah...but listen to how this wicked king describes this true prophet...

*There is yet one man, by whom we may inquire of the LORD:
but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but
always evil:*

Nonetheless, Ahab sends for the prophet and the story goes like this...the prophet is told by the man that went to fetch him that he is being called to prophecy about the upcoming battle. Micaiah basically tell the messenger...I'll prophecy to the king what the Lord tells me too.

Boy did he prophesy...he told Ahab that Israel was going to be scattered and be like sheep without a shepherd. But Ahab would not listen to the voice of truth but chose to listen to the voice of the false prophets.

So the question I have come with today is, "What voice are you listening too?" Before you step out into your work-a-day world what voice have you allowed to influence you? Prior to making decisions, what is the voice you are listening too? I want us to ponder this question and possibly discover how to discern between positive and negative voices.

Today I'd like to start with THREE (3) PROPOSITIONS:

A. MANY PEOPLE SEEK ONLY COUNSELLORS WHO'S WORDS ARE APPEALING.

Ahab had a host of such "prophets" around him - he had lulled himself into a false sense of security, believing that he had the word of the Lord and the approval of wise counselors. LEADERS ARE IN A DANGEROUS PLACE WHEN THEY SURROUND THEMSELVES WITH "YES" MEN! Note those words of Ahab concerning the godly prophet Micaiah in verse 7.

[READ - "he never prophesies good concerning me"]. Also note that Micaiah had to be sent for - he was not kept at the king's side - Ahab didn't like what he had to say.

You know, people are always looking for "flattering prophets". Those who will say just what they want to hear. There are some Christians who go around from person to person, even to every preacher in town, they buy

books and tapes, looking for someone who will say what they want to hear. Listen, if you search long enough you'll ALWAYS find someone who is willing to agree with you - even if you say the moon is made of cheese! (Sure, you may have to go to an institution to find them; but you can ALWAYS find someone who'll say what you want to hear.)

The world laughs at the caricature of "fire & brimstone" preachers - they mock and scorn such men. BUT DO YOU KNOW WHY? Because they don't want to hear a message of judgment - a message that makes them uncomfortable and demands a decision. So they laugh, and run off to their flattering prophets who say "BE AT PEACE, ALL IS WELL!"

I thank God that in my own life I have always had, and still have, people who can "call my cards". People who know me well enough, and love me enough, to tell me the truth. To give me counsel I need to hear rather than just what I'd like to hear.

MANY PEOPLE SEEK ONLY COUNSELLORS WHO'S WORDS ARE APPEALING.
B. THE WORLD HAS SUCH COUNSELLORS IN ABUNDANCE.

There is no shortage of people who are willing to say what you want to hear. In fact, if there is a shortage it's of those who will tell you what you need to hear. If you've read "Pilgrim's Progress" you'll recall that there were MANY who have offered Christian "pleasant" counsel to side-track him from the truth. Listening to any ONE of them would have led him to destruction.

Many people are crying out "TELL US ABOUT THE GOD OF LOVE WHO WILL ACCEPT OUR SIN AND NOT CONDEMN. Not this God of fiery judgment." And they find their prophets of comfort. Even certain "churchmen" are prepared to preach such a one-sided half-truth gospel; not wanting to offend. These are the kind of men who would sell their own soul for the sake of popularity. (Billy Sunday said 100 years ago - "the theatre gives people what they want - the church gives people what they NEED!")

Other people enquire, "Won't my road lead to God? I'm a Buddhist, I'm a Hindu, I follow Hari Krishna; won't my "savior" do?" And there are plenty of voices willing to answer, "Yes, of course, all religions lead to God!"

There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved - Acts 4:12.

Our young people are getting disillusioned with life, and begin to question whether life is worth the living. Suicide seems an easy way out, and so they cry out "Is this the way?" And they too find their prophets of agreement. Rock 'n Roll counselors who sing out their messages of death.

THE WORLD HAS "YES" COUNSELORS IN ABUNDANCE.

Finally, my third proposition is this:

B. THE WISE SEEK ONLY GODLY COUNSEL, EVEN THOUGH IT CONTAINS NO FLATTERY AND IS OFTEN HARD.

The wise man's prayer is "I would rather a word of rebuke at Thy mouth, Oh Lord, than rivers of praise from the lips of men."

Listen to what the Bible says:

He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot. ⁸Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. ⁹Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

Ecclesiastes 7:5 says,

It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than for a man to hear the song of fools.

The wise Christian seeks Godly counsel even when that counsel doesn't please the flesh. But we are still left with the question, "How can we discern between earthly counsel and Godly counsel?" Amid all the voices that fill the world today offering advice and counsel how do we determine what is carnal or godly?

1 Thessalonians 5:21 instructs us to: *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

C. THREE TESTS TO DISCERN THE VOICES

There are, I believe, three tests that will help us to distinguish Godly from ungodly voices.

1. The "CONCRETE" Test.

What IS the concrete test? THE WORD OF GOD.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness... (2 Timothy 3:16)

Here is the "concrete test" for believers – "What does the Word of God say about my problem or situation?" Often, however, we get o God's word as a last resort. We wait until we are so perplexed and confused then we finally begin to seek counsel from the scripture.

Yet if we would consider God's word before we are in the midst of the problem we could prevent a lot of problems. You cannot get past the scripture for direction for your life and walk with God. You must remember that ALL scripture is inspired of God. Not just the parts we like are that we agree with but ALL scripture is given to us for doctrine, reproof, correction and righteous instruction.

If you are seeking answers to a problem and you get advice from someone, ask yourself, "Does what this person say line up with scripture?" If it doesn't - reject it!

The second test we ought to apply is:

2. The "CHARACTER" Test.

The second test could be called the "Character Test." In other words is the person offering you advice an example of Godly character?

I don't want to hear the counsel of those whose lives are out of whack. I want to listen to them that are hearing from God! And you don't hear from God unless your life is right. It doesn't matter how many people they've supposedly healed - what is the character of their life?

Jesus said: "You will know a tree by its fruit". That does NOT mean 'how much they have achieved' - it refers to the fruit of the character of their lives.

Now you need to be aware that there is one DANGER with this test - the "Character" test. And it's simply this ... There are some very impressive counterfeits around. The Bible warns of "wolves in sheep's clothing". The devil himself is able to take on the guise of an angel of light. And SOME false counselors / false teachers / false prophets may have the appearance of being very pious.

Therefore WE MUST BRING EVERYTHING BACK TO THAT CONCRETE TEST OF THE WORD OF GOD.

3. The "CONSCIENCE" Test.

The third test could be called the "Conscience Test." In other words does the advice your getting ring true in your conscience?

Sometimes you'll hear someone's advice and in your heart and ALL THE WARNING BELLS ARE GOING OFF - something's not quite right! At other times, there's a peace there that you are hearing truth and wisdom.

Don't EVER violate your conscience because of the crowd. You hear those warning bells going off in your head and you know something's not quite right. But then everyone else seems to be quite happy accepting it, and so

you think you must be wrong and you go along with it. DON'T DO IT! Don't violate your conscience ... CHECK IT OUT FULLY!

Now, you need to be aware, however, that there is also a danger with this "Conscience" test. And it's this. The voice of our EMOTION / FEELINGS usually scream the loudest! Don't get them confused.

[Illustration: Little Devil and Angel on opposite shoulders...]

For this reason, again, we must always come back to the CONCRETE TEST of the Word of God. All other tests submit to this one ... "WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY?"

I'd also warn you - if you have never come to faith in Christ - DON'T APPLY THIS TEST AT ALL! Your conscience still has yet to be illuminated by the light of God in spiritual regeneration.

So, the Bible tells us that we are to "test all things". We should use the "Conscience" test, and the "Character" test, BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY OF ALL - the "CONCRETE" test ... the Word of God.

CONCLUSION:

Friends, we can be like KING AHAB, and surround ourselves with people who tell us things we want to hear - listen to teachers that are pleasing to the ear - BUT at the end of the day we don't do ourselves any favors. At BEST it will lead us into bondage; WORST STILL it could lead us to complete destruction!

SO, take this matter seriously to heart. THE WISE PERSON WILL SEEK ONLY GODLY COUNSEL, EVEN THOUGH IT CONTAINS NO FLATTERY, AND IS OFTEN HARD.