

“Finishing Well”
1 Kings 13:7-26
(Preached at Trinity, February 28, 2021)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Verse 1** is a continuation of the end of **Chapter 12**. Jeroboam proudly goes up to the altar that he had constructed. Everyone had gathered for the feast he had devised and Jeroboam was about to burn incense. Suddenly, a prophet referred to only as “the man of God” marches up and pronounces judgment. As we've often seen with God's prophets, this was an unusual sight. His pronouncement of judgment was not against Jeroboam but against the altar and Jeroboam's priests. But Jeroboam got the message.
 2. Last week our focus was upon Jeroboam and his unimpressive, insincere, temporary repentance. This week I want to look at the passage in its broader scope. As I pointed out, this passage offers one of the strangest narratives in the Old Testament. It asks many questions and offers few answers.
 - Why does Jeroboam invite the man of God to eat with him?
 - Why does the old prophet lie? And how is it this lying prophet then announces God's judgment upon the disobedient man of God?
 - We are confused by the man-eating lion that leaps upon the disobedient man of God but is then tame enough to sit beside a donkey.
 - The man of God is mauled to death while the lying prophet survives.
 3. This isn't your typical story with a happy ending, not one you tell your children at bedtime. Pastors are challenged with how to preach such a passage. Some see it prophetically with the lying prophet foreshadowing the hundreds of lying prophets in the days of Ahab. And it speaks to the futility of Israel's defense that they had been lied to. God's Word was clear and they chose to disobey.
 4. Tonight, I want us to look at the man of God as an example of the dangers we face on our journey to the finish line. It is so important that we keep our focus on the end and pray, “O God, help me to finish well.”
- I. The man of God withstood the first temptation. He succumbed to the second.
- A. Jeroboam invites the man of God to come with him and he would give him a good meal and a lavish reward.
 1. We can't be certain of Jeroboam's motives for inviting the man of God to dine with him. He wasn't aware of God's charge to the man of God. Perhaps it was simply a gesture of gratitude. Even the most hardened sinner is thankful for the blessings of God's grace. Their problem is their gratitude is not directed towards God and does not result in praise to God. **Romans 1:21 NAU** - "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

2. Although the prophet was tired and hungry he remains true in his obedience to the divine command.

1 Kings 13:9-10 NAU - "For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'You shall eat no bread, nor drink water, nor return by the way which you came.'" ¹⁰ So he went another way and did not return by the way which he came to Bethel."

3. The man of God sets his heart on obedience to God.

a. We must not be easily tempted to the treasures and rewards of this life. There is great virtue in self-denial and self-control.

1 Kings 13:8 NAU - "If you were to give me half your house I would not go with you"

b. We must never forget the dangers that this world presents.

This man inviting him to dinner is the same man who just a few verses before shouted, "Seize him!"

Matthew 10:16 NAU - "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves."

- B. Leaving Jeroboam, the man of God continued his journey but he immediately faced a new temptation.

1. The temptation came from one identified only "an old prophet living in Bethel." The old man told the Man of God, "Come home with me and eat bread." (v.15).

The man of God gives the same response he gave to Jeroboam,

a. V.16 – "I cannot return with you, nor go with you, nor will I eat bread or drink water with you in this place."

b. And the reason hasn't changed, V.17 – "For a command came to me by the word of the LORD"

2. What do we make of this old prophet?

a. Do we call him a false prophet –

Ver 20 & 32 declare him accurately announcing the Word of God.

This is no guarantee of his credentials. The Word of God is always proclaimed by sinful men. The Books of the Bible came through sinful men.

What made him a false prophet is the false testimony that he spoke. The text tells us clearly—he lied.

1 Kings 13:18 NAU - "I also am a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.'" But he lied to him."

Surely, this makes him a false prophet. Such was punishable by death.

b. We also cannot declare him to be a good prophet.

- It's hard to imagine a good prophet telling such a deliberate lie designed to deceive the man of God and tempt him to disobey God.

- If he were a good prophet he would have reproved Jeroboam even before God sent the man of God.

- If he were a good prophet he would have reproved his sons for attending the altar of Jeroboam – they were present and witnesses of the events of Jeroboam and the man of God
- c. We cannot conclude that he had good intentions in deceiving the man of God into disobeying God.
- 3. Temptations can come from unlikely sources. The man of God fell for the deception.
 - a. This man was an aged prophet. He would seem wise. He claimed to be just like the man of God – a prophet like you. This is what false religions often do. We are just like you.
 - b. He claimed to have a fresh word from God. This is also what false religions do – and sometimes the watering down of God’s Word by Christian churches.
 - c. The man of God lowered his guard. Why should he deny being entertained by one of God’s prophets? But God’s command had not changed - “You shall eat no bread, nor drink water.”
 - d. We can never let down our guard. Even a pastor can be guilty of leading his people astray, of lowering the holiness of the church by his own actions, of perverting God’s worship with his own ideas.

II. We can be shipwrecked at any time.

- A. The prophet was referred to only by the designation, “Man of God”
 - 1. He was a Godly man.
 - a. He boldly and accurately proclaimed the Word of God
 - b. He resisted the rewards offered by the King of Israel. Our minds and imaginations can ponder the riches he may have been given, not to mention the kingly meal.
1 Kings 13:8 NAU - "If you were to give me half your house I would not go with you"
 - 2. He was deceived by the words of a man. What was God’s command? You cannot claim ignorance on the Day of Judgment. Every Christian has the duty to search the Scriptures. We have a duty to obey.
 - 3. God’s Word is the chief theme of this chapter. It occurs nine times. In fact this is one of the primary themes of 1 Kings – 33 times.
Will we hear and submit to the Word of God?
- B. This act of disobedience cost him dearly.
 - 1. The old prophet announced God’s judgment
1 Kings 13:22 NAU - "your body shall not come to the grave of your fathers."
 - 2. It came to pass
1 Kings 13:24 NAU - "Now when he had gone, a lion met him on the way and killed him, and his body was thrown on the road"
- C. How are we to understand God’s administration of justice in this passage
 - 1. The man of God was punished sorely – a lion killed him and he was left in the road. And he was not allowed to be buried with his fathers.
 - 2. The false prophet seems to have gone unscathed.

3. God's judgments are perfect but they are also unfathomable.
 - a. Sometimes they seem to prosper more in this life than do the righteous. The Psalmist pondered this dilemma
Psalm 73:3-5 NAU - "For I was envious of the arrogant As I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴ For there are no pains in their death, And their body is fat. ⁵ They are not in trouble as *other* men, Nor are they plagued like mankind."
 - b. We sometimes lose sight on the fact that the ultimate judgment is yet to come. The old prophet will have to give account to the false testimony that cost the man of God his life.

III. What are we to do seeing that there are so many possible ways to fall?

- A. We must be people of absolute integrity
 1. One thing is certain in this confusing passage. The Word of God is clear, final, and absolute. There are nine references to the Word of God in this passage.
 - a. The Bible is our final authority. Everything else is measured by Scripture.
 - b. With God's Word as our guiding light we must determine in our heart that we will not steer to the right or to the left. We must obey no matter the consequence.
 2. This world is full of deceptions
 Sometimes the deception can originate in the church.
 Do we disregard the Sabbath just because it is the practice of most?
 Do we modify our worship to make it more pleasing to the masses?
 Do we soften the Gospel to make it less offensive?
 3. Are we willing to maintain truth, honesty, justice, loyalty no matter what?
- B. We must never lower our guard
 1. The man of God stood boldly in the face of Jeroboam. He knew what to expect. Jeroboam was powerful. He was the king. But he was also an idolater under the judgment of God. God sent His servant to announce judgment. When Jeroboam sought his life the man of God stood firm. When he tried to wine and dine him he stood firm. I will obey God rather than men.
 2. But then he faced the same temptation from the old prophet.
1 Kings 13:14-17 NAU - "So he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak; and he said to him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I am." ¹⁵ Then he said to him, "Come home with me and eat bread." ¹⁶ He said, "I cannot return with you, nor go with you, nor will I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. ¹⁷ "For a command *came* to me by the word of the LORD"
 - a. The man of God said, "I am under orders from God. I cannot come."

- b. But then the temptation became more subtle.
1 Kings 13:18 NAU - "I also am a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.'" *But* he lied to him."
 - c. The old prophet claimed a higher authority – an angel spoke to me. He claimed to have fresh revelation, a new word from God. And the man of God fell for his deceit.
- C. We must not overlook the sin of the old prophet
- 1. Most likely, when he was younger he was a sincere, true prophet. He was careful about seeking God and honoring God.
Is it possible as time passed he became more and more careless?
 - 2. Was his motive for deceiving the man of God that of jealousy. Many have been consumed by this sin.
 - 3. Whatever the cause of his decline, he did not finish well. He was an old, lying prophet.
 - 4. But there is hope that he actually did finish well. He deceived the man of God and was responsible for his fall and his death. But it appears there was repentance.
 - 5. He asked his sons to bury him next to the man of God. He wanted to identify with God's servant—to reclaim what was once true of him—to die the death of a true prophet.

Conclusion:

- 1. This passage must serve to admonish us to press on. We must hold fast to God's Word. We must also pray continually, seeking direction from God.
- 2. Never will we in this life be free from temptation and the danger of sin. The designated descriptions of these men are instructive
 - A. One is referred to as "The Man of God."
 - a. The man of God followed the word of the false prophet and did not seek God's will.
 - b. Direction for us will come from the Word of God under the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit.
 - c. And we need to continually pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."
 - B. The old prophet was aged and no longer a holy man.
 - a. We must not fall into spiritual decline as we advance in years.
 - b. If we fall into sin, it's never too late to repent and turn to Christ.
- 3. Finally, we need to note that in the end, the memory of both of these prophets were honored by King Josiah.
2 Kings 23:15-18 NAU - "Furthermore, the altar that *was* at Bethel *and* the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, even that altar and the high place he broke down. Then he demolished its stones, ground them to dust, and burned the Asherah. ¹⁶ Now when Josiah turned, he saw the graves that *were* there on the mountain, and he sent and took the bones from the graves and burned *them* on the altar and defiled it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these things. ¹⁷ Then he said, "What is this monument that I see?" And the men of the city told him, "It is the grave of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel." ¹⁸ He said, "Let him alone; let no one disturb his bones." So they left his bones undisturbed with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria."