

## The Troubler of Israel

*1 Kings 18:17-20: <sup>17</sup>And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? <sup>18</sup>And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim. (KJV-1900).*

### Introduction

The confrontation between Elijah and Ahab in 1 Kings 18 brings to the limelight the stark reality: truth and error, light and darkness, the workers of iniquity and the servants of righteousness (cf. 2 Thess. 3:1-5). Unfortunately, Ahab did not realize or acknowledge that his transgression brought calamity upon Israel. Instead, he directed all the blames towards Elijah- "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?" (vs 17-NKJV). Today, we can draw the exact correlation when people introduce unscriptural practices into Christ's Church, and God's faithful children oppose their unbiblical innovations. The faithful are quickly labelled "troublemakers" and "unprogressive elements" within the brotherhood. It is not surprising because, like Ahab, unscrupulous men have never wanted the credit for the evil influence of their deeds. They have continuously sought their ways but have never been willing to shoulder the blame for the evil resulting from their unscriptural practices. They always blamed those who oppose their ungodly conduct. Forgetting that part of the wickedness of Ahaz, King of Israel, was his rejection of the divine pattern of the altar and fashioning one like the pagan altar in Damascus (2 Kings 16:10-11). Indeed, evil men appear entirely impervious to the word of warning. Fortunately, for the speakers of truth, Elijah would say, No! Those who refuse to follow the divine pattern revealed in the scripture are troubling spiritual Israel- his Church today (cf. Acts 15:1-2). The rest of this article examines those like Ahab who are the real troublemakers in the Lord's Church.

### FACE TO FACE WITH REALITY

After a long while, about three years into the severe famine, Ahab and Elijah confronted each other for the first time since the famine began (1 Kings 18:1). King Ahab was quick to accuse Elijah, the man of God, of being responsible for all the calamity that befell the land. Remarkably, Elijah was not daunted because of Ahab's intimidation. In contrast, he appropriates the blame where it belonged: "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed the Baals" (vs 18). Said differently, Elijah is saying, "Ahab, this disaster has come upon you because of your disobedience and sin." The Church of Christ is composed of God's Israel today since we are the "Israel of God", and as lively stones, we make up the Church of God (Gal. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:5). Hence, just as there was trouble in Israel in those days because Ahab and his household forsook the commandment of God, so it is today in Lord's Church. We continue to see how the forces of unfruitful works of darkness wreak havoc upon the blood-bought Church of Christ (2 Tim. 2: 19; Eph. 5: 11-12). Remarkably, faithful brethren defending the truth continue to be accused of causing trouble or unsettling the peace within the brotherhood by preaching the truth.

## ISSUES AND PERSONALITY

When Paul wrote to the Corinthian, he did say that Christians should learn "not to go beyond the things which are written" (1 Cor. 4:6), it is worthy of note that sometimes, when personalities and attitudes are infused in a doctrinal issue, they often becloud the issues, and we end up forming cliques with our associates instead of standing for what is right. Let it always be our desire on all matters bothering on doctrinal issues or scriptural fellowship to constantly ask, "what would the Lord have me do on this matter?" (cf. 2 Chro. 11:13-17; 1 Cor. 10:20; Col. 3: 17). We should study objectively as much as possible to determine where lies the truth. It is not healthy to form a clique with propagators of error either because we do not want to damage our friendship or because of American dollars (Tit. 2:1,7). Let us be like the noble Bereans who search diligently to see whether the thing they were taught is according to the Word of God (Acts 17:11). We thank God for the many write up from our brethren in American, but it is not enough for us to swallow such materials hook, line and sinker without scrutiny. Hence, Paul told Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Sadly, some preachers who hold tenaciously in Nigeria congregations that women must cover their heads and not ask questions during general bible study because it is "thus says the Lord" does not apply the same yardstick when they travel to America, all because of US dollar. It seems some of the preachers love to keep their friendships at the detriment of speaking the truth. How would any preacher hold that head covering and women asking a question is a matter of faith in Nigeria but get to America and soft-pedal that it is a cultural issue-really! That is nothing short of hypocrisy. The truth is that Nigerian preachers who are being supported in USD need to deliberate openly and honestly about some of the doctrinal issues with their American counterparts by letting them know what their stands are on those issues. God fed Elijah amid nothing-during a severe drought, the same God is still meeting the needs of his children today (1 Kings 17:8-16; Phil. 4:19).

Furthermore, as God's children, we are required to contend earnestly for the faith and to be set for the defence of the gospel (Jude 3; Phil. 1: 17). Paul would later say, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." (Philippians 1:27). The biblical injunction to faithful gospel preachers is to "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (2 Tim. 4:1-2). God's faithful children must diligently and prayerfully observe all the above instructions to guide against departures from the faith (Acts 20: 27-30). Accordingly, as we see brethren in error and oppose them, our aim must be no other purpose than to ensure the truth triumph (cf. Gal. 2: 11 - 14). A preacher of righteousness must be willing and ready to teach with gentleness, humility, and patience (2 Tim. 2: 24 - 26). While tact and diplomacy are an essential ingredient of a good preacher, it is not a tool for acting hypocritically within the Fold of Christ. Therefore, as disagreements arise among brethren over divisive issues and errors, let each of us be set for the defence of truth, study as objectively as possible in order to determine what the will of God is on each subject that we found controversial. We should be able to defend, teach the truth and oppose error without dealing in personalities. Let us follow no man wherein he does not follow the wholesome word of God (cf. 1 Tim. 4: 6 -7).

Correspondingly, pride is another "spiritual endemic disease" that we need to deal with in our lives. Solomon, the great wise man, writes, "only by pride cometh contention" (Prov. 13:10-KJV), "the fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way, and the perverse mouth I hate

(Proverbs 8:13-NKJV). The truth is bitter, but I must submit that pride has enslaved many brethren in false teaching. Not surprising, Apostle Paul, in his letter to Timothy, says, "If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, <sup>4</sup>they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup>and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain" (1 Timothy 6:3-5). Sadly, many within the Fold of Christ, particularly the preachers, find it difficult to change their stance on several doctrinal issues even when the truth is staring them in the face. How sad! God's children need not behave indecorously by casting smear on other fellow preachers or comrades through innuendoes and aspersion. Let us repent and stop causing trouble in the Lord's Church.

### Conclusion

It is not surprising, Ahab accused Elijah of causing the trouble in Israel, the Jews and chief priests accused Christ of perverting their nation (Luke 23: 2, 5); at Philippi, the fortune-tellers accused Paul and Silas of troubling their city (Acts 16: 16-20). May God bless his Church with bold men who will stand in the way of the error to have it dismantled from its foundation. Apostle Paul would say, "Praying always with all prayer for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." (Acts 4: 5-13; Eph. 6:18, 19). Those who disobey God's divine pattern in the Church today should be held responsible for the problems that accompany their unscriptural practices; the faithful Children of God who oppose them are to be strengthened for standing for the truth (Romans 16:17-18). When people begin to follow the opinions and desires of men, institutions, and practices unknown to the New Testament will soon be evident on every hand. Accommodation with error does not promote unity in the Church of God. It only encourages the union of unscriptural organizations (Eph. 4: 3-5). Thus, compromising with error only produces a loss of fellowship with God, and it causes one to partake of error (2 John 9-11). Let us arise and oppose false doctrine for the sake of truth and the salvation of our soul (Jude 3-4). We cannot stop false teachings by compromising practices that promote them (Rom. 1:18, 32). On a final note, Jeremiah says, "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16). May God help us to walk in the precept of our Lord so that we do not perish like Ahab and his prophets of Baal in hellfire. Amen!