



The King's Executioner

Mark 6:21-29 KJV And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chiefestates of Galilee; [22] And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give *it* thee. [23] And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give *it* thee, unto the half of my kingdom. [24] And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. [25] And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. [26] And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. [27] And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, [28] And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. [29] And when his disciples heard of *it*, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

I. INTRODUCTION—OSCAR WILDE—KILLING THE VOICE

If there is an image that mirrors the mind of the west today, it is strikingly reflected in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The story is about a very good looking and good natured young man whom the entire village he lived in was captivated by his looks and manners.

One day an artist was so struck by this winsome young man that he asked if he could paint a portrait of him. The artist claimed that he had never painted an image of a young man who had a face that was so attractive. Over a period of weeks the painting was finally finished and when it was presented to Dorian he was so narcissistic that he fell in love with his own image. But there was an ever darker side to this when Dorian begins to long for the ability to live a double life of deep sin and the lifestyles not destroy his physical beauty. The catch was that only the portrait would mirror his lifestyle. He longed to live any way he chose to live and not allow any whim to be fettered by any restraint whatsoever.

This he did. It was almost as if he made a deal with the devil and begins to live a life maddeningly teetering on the edge of the world. He sinks in sensuality and indulgence and finally resorts to murder but none of his actions affects his physical appearance. Spurred on by his ability to live a double-life, he sinks even further into a life of great sin.

One day when he was alone and pensive, he uncovered the portrait he had kept hidden for all of those years only to be numbed by the hideousness of the face which had huge scars and a troubled visage of a life that had been lived in scandal.

Fear choked him when he thought about being found out and the incriminations that would come from the village where he lived. With haste he hid it in his attic, thinking that this would be a safe place for it. What Dorian did not count on was the artist finding the picture and when the artist did, he was astounded at the change in the portrait. So overcome with grief was he that he confronted Dorian and pled with him to confess his sin and to change. Reaching back to the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, the artist begged, "Come now let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as wool?" In a fit of rage Dorian Gray grabbed a knife and killed the artist to silence the voice.

The story reaches a terrible summit when Dorian, who is no longer able to look at the picture, takes the knife and attempts to destroy the image that confronts his sin. When the blade pierces the canvas the portrait returns to its former beauty but Dorian slumps to the floor where he has been stabbed to death. The ravages that marred the picture have now disfigured his own countenance that his servants did not even recognize him in his death.

-In consideration of this story, Ravi Zacharias asks some questions of his own in his book, *Deliver Us From Evil*.

- Can an individual or society live with complete disregard for a moral and spiritual center and not suffer from the wounds of wickedness?
- Can the soul of a man or a people who have lived without restraint be left unchanged?
- Is there a point at which one must cry a halt to the passions and the whims of unbridled appetite and admit that enough is enough?

-That story is a good lead-in to the area of the text. What happens when the king sends an executioner to kill a good and spiritual voice in the life of a man?

II. JOHN THE BAPTIST

A. A Brief Picture of What Spiritual Warfare Looks Like

-The Bible is a spiritual book and it can really only be fully understood when we are in a condition of spiritual strength. You can never bring spiritual truth to a carnal or unspiritual man.

-There is much spiritual warfare that is involved in our world today. While I don't often choose to magnify the dark spiritual forces that are present in our spiritual walk, I do believe that they are always attempting to hinder our relationship with God.

-Furthermore, I believe that when God gave us His Word that there are spiritual lessons that we can choose to understand clearly that helps us in our walk. One of the great lessons that I have discovered is that biblical characters, particularly those who were bad in nature, give us insight as to how the devil operates in our lives.

-Note the following characters and you will see a corresponding spirit that ruled their activities.

- **Herod**—Motivated by a spirit that chose to murder anything that threatened his progress. Herod murdered babies at the birth of Jesus, he beheaded John the Baptist, and had part in the crucifixion of Jesus. He was a tyrannical ruler. There are spirits that have the same nature about them. Spirits of murder and destruction.
- **Sennacherib**—He threatened Jerusalem when Hezekiah was the king. His overwhelming presence of soldiers intimidated Hezekiah into a terrible state of fear. His efforts at intimidation were so great that he wrote a letter of demands to Hezekiah telling him what to do or face the capture in the city. Spirits of intimidation and control.
- **Jezebel**—The picture of woman given to idolatry and sensuality who introduced Israel to Baal worship. Spirits of worldliness, sensuality, and lust.
- **Cain**—The man who killed his brother and then tried to cover it up. The spirit that does everything possible to kill a brother still lives in our day. Spirits of jealousy and competition.
- **Michal**—The first wife of David and Saul's daughter. It was a critical spirit that desired to destroy worship and was critical of anyone who worshipped. She was also barren and could not have children. Worship and fruitfulness are closely linked together. Spirits of criticism, ingratitude and barrenness.

-For every one of these characters that map out to us the negative characteristics there is a corresponding character that reflects everything opposed to what to their actions.

- For every Herod, there is a Publius who will treat men like Paul with kindness and courtesy.
- For every Sennacherib, there is a Hiram, a king who will send resources to build a place of worship.
- For every Jezebel, there is an Esther who is pure and godly and will work to save those she can help.
- For every Cain, there is an Abel who will offer a more excellent sacrifice because that is what God requires.
- For every Michal, there is a Mary who will break an alabaster box and her worship will become a memorial for her.

-That is what spiritual warfare looks like and the more acclimated you are with the Word of God the better your ability is to understand what place that you have and can serve in the Kingdom of God.

-This story in Mark 6 gives us a very clear picture of what is going on in the spiritual world above us.

B. John the Baptist

-John the Baptist was the cousin of Jesus. He was a righteous man, a clean man, and pure man who sought to do what was right in the sight of God. Much of his life had been spent hidden away among the reclusive Essenes who were nomadic wanderers.

-However, they loved God and were intent on training those who lived with them to do the same. John the Baptist learned to fast, to pray, to worship, and to understand the Law among these men.

-But when the timing was right, God sent John from this schoolhouse into the nation of Israel where that his voice served as a powerful forerunner of Jesus Christ. John's voice was so powerful and convicting that it resonated with some and condemned others.

-But there was one man who despite his wicked lifestyle actually had a soft spot in his heart for John the Baptist. It was Herod the ruler of country. Although living in adultery with a woman he had taken from his brother, he knew the stability of the voice of righteousness that John embodied.

-However at the opposite end of the spectrum was the woman that he lived in sin with. Her name was Herodias and she hated John because his preaching shook her sin from its perch. Day after day, she schemed in her mind as to how to kill this prophet of God.

-She watched the revival that he was stirring among those who were hungry for God but she also took great delight when John's rivals, the Pharisees, spent much time persecuting him. As the days passed a murderous intent to kill this voice consumed her.

-There came a day when she was at a birthday party and her wicked and lustful daughter danced for Herod. The dirty minds and dirty hearts took great pleasure in her show and with loud applause and shouts she left the king's court.

-Because Herod was so caught up in the party, he offered her a great gift that included up to half of the kingdom. When the dancer consulted with her mother, they determined that half of the kingdom was far less than what they were willing to receive. Herodias wanted the head of the prophet on a silver platter.

When a trapper desires to trap an animal, the snare is hidden and only the bait is revealed. The hook is hidden beneath the bait. The devil laid a trap for Herod in the form of a depraved girl practicing her seductive art of deceit.

-Although Herod's heart was smitten at this debauched request, he called for the executioner to come and kill the preacher.

Mark 6:26-27 KJV And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.**[27]** And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,

-The king was sorry the Bible says. Men often are sorry for various reasons in life.

- He could have been sorry for the loss of respect that he was about to lose.
- He could have been sorry for the loss of public popularity as many politicians do in our day.
- He could have been sorry because this sense of justice was being carried out too far.
- He could have been sorry for the cruelty that was going to be expended at his hand.

-Just as Herod was sorry, men often are sorry for various reasons in life.

- Some are sorry for his sins while others are sorry that their conscience won't let them sin.
- Some are sorry that a profit was made by dishonest means and others are sorry that they cannot make an easy buck dishonestly.
- Some are sorry for the loss of a friend and others because they lost a fortune.

-Sorrow does not always come from God but the fact remains that Herod's sorrow was not strong enough to stop the

hand of the executioner and within a few short hours, the voice of righteous goodness in his life was about to die.

C. The King's Executioner

-This man that the king called was cold, callous, and heartless but he was good at what he did. His whole lot in life was to carry out the king's business of brutality and mayhem. On this fateful day, he would kill a voice that meant much to the king.

-The devil works in much the same way. He sends his own various executioners into our lives that seeks out to kill the very voice of God who is trying to reach us and get us to change the direction of life and eternity.

-When a man gets into the playgrounds of the devil and away from the clean confines of holiness the sky literally is the limit for his sin. If you ever wonder why I am always pleading for you to come to church, to pray, to worship, to give, and to just show up it is because I am aware of the goodness that godly boundaries create in your life. Get in God's church!!!! Stay in God's church!!!!

-This cold assassin destroyed the voice of the prophet. There are assassins of Satan that see to it that they shut off the voice of God.

- Self-deception instead of self-examination of the inner man.
- Sacrifice instead of obedience to the laws of God.
- Indifference and apathy instead of red-hot passion for holy things.
- Self-righteousness and conceit instead of humility that longs for God to promote you in due time.
- Love the world that consumes all of the clock and energy of your life instead of a godly devotion to the spiritual nature of things.
- Procrastination that embraces tomorrow instead of honest confession that says, "today I will get right with God."

III. CONCLUSION—DON'T REFUSE THE VOICE THE SPEAKS TO YOU

-It is crucial that we not refuse the voice that speaks to us.

Hebrews 12:25-26 KJV *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.* For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: [26] Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

-There is a voice of God that sounds so clearly and loudly that it will shake both heaven and earth. But this is not the greatest thing that the voice of God does. It does its greatest work when it shakes our own conscience.

-You can easily refuse that voice.

You can refuse it by not hearing. You can be absent from corporate worship. You can refuse to read the Word. You can choose not to listen to the voice of those who are concerned about your spiritual condition.

You can refuse that voice by hearing lethargically. Half-asleep to spiritual things. Half-asleep to the preacher's voice. Half-asleep to the singing and praying going on around you.

You can refuse the voice of God by not believing. When you don't believe you never allow the heart to be engaged. Your worship has no passion in it. Your holiness is absent of the desire to please God. You scoff at testimonies of healing, deliverance, and the reports of revival.

You can refuse the voice of God by raising arguments. There can be moments in time when someone becomes so educated in the ways of the world that it argues against all spiritual principles that are seeking to help you.

You can refuse the voice of God by being offended. Angry with the message of the Bible. Indignant at a preacher who speaks plainly. Opposing honest and personal admonishment.

You can refuse the voice of God by perverting His Word. Twisting the Scriptures and saying that so many things are not for today. Wrest them to your own destruction by saying the majority must be right.

You can refuse the voice of God by telling the Lord to leave. The conscience is steeled so that the voice of God cannot penetrate your sin. You can laugh off conviction. You may hang out with frivolous superficial people who haven't had a spiritual thought in years.

You can refuse the voice of God by reviling the Lord. Laughing at sincere worship. Scoffing and making fun of holiness principles.

You can refuse the voice of the Lord by persecuting Him. You turn on his people and try to hurt them. You can assail them as individuals and seek to ruin their reputation with your tongue.

-All of these things are nothing more than the devil at work as the executioner. Hear the voice of the Lord.

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