

No Compromise

1 Kings 13: 1-19; 23-25; 30-32.

An Address to Young Christian Men by F. B. Hole.

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What I have to say tonight may be summed up in the two words "No compromise." This is dead in the teeth of the modern spirit, because among men the best road to a bargain is through compromise. Starting with our thoughts rather widely apart, we can by degrees get together, whereas if you maintain your point of view, and I maintain my point of view, our differences will be irreconcilable. Compromise is responsible for many successful things in the world of business and the world of politics, but it is the secret of failure in the things of God. If you want success there, you have to seek out what is the divine way, and stick to that without a shadow of compromise. You remember that word in 2 Cor. 6 where the Apostle Paul wants the believers to be enlarged, and then you have that most striking passage which begins, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." He had spoken to them with wonderful delicacy about various matters in the earlier epistle. He had given a good deal of personal information in the early chapters of the second epistle. He had found that which encouraged him, because he saw signs of the working of the Holy Spirit, and he felt that he could now tell them what was at the bottom of all their troubles. Why had they been so shaky on the great fundamental points of doctrine? Why this grave immorality in their midst? Why this importing into their assembly the methods and ways of the heathen? The reason was that they had their links with the world very largely uncut. They had broken down in their insulation. Instead of being like an electric cable well charged with heavenly electricity, and insulated from the world, the insulation had broken down and the energy was escaping. They were allowing in their midst many evil things from the world with which they were compromising. I might turn to that verse in Ephesians, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." The Christian has to be uncompromising when it is a question of sin, evil or the world.

We get wonderful illustrations in the Old Testament. The man who stands for God is the one who takes an uncompromising attitude in the presence of the world. Perhaps Enoch is the first great example. We know he lived little more than one-third of the span of human life in antediluvian days. His days were very short compared with his contemporaries, and he walked with God. But when you come to the New Testament you find this man was an uncompromising witness. The world became rather an awkward place for Enoch to dwell in. Did you notice Hebrews 11, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death"? I often read that before it dawned on me that it was a remarkable thing to say. In the ordinary course he would have had the expectation of another 500 or 600 years. I believe if he had not been translated he would have been put to death for talking such talk in those lawless days when corruption and violence filled the earth. He told them the Lord was coming

with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment. It is the man of faith and of uncompromising faithfulness who leaves his mark for God. Compare Abraham with Lot, and you have the thing set before you almost in perfection. Lot becomes a warning, while Abraham is called the "friend of God."

Now in the incident we have had read in our hearing to-night an unnamed man of God is called upon to witness at a great crisis in Israel's history. The division between the two tribes and the ten had just been consummated. Jeroboam, with a good deal of worldly foresight, had said: "After all, religion is a most potent force, and in spite of all the feeling that has been generated by the tyranny of Solomon's day, yet after all anger does not burn for ever. The old links will assert themselves, and the pull of the old relationship, and the hearts of my people will be sneaking back to that king who is of David's line. Most of all, there are those feasts of the Lord, where every male is supposed to go. Can I let them go and come under the influence of the great house that Solomon made? It is not policy to permit it. I must manage somehow to divert them to a new centre." Therefore he set up the calves in Bethel and Dan. He carried it out very effectively. He says, "Behold thy gods, O Israel." False gods. He made a house — false temple. He made priests — false priests. He ordained a feast — a false feast. He had false sacrifices, a false altar, and false incense. He diverted the minds of his people in the mass to these false things. This was a great crisis. The larger part of Israel were being totally diverted from the true God. God called an unknown man. Mark you, not every prophet is called a man of God. He was no mean individual, though his name is not given. He had specific instructions to eat no bread and to drink no water, and not to return by the way he came. He had to appear like a meteor in the sky, drop in and deliver his message, and have no fellowship with the accursed thing. Do not even eat bread or drink water. Do not go back by the same way, where you might meet somebody who recognized you as having passed through a day or two before. He was to go right into the hornet's nest. He was to deliver his message without the smallest degree of compromise, and he was to return.

THE FIRST TEST.

Now he was sorely tested. I think you will see how the test divides itself into four stages. The first test, which was a very serious one, was when he appeared suddenly in the presence of Jeroboam, who was there at the false altar, and delivered his message. God was going to raise up, in days that were yet distant, a certain individual of the house of David, whose name was given, and he would desecrate that altar. The bones of the very men who were burning incense upon it would be burnt upon it. He most explicitly prophesied the total dishonour and overthrow of this idolatrous thing that Jeroboam had made. The first test came. Jeroboam was a forceful man. He had led a revolt almost immediately after the palmy days of Solomon, and must have been a man of strong character. He says, "Lay hold of him!" There was the man of God absolutely defenceless in the presence of the great king. He has now to face the violence of the world. It is a great test. Many a good man has quailed before it. The violence of the world is often the first test. Well, the man of God did not give way. The power of God was manifestly with him. Jeroboam stretched out his hand, but he found his arm paralysed. Every vestige of strength went out of that one member. There stood the king absolutely impotent to bring his arm to his side. In a moment or two the king is at the prophet's feet, begging him to ask the Lord that this blight might be removed. The prophet successfully negotiated the storm which arose out of the world's violence. We may have to stand in the presence of the violence of the world, and very often it puts backbone into us instead of taking it out. I remember a servant of God speaking of a young fellow who had been converted. His old friends to whom he told it shook their fists in his face, and said, "We will take that out of you." He said, "They tried, but they did not knock it out: they knocked it in." He was strengthened, and the world's violence did not move him.

THE SECOND TEST.

A few minutes more, and the prophet has a more severe test. Verse 7 is the world's patronage. Now that the prophet has established a certain claim on the king by healing him, the situation is changed. The king said, "Come home with me and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward." Now, man of God, take care! He did take care. That brought forth this striking pronouncement, "If thou give me half thy house, I will not go in to thee." The world is now fawning and smiling upon him. "Come and sit at my royal table," says the king, "I will give you a reward." It is a very difficult thing to refuse, yet he did refuse. He stood the test. The world sometimes swings round, and would fain patronise us. It is much more difficult. Many Christians would have fallen where the Apostle Paul stood in Acts 16. A damsel with a spirit of divination came forth and in a moral way patted the apostles on the back. She said, "These men are the servants of the most high God, telling us the way of salvation." That was a beautiful advertisement from the devil, but the devil's advertisement will not help the work of God. No servant of God is going to be helped by it. If you were interviewing an employer for a situation, and just then a man with as shady a character as he could possibly have were to drop in and treat you as "hail, fellow, well met," your chances of employment would vanish to zero. The employer would say to himself, "He is on the very best of terms in that quarter," and you would not get the job. In the same way, the devil's patronage is no good to you and me.

THE THIRD TEST.

Now in verse 15 you have the third test, by the old prophet, who repeats the king's invitation almost in the same words. "Come home with me and eat bread." This is the test of religious associations. Here is a prophet, a man who shines in the religious sphere, a man who, to take him at his face value, speaks on God's behalf, yet who dwells serenely in the midst of all this idolatry, as we do not hear that he uttered one word of protest. Maybe in his heart and mind he did not like it, but it is pretty clear he did not say anything against it. One wonders at his going on in the midst of all these things if he had much care for his God. He sends a message to the man of God to come home with him and eat bread. I am religious. I am not an idolatrous king. Once again the man of God resisted the temptation. He stands in the presence of this further test of religious associations. That is a test which comes to us again and again. "It is for a good cause," they say; "it is religious." Beware of worldly compromising religion. Once more the prophet has grace to shake his head and say, No. It is not so good nor so strong as the way he speaks to the king. He says to the old prophet, "I may not," as if he would very much have liked to. He did not say, "I will not," as if his will was in it. To the religious man he says, "I may not. It would be very nice, but I am not free."

THE FOURTH TEST.

He refuses until the old prophet with his wiles says once more (verse 18), "I am a prophet as thou art; and an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thy house, that he may eat bread and drink water." But he lied unto him. He was tested this time by what was in its substance the very thing he was sent to protest against — false religious imitation. Here was a man who had all the outward trappings of being a true prophet. "I am a Christian, as you are," they say; "I am quite happy here. I can settle down amongst these people. I have words from the Lord. I have seen an angel." He was lying. Whether he was consciously lying may be questioned. He may have been the victim of delusions. He did not see an angel that came from heaven. It may have been an angel from the pit. The man of God ought surely to have said, "God never goes back upon His instructions." He never

begins an enterprise not foreseeing all the eventualities, and in the middle countermands His programme. God begins by foreseeing everything, and His instructions at the beginning stand to the finish. He ought to have known that what God begins with He carries through. Taken on the ground of this religious imitation the man of God fell. God intervened, and He used those lying lips to tell the man of God his doom — a doom which fell upon him in the government of God. You find how God at the beginning of things makes a drastic example of somebody. You can find various illustrations of that: Achan in Joshua's day, at the beginning of the conquest of the land, and Ananias and Sapphira at the beginning of the church's history. Although the man of God failed on the fourth test, it pleased God in His government to make an example of him, that you and I might learn the lesson of no compromise. Be very careful when the compromise comes to you by the way of religious imitation. It may be someone who was like the old prophet of Bethel. Perhaps they were once true prophets of the Lord but have backslidden, and take a terrible pleasure in drawing aside others. It makes them feel more easy in their minds if they can get others back in the compromising path. You may be tested in this way by some poor backsliding saint, or possibly — I do not want to pronounce on the old prophet of Bethel - someone who only makes a religious profession.

You have heard a good deal of truth and unfolding of the word of God. My appeal to you is this: if you desire to be for the Lord and stand for Him, see to it that you are not sidetracked by the way of compromise. While you go through the world men will say to you, "We know as much about it as you. We are as true Christians as you." Yet they are going on with the world, endorsing the world, speaking the things the world loves, introducing those false things which are sweeping professing Christianity. By the grace of God, let "no compromise" be our watchword. Be obedient to the instructions that God has given us in His Word. Obedience would have saved the man of God who came from Judah.