**By the word of the Lord a man of God came**

1 Kings 13:1-34

Key Verses 13:1

**“By the word of the Lord a man of God came from Judah to Bethel, as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering.”**

Today’s passage shows the glorious story of the man of God who came from Judah to Bethel by the word of the Lord. We can see his glory when he lived by the word of the Lord. We can see his painful shame and punishment when he did not live by the word of the Lord.

In the same way, when we live by the word of the Lord, we can experience the glory of the Lord. But when we do not live by the word of the Lord we may live a shameful life. We may be even under God’s punishment.

I know all of us want to live a glorious life by living according to the word of the Lord. In order to do so we need to know the reason why the man of God failed after such a great success. By knowing the cause of his mistake and by not making the same mistakes, we can live a glorious life which is living by the word of the Lord.

My message has two parts.

**Part I. The man of God cried out against the altar (v.1-10)**

**Part II. The old prophet cried out to the man of God (v.11-34)**

Part I shows the glory of the man of God when he lived by the word of the Lord.

Part II shows the misery of the man of God when he did not live by the word of the Lord.

**Part I. The man of God cried out against the altar (v.1-10)**

This part shows the glory of the man of God when he lived by the word of the Lord.

His glory came from God. When he lived by the word of the Lord, the Lord’s power and glory was shown as he spoke and took actions. What he said and what he did carried the power and the authority of the Lord.

**Verses 1-3**

**By the word of the Lord a man of God came from Judah to Bethel, as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering. 2 By the word of the Lord he cried out against the altar: “Altar, altar! This is what the Lord says: ‘A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.’” 3 That same day the man of God gave a sign: “This is the sign the Lord has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out.”**

The man of God came from Judah to Bethel when Jeroboam was ready to make an offering. It was the time of the great festival according to Jeroboam’s calendar, the fifteenth day of the eighth month. Therefore, there must have been a huge crowd gathered at that time. In addition, it was a highlight when the king made an offering on the altar. All the people who gathered at Bethel were paying attention to what Jeroboam was going to do.

But suddenly a great disturbance occurred. By the word of the Lord a man of God came from Judah to Bethel at that very moment.

By the word of the Lord he cried out against the altar, **“Altar, altar! This is what the Lord says: ‘A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.’” 3 That same day the man of God gave a sign: “This is the sign the Lord has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out.”**

He proclaimed that a son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. King Josiah would be born 300 years later. In the bible, I believe there are two prophecies mentioning names. One of them is Cyrus, the king of Persia who allowed Jewish captives to return to their home land. It was prophesied by the prophet Jeremiah about 70 years before the actual event. Another one is in today’s passage. The Lord was telling something that would happen about 300 years later. The Lord proclaimed that Josiah would sacrifice the priests of the high places who made offerings there. It means he would kill them and made an offering from them. And he would burn human bones on the altar. Dead bodies were regarded as ceremonially unclean. How much more with human bones burned. When it happens, the altar will be completely desecrated and become useless.

The proclamation of the message by the word of the Lord by the man of God came by the demonstration of the power. **3 That same day the man of God gave a sign: “This is the sign the Lord has declared: The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out.”**

The Lord proved the authenticity of the message of the man of God through the demonstration of his power. The altar will be split apart and the ashes on it will be poured out.

The splitting of the altar demonstrates that the Lord is completely opposing their worship and making offerings on the altar. The Lord opposes idol worship. To worship idols is to break the first and second commandment of ten commandments. It was the direct challenge given to them by the word of the Lord.

**Verses 4-6**

**4 When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, “Seize him!” But the hand he stretched out toward the man shriveled up, so that he could not pull it back. 5 Also, the altar was split apart and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the Lord.**

**6 Then the king said to the man of God, “Intercede with the Lord your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored.” So the man of God interceded with the Lord, and the king’s hand was restored and became as it was before.**

King Jeroboam tried to deter the man of God because it was the direct challenge in public for all his religious system he made. But when he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, “Seize him!” his hand was shriveled up. Suddenly in one moment, all his muscles and ligaments in his hand dried up. His hand became like a dried branch sticking out from his body because he could not pull it back. It was such a humiliation. He was the king. Therefore, he expected he could seize the man of God and execute him. But before the power of God he was powerless.

In addition, **the altar was split apart and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the Lord.**

By now Jeroboam realized it was useless for him to fight against the man of God. His urgent need was to restore his hand. He did not want to live with the shriveled hand for the rest of his life. So, he said to the man of God, **“Intercede with the Lord your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored.”** Jeroboam said, “intercede with the Lord your God”. He forsook the Lord his God and now he called the Lord as the God of the man of God instead of his own God. It mean he made his god as the god of the golden altar.

Nonetheless the man of God interceded with the Lord, and his hand was restored and became as it was before. Without repentance Jeroboam experienced the Lord’s mercy. The Lord healed his hand not because of his repentance but because of the prayer of the man of God.

When the man of God lived by the word of the Lord he could demonstrate God’s judgment against the altar. He could demonstrate the mercy of God through his prayer. His life was only glorious when he lived by the word of the Lord and obeyed it.

When king Jeroboam realized he could not fight against the man of God he wanted to make him his friend. So he invited him.

**Verses 7-10**

**7 The king said to the man of God, “Come home with me for a meal, and I will give you a gift.” 8 But the man of God answered the king, “Even if you were to give me half your possessions, I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water here. 9 For I was commanded by the word of the Lord: ‘You must not eat bread or drink water or return by the way you came.’” 10 So he took another road and did not return by the way he had come to Bethel.**

When the king invited the man of God it appeared that the man of God had his own command by the word of the Lord. It was the command not to eat or drink at Bethel and do not return by the way he came. The Lord made it clear that he did not want the man of God to do anything in the land of Bethel. It was the place of idol worship.

But the man of God answered the king, “I would not go with you.”

When the Lord appointed Jeroboam as the king over Israel through the prophet Ahijah, this is what the Lord says in **1 Kings 11:37-38**.

**37 However, as for you, I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. 38 If you do whatever I command you and walk in obedience to me and do what is right in my eyes by obeying my decrees and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you.**

The Lord said to Jeroboam, “I will be with you.” But now the Lord said to Jeroboam, “I would not go with you” through the man of God. The message to Jeroboam has been dramatically changed from ‘I will be with you” to “I would not go with you.” It is a clear rejection of the Lord against Jeroboam. When the man of God obeyed the word of the Lord he could deliver the clear message against the altar and the king Jeroboam. It was a warning against them.

So far in part I, we see the glory of the man of God as he lived by the word of the Lord in three ways: the clear warning against the altar, the demonstration of the Lord’s mercy to the king, and clear warning to Jeroboam.

**Part II. The old prophet cried out to the man of God (v.11-34)**

**Verses 11-14a**

**“11 Now there was a certain old prophet living in Bethel, whose sons came and told him all that the man of God had done there that day. They also told their father what he had said to the king. 12 Their father asked them, “Which way did he go?” And his sons showed him which road the man of God from Judah had taken. 13 So he said to his sons, “Saddle the donkey for me.” And when they had saddled the donkey for him, he mounted it 14 and rode after the man of God.”**

The old prophet was living in Bethel. He did not challenge the king from idol worshipping. He allowed his sons to worship the golden calf at Bethel. So spiritually he was not doing great. Furthermore, he was old. But he was a prophet living in Bethel.

His sons came **and told him all that the man of God had done there that day. They also told their father what he had said to the king.**

When the old prophet heard what the man of God had said to the king he asked them, “Which way did he go?”

**And his sons showed him which road the man of God from Judah had taken. 13 So he said to his sons, “Saddle the donkey for me.” And when they had saddled the donkey for him, he mounted it 14 and rode after the man of God.”**

So far so good.

**Verses 14b-19**

**He found him sitting under an oak tree and asked, “Are you the man of God who came from Judah?” “I am,” he replied. 15 So the prophet said to him, “Come home with me and eat.”**

**16 The man of God said, “I cannot turn back and go with you, nor can I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. 17 I have been told by the word of the Lord: ‘You must not eat bread or drink water there or return by the way you came.’”**

**18 The old prophet answered, “I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the Lord: ‘Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.’” (But he was lying to him.) 19 So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house.**

We don’t know why the old prophet wanted to have fellowship with the man of God. But he wanted. When the old prophet found the man of God he was sitting under an oak tree. Obviously, he was tired and was taking a break.

When the old prophet said to the man of God, “Come home with me and eat” he said, **16 “I cannot turn back and go with you, nor can I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. 17 I have been told by the word of the Lord: ‘You must not eat bread or drink water there or return by the way you came.’”**

But the old prophet did not give in. He already knew how the man of God would answer him because he had heard what the man of God had said to the king through his sons. So, he had already prepared a different answer. He said, **“I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the Lord: ‘Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.’” (But he was lying to him.)**

The old prophet lied to him using the expression, “by the word of the Lord”. Maybe he remembered the expression from what his sons told him.

What was the response of the man of God?

**19 So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house.**

There was no hesitation from the man of God. He even did not say “really?” He simply returned with the old prophet and ate and drank in his house at Bethel!

What he did shows he believed the word of the old prophet. He had the word of the Lord and he had the word of the man. But he simply believed the word of man and returned with him and ate and drank!

Why was he so easily tempted? It was because of the suffering involved in obey the word of the Lord, namely, the suffering of hunger and thirst.

 Bethel was about 10 miles north of Jerusalem. The border line between Judah and Israel was somewhere in the middle. If we assume the border was in the middle, then the Bethel is about 5 miles north from the border. If we assume it takes about 2 hours to walk 5 miles in one way, the man of God had to walk 4 hours on the road. And who knows about the weather? It could be a hot day. And the man of God spent some time in Bethel and now he was returning. He was hungry and thirsty and he was tired. That was why he was resting under the oak tree.

There was pain and suffering involved in living by the word of the Lord.

So if we do not want to make the same mistake of the man of God and keep living by the word of the Lord we need to learn how to overcome the sufferings that come from obeying the word of the Lord.

First, we need to learn that the suffering for Christ is the way for the glory of Christ.

**Romans 8:16-17**

**16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”**

We are born again when he Spirit testified with our spirit that we are children of God. If we are children then we are heirs and co-heirs of Christ. The sharing of the glory of Christ comes by sharing in his sufferings.

**Philippians 1:29**

**“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.”**

This verse teaches us that Christian’s calling is not only to believe in him but also to suffer fro him.

How then can we overcome the suffering that comes in the course of living by the word of the Lord?

That is through prayer. Jesus showed the best example.

Mark 14:32-41 shows such a change in Jesus about suffering. Jesus suffered from deep distress, trouble, overwhelming sorrow and death before he prayed. **Mark 14:33-34  33 He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 34 “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”**

But after prayer, he said in **Mark 14:41-42, 41 Returning the third time, he said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”**

Can you notice three exclamation marks in verse 42. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!

He was advancing to his accuser to be crucified! After prayer he was like more than a conqueror.

And he never suffered from deep distress and trouble and sorrow to the point of death all the time until he died on the cross.

The power of prayer was effective while he was on the cross for 6 hours.

When Jesus was hung on the cross, Jesus went through all possible pain and suffering and died. But there was no fear in him. There was no fear of pain and suffering although he suffered so much. There was no fear of death although he died.

There is one more thing that we need to know when we do not want to be tempted by suffering. That is deception. Our enemies uses deception so that we may not participate in the sufferings of Christ.

Jesus said in **John 8:43-44 “43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”**

We should not believe the lying of the devil.

Whenever I do not work on my message or doing serious work of God I do not have any pressure or fear or anxiety. But whenever I sit down to work on my Sunday messages or doing important work of God, suddenly I feel my blood pressure goes up and I begin to have a mild headache and I am so amazed to find how much stress and pressure I have! Then I want to get out those stresses and pressure and fears as soon as possible so that I may suffer less.

In those times, I believed such thoughts and feelings were mine. But not anymore.

Jesus Christ our Lord is dwelling in my spirit. And such fear of suffering does not come from the Lord. Who gave such lies? Our enemy the devil.

So in these days, I simply rejected them in Jesus’ name because they come from lying or bluffs of my enemy.

So whenever the thoughts about suffering from writing a message comes into my mind, immediately I reject it, and I say to myself “This brings me great joy! This makes me happy!” Then my mind is immediately restored and changed.

Indeed to suffer in the course of living by the word of the Lord is such a glory and joy for us!

So the man of God failed when he was not ready to endure pain and suffering of hunger, thirst, and tiredness. So he returned with the old prophet and ate and drank in his house.

When the old prophet and the man of God were sitting at the table a mysterious thing happened.

**Verses  20-22**

**20 While they were sitting at the table, the word of the Lord came to the old prophet who had brought him back. 21 He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, “This is what the Lord says: ‘You have defied the word of the Lord and have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you. 22 You came back and ate bread and drank water in the place where he told you not to eat or drink. Therefore your body will not be buried in the tomb of your ancestors.’”**

The word of the Lord came to the old prophet. He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah. **“This is what the Lord says: ‘You have defied the word of the Lord and have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you. 22 You came back and ate bread and drank water in the place where he told you not to eat or drink. Therefore your body will not be buried in the tomb of your ancestors.’”**

Only after the commandment was broken by the man of God, God’s judgment was pronounced  “**Therefore your body will not be buried in the tomb of your ancestors.”** Now because of his disobedience against the command of the Lord by the word of the Lord, the punishment was revealed. “**Therefore your body will not be buried in the tomb of your ancestors.”**

How did the man of God respond? Was he so surprised and shocked? Nothing. There is no record that he responded to the message. The very next verse (verse 23) shows that he had just finished his eating and drinking as if nothing happened. He completely failed to repent when the word of the Lord pointed out his sin and the message of the judgment was delivered. His non-response when the word of the Lord had warned him shows he was not much different from Jeroboam in this aspect. Both of them were warned and both of them did not repent.

Why complete silence?

If you were the man of God what would be your response if you take the message seriously? Yes, at least something like “Ah, you deceived me. Why did you lie to me? Now I am doomed.” Or at least one word like, “Ah!’ But there was complete silence. I am sure the old prophet must have been surprised because of the complete silence of the man of God.

If the man of God repented immediately when the message of judgment was delivered differently from Jeroboam, the Lord could have changed his mind and saved him. But there was no sign of repentance but just complete silence.

His silence made me think. Maybe he thought God’s judgment was not so bad because he could die in a mission field and he could not be buried in the tomb of his ancestors in the far future. Maybe that was why he did not blame the old prophet and was able to keep eating. But anyhow his silence is kind of strange, and this is not what we did not expect. We expected that he would repent right there instead of finishing his eating and drinking.

**Verses 23-26**

**23 When the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the prophet who had brought him back saddled his donkey for him. 24 As he went on his way, a lion met him on the road and killed him, and his body was left lying on the road, with both the donkey and the lion standing beside it. 25 Some people who passed by saw the body lying there, with the lion standing beside the body, and they went and reported it in the city where the old prophet lived.**

**26 When the prophet who had brought him back from his journey heard of it, he said, “It is the man of God who defied the word of the Lord. The Lord has given him over to the lion, which has mauled him and killed him, as the word of the Lord had warned him.”**

The man of God went on his way after the old prophet saddled his own donkey for him. Then **a lion met him on the road and killed him, and his body was left lying on the road, with both the donkey and the lion standing beside it. 25 Some people who passed by saw the body lying there, with the lion standing beside the body, and they went and reported it in the city where the old prophet lived.**

God’s judgment by the word of the Lord was so sure. It came so quickly. His death shows how much people of God’s words should obey them first.

**1 Peter 4:17**

**17 For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?**

The severity of God’s judgment against the man of God shows those who are entrusted with the word of the Lord must be serious about obedience first by themselves.

It is a very unusual scene when the donkey and the lion were standing together by the dead body of one man who was lying on the road. So, people paid attention to it and went and reported it in the city where the old prophet lived.

**26 When the prophet who had brought him back from his journey heard of it, he said, “It is the man of God who defied the word of the Lord. The Lord has given him over to the lion, which has mauled him and killed him, as the word of the Lord had warned him.”**

**Verses 27-30**

**27 The prophet said to his sons, “Saddle the donkey for me,” and they did so. 28 Then he went out and found the body lying on the road, with the donkey and the lion standing beside it. The lion had neither eaten the body nor mauled the donkey. 29 So the prophet picked up the body of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back to his own city to mourn for him and bury him. 30 Then he laid the body in his own tomb, and they mourned over him and said, “Alas, my brother!”**

When the old prophet heard the story he said, “**“It is the man of God who defied the word of the Lord. The Lord has given him over to the lion, which has mauled him and killed him, as the word of the Lord had warned him.”**

Then he asked his sons to saddle the donkey for him. And he found the body with both the donkey and the lion standing beside it. The Lion had neither eaten the body nor mauled the donkey. So he picked up his body and laid it on the donkey and brought it back to his own city to mourn for him and bury him. He laid his body in his own tomb, and they mourned over him and said, “**“Alas, my brother!”**

**Verses 31-32**

**31 After burying him, he said to his sons, “When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. 32 For the message he declared by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel and against all the shrines on the high places in the towns of Samaria will certainly come true.”**

At first the old prophet was not sure whether the word of the Lord proclaimed by the man of God was the true word of the Lord. But now he was convinced because the man of God even paid his own life to prove the word of the Lord.

So he said to his sons, “**When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. 32 For the message he declared by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel and against all the shrines on the high places in the towns of Samaria will certainly come true.”**

The old prophet asked his sons to bury him in the grave where the man of God was buried and lay his bones beside his bones. He concluded saying, “**32 For the message he declared by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel and against all the shrines on the high places in the towns of Samaria will certainly come true.”**

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**Verses 33-34**

**33 Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways, but once more appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people. Anyone who wanted to become a priest he consecrated for the high places. 34 This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth.**

“Even after this” refers to several things: Hearing the message of judgment against the altar, seeing the splitting of the altar, his hand was shriveled and restored, and he was rejected by the man of God.

Despite all these, he did not change his evil ways. He probably thought that the man of God was killed by his own God of the golden calf and therefore the message of the man of God was void. He did not know the word of God would come true without fail. So even the man of God was killed when he disobeyed.

But Jeroboam **once more appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people. Anyone who wanted to become a priest he consecrated for the high places. 34 This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth.**

We see the mercy of God. Although Jeroboam did not change his evil ways and provoked the Lord all the more against the word of the Lord by consecrating anyone who wanted to become a priest, the Lord did not kill him directly. He had a lifetime to repent and turn back to God. But it was clear that his actions against the word of the Lord led to the downfall of his house and its destruction from the face of the earth. If he did not repent but kept disobeying the word of the Lord his descendants would be wiped out from the face of the earth. There would not no one left from the house of Jeroboam.

The Bible says, to those who are given much, much more will be demanded. Since the Lord gave Jeroboam the authority of a king over the whole 10 tribes of Israel and gave him his lifetime to repent, the Lord’s punishment against him was far greater. In the case of the man of God, only he was killed. But in the case of Jeroboam all of his descendants were completely cut off from the face of the earth.

In sum, we learned that the man of God was glorious when he lived by the word of the Lord. God’s power, judgment and mercy was revealed through him when he denounced the altar, Jeroboam, and healed his hand. But he failed to obey the command because he did not know how to take care of his pain and suffering of hunger, thirst, and tiredness. Jesus showed us that we can overcome fear of pain and suffering through prayer. After his prayer Jesus did not suffer from any fear of pain and suffering although he went through all possible pain and suffering on the cross for 6 hours.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord and his power and authority given to us, we can also pray and win the victory against the devil’s lie about our suffering. Our sufferings in the course of living by the word of the Lord is a glorious one!

One word: **By the word of the Lord a man of God came**