**Cross And Crown Christian Outreach**

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**Avoid Being Deceived\_2.**

**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. 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.’ ” -** 1Kgs. 13:8

King Jeroboam I who was from the lineage of Ephraim used to be a servant in the palace of King Solomon and later King Rehoboam, until the Lord decided to activate his punishment for King Solomon’s act of joining his numerous wives to worship other gods – 1Kgs. 11:9-13. With Jehovah’s support, he successfully rebelled against King Rehoboam and became the King over the Israelites of the Northern kingdom which consisted of all the tribes of Israel except Judah and Levi – 1Kgs. 12:1-24.

He however lost it along the line when out of fear of losing what was never acquired by his ability in the first place, he introduced Israel to the worship of idols and earned himself the anger of the Lord – 1Kgs. 12:25-33. Infact, Bible historians have him as the most wicked and evil king of Israel. He did everything, anti-Yahweh to protect what Yahweh presented to him as a gift as he could not trust the same Yahweh to preserve the gift for him. This expectedly angered the Almighty God who sent a message to him through a prophet from the southern kingdom of Judah - 1Kgs. 13:1.

On arrival in Bethel, he met Jeroboam by the altar of God where he was about to perform one of his several atrocities. This time, he was going to offer sacrifices at the altar to a god only he knows, because it could not be the Jehovah God who has designated people to play that role, and he or his family lineage was not included in that group. The man of God then went ahead to announce God’s judgement openly on the altar, a move that got king Jeroboam angry and attempted to seize him but the stretched arm shriveled and the altar equally split apart and the ashes spilled just as the man of God had earlier prophesied. With pleas from king Jeroboam and prayers from the man of God, the shriveled hand was restored and probably as a sign of gratitude, the king invited him to dine with him – 1Kgs. 13:1-7. The response of the man of God is the foundation scripture for today’s devotion. The following points stand out from that response;

1. He will not collect any gift from the king irrespective of its magnitude.
2. He was never going anywhere with the king.
3. He was not going to eat or drink anything on that journey.
4. He was not going to return by the same route which he arrived.
5. All the above decisions were in compliance with the instructions he got from the Lord for that journey.

From the above, there was no doubt that he understood clearly the instructions of the Lord concerning the task so the expectation was that he would stick to this instruction throughout the journey. That he did until a senior prophet resident in the city ran after him, after being informed by his children, of the events that happened. On catching up with him, he presented him an offer similar to that of the king and he also gave the same response but only this time, the senior prophet claimed to have an updated version of the instruction. He could now eat and drink on the journey but just as in the case of the Israelites and the Gibeonites, he did not seek confirmation from the Lord (1Kgs. 13:13-20) else he would have known that the senior prophet was seeking to deceive him, just as the scripture noted. He did honour the invite only for the same senior prophet to deliver to him, this time, a true message from the Lord letting him know that he will not return safely to his destination, as a punishment for dis-obedience to the Instructions of the Lord concerning the journey (1Kgs. 13:20-22). This came to pass as he was attacked by a lion on his way back and killed – 1Kgs. 13:23-24. He had lost his life to deception.

Most times, trust in people assumed to have credibility and integrity is the reason why an individual becomes a victim of deception. He never could imagine that a senior member of the prophetic ministry, could for no obvious reason deceive him to act against the Will of God. Many Christians today wait to blame their pastor or their spiritual leader for acting against the Will of God but the truth is that it was not the senior prophet that was sent on the message. He was not the one that was given the clear instructions for the task. He was not the one through whom God proved himself before the altar at Bethel. He was not the one that got deceived even if he was the one that deceived someone and of course he was not the one that was killed by the lion. If anything, it was the senior prophet that announced the punishment of God for the act of dis-obedience of the man of God from Judah just as it is likely that it will be the responsibility of your spiritual leader to give the homily at your interment, where he will have obedience to God as the theme (1Kgs. 13:26-29) and you paying the price for your dis-obedience.

All he needed to have done was to confirm the so called updated information from the Lord. Yes! he would be accused of display of spiritual arrogance towards a superior prophet, but with benefit of hindsight, he sure would have preferred that, to losing his life in such humiliating circumstances, especially after the honour he just got from the Lord for properly representating Him at Bethel.

It should never be about the comment of people no matter how highly placed, but about your communication with the Almighty God. It was just the two of you when he communicated with you. It is better left like that throughout the period of implementing the task to avoid regrets. Learn to avoid the deceitful nature of men by keeping communication lines with your God always open and effective. May God hear you when you call in Jesus name. Amen.