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# **Be Careful What You Do!**

**#1108-B**

**Series: Living Legends - Part 3**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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# Be Careful What You Do!

There is probably no single characteristic of fallen man more consistent than his desire to be “in charge”. It is the driving force in business, the driving force in athletics, the driving force in most all human endeavors. It is the source of dissension and the cause of disruption in most marital disputes, most job disputes, most disputes between parents and children, and most national disputes. It has at its roots, of course, the fact that Satan wants desperately to put us into this frame of mind.

It was his argument to Eve. He railed, “Who is God to tell you what to do, Eve? You can be *like God*. You can be *in charge!*” It was his argument to God. “**I** will be like the Most High. **I** will be in charge!” It was his prime temptation to Jesus. “Bow down and worship me, Jesus...then *you* can be in charge of *this world!*” Satan has sold mankind the lie that the way to success is to rule over others, to be able to tell others what to do, and *to be in charge!* His key lie in the realm of religion is that, when we have a proper hold on the concept of faith, we can even tell God what to do. We can press a button, and like a genie of some sort, Deity is supposed to respond to our belief, *thus letting us be God*.

So it is no wonder that, even in Biblical times, man’s great quest was to rule. The reason was the higher the office, the greater the rank. The higher the office, the greater the power. The higher the office, the greater the respect. Yet so often, with the rank and with the office and with the power and with the respect came the corruption of the human soul and the loss of spiritual sensitivity. It wasn’t until Jesus came and demonstrated what Scriptural leadership is that man began to see that real leaders lead by serving, and the more humble a man is, the more leadership potential God sees in his life. The more submissive he is, the more worthy he is *to be in charge*.

The kings of Israel were perfect examples of the subtle dangers of being leaders in the kingdom. So often they came into power with good intentions, sensitive spirits, and great potential. Then wealth became theirs. They experienced victory in warfare. Thousands reacted to the mere mention of their names, and

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before long, that meek, mild-mannered man became a tyrant—selfish, dictatorial, compromising. Wealth became his new god, power his new ambition. So God had to lovingly remove from him the mantle of authority or remove him bodily from the throne. That is the end of leadership when leadership becomes an end within itself.

Such is true in the church in our day as well. Men clamor to become deacons and elders and rulers. They want to head committees or run programs. They want others to answer to them, often *never realizing the intensity of spiritual accountability that accompanies leadership from God's perspective*. Today's lesson is about that problem. It is a word of warning given to those who were given the reins of authority among God's people. And it is a word of warning to those of us who are privileged to lead even in our day.

Our Living Legend of the hour is a man named Jehoshophat; and our story is found in II Chronicles, chapter 19. The title and the outline look like this:

Be Careful What You Do! (II Chronicles 19:1-11)

I- Compromise, Grace, & a Holy Heart (19:1-5)

II- So You Want to Be a Leader?

A- Consider What You Are Doing (verse 6)

B- Be Careful What You Do (verse 7)

C- Thus You Shall Do (verse 9)

D- That They May Not Be Guilty (verse 10)

### I- COMPROMISE, GRACE, & A HOLY HEART

Our story begins where we left off in our last lesson. King Jay, as we've chosen to call him, or Jehoshophat, as he is properly named, is returning from his rather unfortunate and quite unnecessary trip to the battlefield with the now-deceased King of Israel, King Ahab, (may he rest in peace). Ahab wined and dined Jay, you remember, and in the process talked him into taking on the enemy at Ramoth-Gilead in a kind of "bury the hatchet" offensive. What got buried was Ahab, because the whole thing was offensive to God.

Jay, you recall, had demanded a word from Jehovah before he would go to battle. After a brief theatrical skit by 400 phony prophets who predicted, a-la-Jeanne Dixon, overwhelming victory for these new unlikely allies, Jay demanded a more prestigious

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prophet. Grudgingly, Ahab gave in and sent for Mike, or Micaiah, as he was called in his day. Mike, you remember, said, “Go if you like, Ahab, but be sure to have your funeral arrangements made before you leave...you will have seen the old palace for the last time.” Ahab scoffed and threw Mike into the hoosegow, and Jay, showing an unusual bit of spiritual weakness, *ignored the very counsel he had demanded* and went on into battle. The results were predictable. The enemy thought Jay was Ahab, went for the throat, and graciously, God intervened. They found the real culprit; Ahab went bye-bye, and Jehoshophat returned, bewildered and beaten. As the curtain rises on today’s episode of “As the World Burns” Jehoshophat is approaching headquarters upon his return, and he is greeted by a spokesman for God who has a few words of warning about what a leader does and doesn’t do. Jehoshophat adds a few words of his own to the leaders he appoints, and the sum total of it all is indeed good food for thought for all of us. The story takes up, now, in II Chronicles 19,

Then Jehoshophat the king of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem.

And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshophat, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD and so bring wrath on yourself from the LORD?”

But there is some good in you, for you have removed the Asheroth from the land and you have set your heart to seek God.”

So Jehoshophat lived in Jerusalem and went out again among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers.

And he appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city. (II Chronicles 19:1-5 NASB)

King Jay returned safely, if not ceremonially, to his palatial estate. But as he was sauntering up the walk, pretending he had just been out jogging before his morning tea (rather than risking the future of his country in an alliance with his enemy), there just happened to walk by a young man named Jehu. (We won’t even attempt to give him a nickname.) At any rate, Jehu, the son of Hanani, had a few questions for our somewhat subdued commander-in-chief. He wanted to know *just who he thought he was?*

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Well, the king thought he was the king, so he thought he could do *anything* that came into his head. (Men get that idea after a term or two in office.) Jehu reminded the king that he may wear the crown, *but it's God's crown!* He “sets up one, and puts down another,” as the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 75:7. Jehu went on, “And just who do you think you are to join in an alliance with men who have gone on record as being your enemies, who scoff at the very God who rules your Kingdom? God doesn't appreciate that!”

By that time, Jay must have been braced for the worst... banishment to work in the vineyards, or exile in Israel, among the people he needlessly befriended. But, no, Jehu went on. “You're not all bad, though. *You did get rid of the last of the satanic shrines.* And God has something to say in your behalf. He says you have *set your heart* to seek him.”

Ah! There's our phrase again. Remember? The key ingredient that makes a man a man of God is whether or not he has set his heart to seek the Lord. God seems to forgive a lot of foolish mistakes if they are just that—dumb decisions by guileless, committed believers. But He has so little patience with deceitful, willful disobedience. With Jay, it wasn't willful disobedience, it was the absence of wisdom in the presence of an honorable heart. So God overlooked his great offense and simply rebuked him a-la-Jehu, and sent him back to the palace to begin again.

And begin again he did. He began a series of goodwill tours throughout the land, from Beersheba all the way to the hill country. And everywhere he had originally sent the Word of God through teachers, *he personally* visited the people and *he personally* saw to it that *they returned to the Lord.* The king of the land laid aside his royalty and became an evangelist. He set up tent meetings in every little town that so much as had a gas station and a corner grocery, and he humbled himself before the people and urged the people to put God where He belonged...as the real King of Judah. And that's not an easy thing for the man who laid claim to *being king of Judah* to do.

He did another thing while on his evangelistic tour. He appointed judges, or spiritual leaders, to oversee each of the fortified cities, so that there would be a proper chain of spiritual command. He delegated authority to men he thought could handle it, and then he gave them specific instructions. Those

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instructions form the basis for the rest of this lesson.

### II- SO YOU WANT TO BE A LEADER?

In essence, Jay said to these judges-to-be, “So you want to be a leader? *Then you’ll have to do it God’s way.*” God’s way is outlined in the next few verses. God had been very gracious to Jay. Jay had been disobedient, *but his heart was set on seeking God.* So a God of grace enabled him to continue to reign. Now he had learned his lesson; a lesson he planned to impart to those who served under him.

#### A- Consider What You Are Doing

Jehoshophat begins his lecture on leadership with these words:

And he said to the judges, “Consider what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD who is with you when you render judgment.” (II Chronicles 19:6 NASB)

“Consider what you are doing...” Jehoshophat began, “for you are not working for me; you’re employed by the Living God...and the Living God will be right there alongside you, assisting you in your work. So this *isn’t just another political appointment.* This is *Kingdom Business.*”

I think that would be a good verse for anyone to memorize before they accept a job in the church or before they candidate for any position with a Christian organization. *Consider what you are doing—you do not work for man.* In other words, when you are offered a responsibility that represents the Living God, take it seriously. Consider what you are doing. You are saying to the world:

*Hello. My Name is \_\_\_\_\_.*

*I represent the God who created the universe; the one who holds the stars in place by the breath of His power; the one who counts the very hairs of our heads, who notes each sparrow that falls; the one who is coming again in clouds of great power and glory. I am an official representative of Jehovah God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Consider what you are doing. You are henceforth transmitting a signal that says, “Watch what I do; listen to what I say; God is speaking through me.” Serving the Living God is an awesome responsibility. So you don’t do it because you want to. You do it

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because *He has called you to...*and as we are about to see, you do so always *in the fear of the Lord*.

### B- Be Careful What You Do

Having prepared those he addressed by imparting the seriousness of the task, Jehoshaphat now begins his treatise on how to be a godly leader. It begins this way:

Now then, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; be very careful what you do, for the Lord our God will have no part in unrighteousness, or partiality, or the taking of a bribe.

(II Chronicles 19:7 NASB)

I do not know if there is a more powerful verse on Christian leadership to be found anywhere in Scripture. It enunciates a trinity of foundational attitudes every Christian leader must have, and is preceded by a preamble of caution which forms the basis upon which we can even serve. The preamble goes like this:

Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; be very careful what you do,

(II Chronicles 19:7a NASB)

That means whenever you accept any responsibility for leadership in God's Kingdom among God's people, you do so in the fear of the Lord. You fall to your knees in utter abandonment and awesome respect, in total recognition *that God is in charge*. That's what it means to have "the fear of the Lord". Total abandonment. Awesome respect. Absolute recognition that *you may have the title to the job; but God has the title to you*. It will be your responsibility to do what God has determined, but, Beloved, it will be God's responsibility to decide what to do. It will *never* become *your church, your ministry, your class, your program, your books, your crusade, your association*. When it does, *it is no longer God's*.

So be very careful what you do. You represent the Living God. And only as you maintain that awesome respect for His power and that total commitment to His will can you enjoy real success. How many of us take on responsibilities in the Kingdom with a feeling of such unworthiness and abandonment that for God to even consider using us seems in itself a miracle. Then He blesses what we do; He expands the work, enlarges the crowds, increases the gifts, and allows the accolades to ring in our ears. And little by little, ever so subtly (for that's how the enemy works), we begin to creep on stage and share His glory. *Our church is doing well. Our ministry is increasing. Our offerings are good. And before*

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long, *we lose the fear of the Lord.*

We no longer linger in prayer before every decision. We no longer stand in awe at every single little miracle God performs. We no longer are grateful for every soul, for every dollar, for every blessing. Jehoshaphat is warning us...*Be careful what you do.* Always do what you do in utter awe at who God is. Always. In fact, the longer you serve, the greater that awe ought to be.

The preamble in place, Jehoshaphat now forms a three-fold foundation for spiritual leadership. He says, "Be careful what you do," and here are some things to be careful about:

...for he LORD our God will have no part in unrighteousness, or partiality, or the taking of a bribe.

(II Chronicles 19:7 NASB)

1- God's leader will have no part in unrighteousness or compromise. He can't! As the Psalmist said in Psalm 92:15, "The Lord is upright; He is my Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." And if there is no unrighteousness in God, then God in us cannot tolerate tampering with Scriptural precepts in the name of Christian leadership.

What that means is that, *as a leader*, your decisions and your choices must always be based on Scriptural principles. You are not to be motivated by feelings, emotions, or acceptance. You don't lead the people based on what you *feel is right*, or what will please the most people. With God there are absolutes. Truth is always truth. What the Word says, the Word says. And if you or I compromise or alter those precepts in the name of expediency, *God will have no part in that!*

So if we gradually wander from what we know to be right because everybody else is doing it, we are simply biding our time till the hand of God departs from our ministry. God will have no part in unrighteousness, particularly not among those who lead the flock. Be careful what you do.

2- God wants nothing to do with partiality. Look at James, chapter 2. It clearly states God's position. It says this:

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.

For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,



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and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,"

have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? (James 2:1-4 NASB)

In other words, your decisions or choices must all be made impartially. You mustn't gravitate toward or show favoritism toward those who are rich or talented or successful (or any thing else). You are to have the same motivation to fellowship with those who are weak or lame or crude or unpopular or poor. You are to honor men and women for who they are in Christ, not for what they are or have in this world. God is your judge. You must not rule or lead with a spirit of partiality. God will have no part in that.

3- God will have no part in any form of bribery. In other words, your decisions or choices must not be affected by flattery or flavored by selfish motivations. You must not be prejudiced in favor of those who can help you or offer you something in return, no matter how subtle, no matter how slight. God's man or woman doesn't even think of himself or herself while they are ministering to others. They think of Jesus; and they think of the one in need. The fact that the person they are ministering to can do something in return for them means less than nothing. Otherwise, your ministry will develop around those who have something to offer in return, and you will lose the reward in heaven that comes from giving to those who have nothing to give.

So you see, God is particular about how we minister. We are to do what we do *in the fear of the Lord*, without compromising Scriptural principles for the sake of convenience or popularity, without demonstrating partiality for any group or individual within the fellowship, and without considering what we can receive in return. God says...Be careful what you do. What you do, you do in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do so in a spirit of awe at who He is.

### C- Thus You Shall Do

The passage goes on:

Then he charged them saying, "Thus you shall do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully and wholeheartedly."

(II Chronicles 19:9 NASB)

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Now King Jehoshophat gets down to *attitudes*. He says do what you do, motivated by an awesome respect for who God is; and because of who God is, never stop being faithful, and never stop being wholehearted...no matter what. Whether you are appreciated or not, whether you appear to be successful or not, whether you enjoy what you are doing or not, you are, remember, not doing it for man or for yourself, but for the Lord, “who is with you when you render judgment.”

1- We are to minister faithfully. There will be times when it’s not “convenient” to preach or teach or serve or be available. Do it anyway. God isn’t just available to us when its “convenient” for Him. *He never slumbers or sleeps...*because He knows we might need Him. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. (I Corinthians 15:58 NASB)

Are you ever tempted to quit? Does the load of the ministry seem to be more than you can carry? No wonder. You were never meant to carry it. God was. And God will. Your job, my job, our jobs are to be faithful. To keep on keeping on no matter what. In the fear of the Lord, that is, remembering who’s in charge!

2- We are to minister always, not only faithfully but wholeheartedly. We can be there in body, but not in spirit. We can keep on teaching, keep on preaching, keep on serving out of duty. Colossians 3 says, “Don’t do that.” Instead:

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (Colossians 3:23,24 NASB)

### D- That They May Not Be Guilty

Jehoshophat’s final word of warning to those who would be leaders comes in verse 10. It says:

And whenever any dispute comes to you from your brethren who live in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statues and ordinances, you shall warn them that they may not be guilty before the LORD, and wrath may not come on you and your brethren. Thus you shall do and you will not be guilty.

(II Chronicles 19:10 NASB)

God’s final word of warning through His King to those who

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would be leaders, “Never forget. Leadership carries with it certain unavoidable responsibilities. One such responsibility is to speak clearly if you see someone wrong another, or violate a Scriptural principle. Warn them, and their blood is on their hands. Ignore them, and their blood is on your hands.” That’s essentially what Ezekiel said,

But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require from the watchman’s hand.  
(Ezekiel 33:6 NASB)

Your responsibility and mine in any form of Christian ministry is to clearly warn the people of iniquity and transgression and judgment. We must do it in love, as Paul said In Galatians 6:1... but we must do it. We must warn the congregation of general dangers, and we must warn individuals of personal impending consequences, should they not repent. Like it or not, we must, *because we do not judge for man, but God.*

God did not mince words with Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat did not mince words with the judges he chose. He said, basically, this:

*Consider what you are doing...you’re not working for man, but for God, and God is with you to enable you to do it His way. His way means you minister in the fear of the Lord...in utter abandonment, with awesome respect, in total recognition that He is in charge, not you. It is an awesome thing to be in the hands of a Holy God. Consider what you are doing. And once committed to the task, be careful what you do...your God will have no part in compromising Scriptural precepts, in a ministry built on favoritism, or in a life that serves those who can serve in return. So humble yourself and minister faithfully and minister wholeheartedly, no matter what (and that means no matter what) never being unwilling to clearly warn those who are guilty, that they may come to their senses. Thus you shall do, if you consider what you are doing.*

I think every one of us who is in any way involved in ministry, as a layman, or as a pastor, ought to stop right now and bow down before a Holy God in absolute awe that He has chosen to use the likes of us. The fear of the Lord ought to be on us once again. We’re not serving man; we’re serving the Living God, and He is right there with us enabling us to do so. Some of us

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need to confess the presumptuous spirit that has crept into our ministries as time has gone by, and ask God to return us to that level of awe that we experienced when first He called us.

We need to *consider what we are doing*. This isn't Mickey Mouse business. Every time we utter a word of God's Word, eternity is involved. Every time we counsel from God's Word, eternity is involved. Every time we witness, eternity is involved. This is not just another interesting endeavor. This battle is for the souls of men. And eternity hangs in the balance.

And as we go about ministering this week, we need a fresh renewal of God's grace. *We need to be careful what we do*. Our God will have no part in unrighteousness, or partiality, or bribery. Some of us need to simply fall down before a Holy God once again, and renew our commitment that "whatsoever we do, we will do it heartily, as unto God and not unto man". No matter what.

We are all, to some degree, laborers in God's vineyard. We have been sent there by the Master of the vineyard, and both the responsibility and the opportunity are awesome. We must not take it lightly. We must not take it presumptuously. We must not labor wearily. Because a loving God, the one who has called us, is warning us. It is a loving warning; but it is a sober one. He is quietly whispering these words:

"...let the fear of the Lord be upon you  
...and be careful what you do."

And all those who labored in God's vineyard could be heard to reply. "Amen".

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