

## 2 Chronicles 17-18

As we came to a close in Ch 16 it was with the death of king Asa. And Asa was a great king overall but toward the end he took a turn for the worse; his walk began to wax with the Lord. And he serves to remind us that good beginnings don't always make for good endings. That we need to *abide* consistently/persistently in Christ because just because things start out right, are going strong and pressing forward, that's not necessarily an indication that that kind of momentum will be kept up. You can't count on where you were at with the Lord yesterday, or last week, or a couple of years ago to get you through today or to somehow lead you to believe that because things were going good in my relationship with the Lord then, that things must still be ok today. But if you step back and take a look at your life, if you're not growing in the Lord, if you're convictions have become less and less, you're justifying and rationalizing certain sins in your life, you're no longer in the word or in prayer, it's rare to never that you fellowship with other believers...then things are no longer ok.

Sometimes we even fall into that trap of still going through the motions but we've lost heart in it. What I mean by that is that there doesn't necessarily need to be any radical sin in our lives for us to find ourselves in that place where things aren't ok anymore between us and the Lord. We slip into that mode of going through the mechanics of ministry, but our passion for Christ has long since waxed cold. On the outside we're still apart of good works and all of that, but on the inside we're really not pursuing that love relationship with Jesus, it's no longer the love of Christ that constrains us, that compels us, moves or motivates us. Remember what Jesus said to the church in Ephesus there in Rev 2? He said, *"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.* (Which is to say that from the outside things appear to be great, you're doing all the right things as it pertains to a high moral standard) *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place -- unless you repent."* Rev 2:2-5 So although how we begin is critical, how we end is what it all comes down to. Asa began well, but toward the end things didn't go well, he sought aid from a pagan king, he persecuted the prophet of God and those who stood with the prophet. He got diseased in his feet (which is a profound picture of his walk with the Lord) and he didn't seek the Lord but physicians and so he died. And again it's not that it's wrong to seek the physicians; we absolutely should. But it is wrong to *not* seek the Lord; our hearts should always be turning *to* and seeking *after* the Lord in our given situation.

Well, Asa died and Ch 17 finds Jehoshaphat his son ascending to the throne in his place, and we find that Jehoshaphat was one of the greatest kings that Israel ever knew. Not a perfect king, there's only One King who reigns with out sin in total perfection and that's J.C. But overall Jehoshaphat reigned well.

It's been a few weeks since we've been here so to remind you; you recall that Israel is at this point divided and has been for some time. The northern kingdom is often referred to as "Israel" while the southern kingdom is known as "Judah." And there seems to be (obviously) constant tension between these two kingdoms, and Jehoshaphat realizing that Israel is a potential threat to him militarily, politically and even (and most importantly) spiritually, he beefs up his borders. And along with that he obviously at the same time is strengthening his resolve with regard to any other neighboring nation.

#### Vs3-4

So we have here 3 defining characteristics of Jehoshaphat's reign, 2 that are positive, 1 that is negative. And of course we always like to point out what it was that made his reign (along with any other of the kings of Israel's reign) so successful (or for that matter what it is that will make for *our* sure foundation in life) and we see it right there in Vs 3, "The Lord was with Jehoshaphat." And when the Lord is with you who can be against you? As the Psalmist said, "*The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*" Ps 118:6 Oh they can be of physical detriment (perhaps) should the Lord allow for His own sovereign purpose. But man holds nothing on you spiritually/eternally as it pertains to your walk and relationship with the Lord personally. "The Lord was with Jehoshaphat."

Why? Notice, (Vs3) "Because he walked in the former ways of his father David; he did not seek the Baals." Now understand that when it says he walked in the *former* ways of his father David, it's not saying "former" in the sense of, "He was kickin' it old school." That he wasn't worried about what God was doing today he was taking part in that "old time" religion. When it speaks of the "former" ways of David it means "as opposed to David's latter days" after his fall with Bathsheba. After David fell into sin with Bathsheba something definite took place there; that was defining moment in his life that he never fully recovered from. Oh, God forgave him to be sure, however his walk was never really the same. He suffered as a father, he lost his confidence in many ways as a king, and the ramifications were just overwhelming. And Such is the nature of sin. There's a cost, there's a consequence and there's no escaping it. But prior to that David's walk in many ways set the bench mark for his fellow Israelites and definitely for the future kings of Israel/Judah. So this is a radical comment and an extremely high compliment to have said of you (by divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit no less) that you walked in the former (or early) ways of David. And the specifics of that are spelled out for us in

Vs 4, notice.

#1 He sought the God of his father (Asa who like David sought after the Lord with a loyal heart). #2 He walked in His commandments, and # 3 He did not do according to the acts of Israel. Meaning he didn't succumb to idolatry or seek after false gods. The 1<sup>st</sup> 2 comments are to the positive; the 3<sup>rd</sup> is to the negative. He #1 *sought* the God of his father. And that word "Sought" means to investigate or study, it speaks of seeking with application. Or another way to understand that is that he not only sought the *heart* of God through the study of the *word* of God but he wasn't content with being a hearer only but rather he was a *doer* of the word.

He studied/sought with the resolve to apply. Which causes us to see this 2<sup>nd</sup> aspect as really building on or bringing further clarity to the 1<sup>st</sup>, “He sought the God of his father, (not only to discover godly principles but to make the application practical in his life) He *walked* in His commandments.” And of course walking implies forward momentum, he moved forward in life, he led his life in the application of God’s word, he *walked* in it. #3 To the negative *not* according to the acts of Israel; Israel at this time was immersed in idolatry. Ahab was the king; you’re probably more familiar with his wife Jezebel. They were fostering a wicked and idolatrous generation, but Jehoshaphat didn’t do that; he encouraged people, exhorted people in the Lord.

And I think it’s no coincidence that over and over again the writer of Chronicles causes us to see the contrast between Israel and Judah. Because it places before us a choice and a challenge, who do we want to associate with? Our destiny can fall into one of 2 categories depending on where our resolve lies. We do well to purpose in our hearts to like those who sought the Lord and walked in His commandments, and *not* according to the acts of Israel. Jehoshaphat sought the Lord.

Vs 5-6

What does your heart take delight in? What a great testimony to hear, “His heart took delight in the ways of the Lord;” not only did he seek the Lord, and walk *with* the Lord but he also removed any of the altars of pagan worship that were scattered throughout the land. He actively sought to lead and live a sanctified life and set that same standard throughout the land. And so God was just blessing his life; the bible says, “*Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.*” Ps 37:4 Because your heart will be set on the thing pertaining to *Him*, what honors and glorifies *Him*.

Vs7-10

The proverbs tell us, “*When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.*” Prov 16:7 I found it interesting that when he was beefing up his borders militarily it makes no mention of it phasing the surrounding nations collectively at all. But as he prioritized the teaching of God’s word to the people the fear of the Lord fell on the neighboring nations around them consequently. As he sought the Lord and set a godly precedent for the nation, God established him and caused the fear of the Lord to rest on the neighboring nations and surrounding kingdoms. And this is one reason why it’s so important to have godly people in places of national leadership. Because we find over and over again throughout the scriptures that God will often times deal with a nation based upon the position of the heart of the leader or leaders *of* that nation. Jehoshaphat loved the Lord, was setting godly policies for the kingdom and God was just blessing. Up in Israel it’s a different story altogether, now there are also times when God would act on behalf of a nation seemingly for a single person who was praying for that nation. How many times did God thwart a particular act of judgment over the nation of Israel because Moses would pray for them? But godly leadership is so critical, which is another reason I believe the church has a responsibility to make her voice known during elections. Do what you can do to place godly people in places of authority.

And notice there was no distinction between church and state. He sent leaders and Levites, those in his political cabinet and priests to teach the people the word of God. They went on a teaching tour of God's word; they didn't have radio broadcasts or internet, TV, things of that nature, so they made a circuit throughout the cities of Judah and taught God's Word to the people. And really the way he tended to them spiritually was of infinitely better value to them than the way he sought to secure them militarily. Because as he met the needs of the people spiritually, *God* saw to it that their borders were secure practically, He caused the fear of Himself to rest upon all the kingdoms around them.

Vs11-19

The thing that caught my attention in these Vs (outside of the fact of God's overwhelming blessing upon Jehoshaphat and his reign) was this fella mentioned here in Vs 16. Amasiah of whom it says he, "...willingly offered himself to the Lord." And that's all we know of him; he willingly offered himself to the Lord. And I'm not sure what that means in his case but I know it's a place that we all need to find ourselves, willingly offering ourselves to the Lord. He wasn't a Levite or a priest, he was a military man. You don't have to be a preacher, or a pastor to serve the Lord or willingly offer yourself to the Lord. Wherever you're at, whatever your vocation might be, serve the Lord willingly, whole heartedly in that place.

## Ch 18

Vs1

Here we see the 1<sup>st</sup> "chink" as it were in his armor, remember I told you he was a great king, but not a perfect king, this was a major flaw. He allowed his son to marry the daughter of Ahab (the wicked king of Israel.)

And why he did this no one knows, most think to sure up security between them; odds of you attacking a nation that your daughter in someway presides over are fairly slim. But this was a huge mistake and will work untold ruin in Judah. It's amazing how much a single ungodly decision can cost us and others around us. His best defense was to stay committed to the Lord, not compromise the standard. But as it were he sanctioned an unequally yoked relationship and it will devastate the kingdom and ultimately nearly snuff out the line of David altogether because Ahab's daughter was a woman after her mom's (Jezebel) own heart, wicked to the core.

Vs2-3

Mistake # 2, he went up to him and yoked himself *with* him. In Ch 17 he was strengthening himself against Israel was worried Israel would *attack* him, but instead Israel decided to *attract* him. They didn't war, the reveled, they didn't fight, they were festive. And Ahab buttered him up, said, "Hey seeing as though we're practically family how about you go to war with me against Ramoth Gilead?" And since Ramoth Gilead wasn't too far from his own territory it seemed to make some sense and so he says, "I am as you are, and my people are as your people; we'll be with you in the war."

Now let me just say that Jehoshaphat was nothing as Ahab was, and his people were *not* as his people, and they should have *never* been together in the war. Jehoshaphat didn't seek the Lord on this, he's seeking to mingle light with darkness and it's a recipe for disaster. Jehoshaphat is *in* the world, not *of* the world. Ahab is both *in* the world and *of* the world. And the bible says, "...*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.*" Eph 5:11 Someone asks you to join them in something God hasn't sanctioned you to do, don't do it, don't yoke up, this was a big mistake.

Vs4

Now he should have said this *before* he committed, not *after* he committed. We commend him for at least desiring to know the heart of God in this, but it would've been better had he inquired of the Lord prior to his commitment to the task.

Vs5-6

Here we commend Jehoshaphat because there's a small sea of would be prophets in front of him, 400 to be exact and they're all saying, "God is going to give you victory, go on up." And I don't know if they're obviously pagan prophets, or if it just smells funny or it's out of sorts with what he's familiar with regarding the prophets of the Lord, disorderly or whatever. But he looks over and Ahab and basically says, "Maybe I miss-communicated, because all these 'prophets' are neat I suppose but isn't there a prophet *of the Lord* here that we can inquire of?" Translation, "Dude this is lame, we don't need a show we need substance."

Vs7-8

There's something tragically humorous about this, (and did you catch that there's only 1 left in Israel that he knows of who honestly seeks after and says what the Lord leads him to). And basically what he's saying is, "I don't like that guy because he always speaks the truth to me, tells me that God is against me, that I need to repent and turn back to the Lord." And so often the animosity is focused on the messenger when in reality that's like hating the mailman for the letters he's carrying. And it would seem as though Ahab had already detained him because in Vs 25 he'll have him *returned* to a guy named Amon and placed in prison. But they call for him and robe themselves in their royal apparel and sit on their thrones at a particular threshing floor by the gates of the city where so often the judgments and decisions of a particular city was made.

Vs9-12

I think that this is a scene that I'd like to have seen unfold, because here are these 400 guys.

And they're prophesying all flamboyantly, coming together with one accord collectively. One guy (Zedekiah) kicks it up a notch and brings out an object lesson, starts running around with these horns he's made. (Horns being the symbol of strength and power) and he says in essence, "Thus says the Lord, you 2 are going to gore the Syrians until they're destroyed."

I mean it seems to me to be a 1<sup>st</sup> class Branson act, meanwhile backstage the stagehand is prepping Micaiah the prophet saying, “Look, all these guys are encouraging the king, telling him exactly what he wants to hear; now *please* just let your word be like theirs, encourage him.”

And the thrust of this whole thing is you have on the one hand a small multitude of man pleasers and on the other hand a single man who is a God pleaser. And these guys are simply looking for job security willing to scratch his itching ears if it puts them in the king’s favor. Micaiah is looking to be in a different King’s favor, and because of that he’s found in a position of persecution. And as we’ve noted over the last few weeks on Sunday morning such can be the lot in this life for the child of God, but the present sufferings of this world aren’t worthy to be compared to the glory that’ll be revealed in us.

Something else we see in this is that just because someone comes to you in the *name* of the Lord, says that have a word for you that’s *from* the Lord, you’re not to automatically assume that it’s *of* the Lord. These guys were all too willing to use the name of God, but what they were saying was *nothing* of God. Can God speak *to* you *through* others? Absolutely, but He knows your address as well, as powerful, as persuasive as they’re message was, what it *wasn’t* was from the Lord. How am I to know when it is or it isn’t? Well 1 thing we *do* know is that God will never speak contrary to His written word, so He won’t call you to a contrast with His word. 2<sup>ndly</sup> Does it bear witness? If God has been speaking to my heart on an issue and then someone who’s not even familiar with that fact speaks to me inline with what I believe God’s already shown me, then I might think it through a little more seriously. But then 3<sup>rdly</sup> We wait on the Lord to bring it to pass, we don’t try and make it happen, we sit back, wait and watch. God is able to bring to pass His promises, if God is doing the work, then let *God* do the work don’t try to make it happen for Him. So when someone comes to you with a word from the Lord, I’m not saying turn a deaf ear, but don’t automatically assume God is speaking through him/her. In this case it wasn’t the Lord at all; it was a lying spirit of deception. And the stagehand is asking Micaiah to underscore the lie.

Vs13

Underline that Vs, “As the Lord lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak.” No compromise. And so here’s the flamboyancy of the 400 prophets, the center stage with Zedekiah and the object lesson of the horns, and enters the equation the prophet of God clothed in rags, tattered and in chains poised and prepared to speak to kings.

Vs14-15

We get the idea that Micaiah was a bit sarcastic in his tone don’t we? “Here’s what you want to hear king, head on up you’ll prosper for sure.” And the king’s all, “How many times do I have to tell you, don’t play these games, just tell me the truth.” Then the prophet’s tone of voice makes a change.

Vs16

In other words, “You, Ahab, the shepherd of these sheep are going to die in this battle and Israel will suffer defeat.”

#### Vs17-22

So we’re given a glimpse here into the spiritual realm and what was going on in order that God might bring judgment upon Ahab. And some people have a problem with this but the idea that God doesn’t cause evil, but allows it in order to bring about His own ultimate sovereign purpose is nothing foreign to scripture. And where we read that all the hosts of heaven were present at both His right hand *and* His left it seems that the combined hosts of heaven were present. Angels that were both faithful, and fallen. There is a mistaken idea that God can’t allow evil into His presence, well God is omnipresent it can’t not be in His presence. Now God has no *fellowship*, no *koinonia* with evil. But Satan has access to heaven, and will have until a particular point in the tribulation whereby we read in Rev 12 that he will be cast out once and for all. And so as God is preparing to bring judgment upon Ahab apparently Satan or a particular fallen angel came forward and said, “I’ll persuade him to take the path that leads to his fall at Ramoth Gilead.” God says, “In what way?” and He said, “I’ll be a lying spirit in mouth of all his prophets.” and God says, “Then do it.” Wild stuff to be sure.

#### Vs23

Or another way to understand that is, “Since when did God quit using me and start using you?” He’s not the star of the show anymore and so he basically seeks to re-enforce his lie by calling Micaiah a liar.

#### Vs24-27

A dramatic scene to be sure. Notice Micaiah is ready to put it on the line, “You’ll know whether or not I’m speaking from the Lord by if it comes to pass or not, and if you return in peace then the Lord has *never* spoken by me.” And then as he’s being dragged off he shouts out, “Take heed, all you people!” But Ahab...it’s like he wants the truth but he doesn’t want the truth. He wants to hear the truth, but only if it supports his position and when it doesn’t he gets ticked. Much like we are today, we want the truth but we get mad when the truth stands against us and we take it out on the vessel that shares it *with* us. He’s all, “Tell me the truth!” Then when he tells him the truth he responds in violence placing him in prison and giving him next to nothing to eat or drink. If you don’t want to hear it don’t ask, but if you ask for it be prepared to respond appropriately to it.

#### Vs28-29

Now I can’t decide if Jehoshaphat is honestly that naïve, or has great faith. But king Ahab has been prophesied to die, Jehoshaphat still opts to go to war with him and Ahab says, “I’m going to go ahead and dress like a soldier and get into the action, but you go ahead and wear your royal robes and look like a king, sound good?” and Jehoshaphat is all, “Sounds like a plan!” And off to battle they go.

#### Vs30-32

Now what it was that tipped them off as to him not being Ahab I don't know. Perhaps as he was screaming out like Jr. high girl begging to God for his life they realized he wasn't the one they were look for, or maybe he had an emblem on his robe or something that didn't match the soldiers of Israel, I don't know. But ultimately it was God who was his shelter and his shield of defense in his time of need. He cried out, and the Lord helped, that's the bottom line. And there may be all sorts of things that cause us to cry out, but it's refreshing to know that whatever the motive is, if it's from the heart, God is going to hear us and be there for us in whatever way we may have need.

#### Vs33-34

What are the odds? A random arrow striking him right between the joints of his armor in a fatal position of his body? This was the judgment of God, like a sin seeking, Ahab seeking missile this arrow flew through the sky and hit its mark with pin point accuracy. You can hide from man, you can camouflage yourself in the flow of life, but God knows right where you're at, there's no escaping His presence. Now, who do you wanna be; Micaiah in chains, or Ahab in the chariot, Micaiah in prison, or Ahab propped up poised to die? What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Ahab had opportunity after opportunity to repent, yet he refused, now the time of judgment has fallen. How important it is to give heed, and take to heart the word of God.

#### Prayer Points:

Lord give us ears to hear, and wills ready to obey what the Spirit says, may we be doers and not hearers only of Your Word. And Father may we be like Micaiah who had it as the resolve of his heart to not give way to compromise but speak only what You say and then having counted the cost, let the chips fall where they may. We thank You that we can cry out to You and You're an ever present help to us. May we seek You, and walk in Your ways, finding our *delight* in Your ways, and may our lives give you praise.