

**1<sup>st</sup> Kings 22: 29 - 50; “Repentance in a Timely Fashion”, Message # 17 in the series –  
“Lessons from the Life of Elijah”, A Bible Study conducted  
by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018,  
for those gathered at his home.**

The greatest lessons that we can learn from the books of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings are all related to our receiving the word of God, believing the word that we have heard, and then doing what God would have us to do. Even kings need to repent of their sins in the sight of God. We might say – especially kings because their actions affect so many people around them. Ahab was a king who did not repent of his sins, and his sins led him to God’s great judgment of him in this life as well as his sending him to hell after he died. Jehoshaphat was a king who repented of his sins, and we can say by the way that Jehoshaphat’s life turned out that God was actually pleased with him at many points. He found himself in the place of spiritual safety when he repented, because he did what God was asking him to do. “The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever,” it says in 1<sup>st</sup> John 2: 17.

The question that I would like to have us ask ourselves this evening as we listen to this message, is whether each of us are keeping the word of God by repenting of our sins in a timely fashion? I want to lay before you the evidence, 1<sup>st</sup> of all – That Ahab did not repent of his sins at all, while Jehoshaphat did. And then 2<sup>nd</sup> – That Ahab perished because he did not repent of his sins, while Jehoshaphat was rescued and delivered eternally from his. And then 3<sup>rd</sup> – That Jehoshaphat did do the will of God in a timely fashion and he was blessed eternally because of it. As we listen to this message, let us pray to learn all of the lessons of repentance which the Lord would teach us, in a timely fashion, so that God would be honored and we would be blessed eternally as well.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Ahab did not repent of his sins at all, while Jehoshaphat did.**

You will recall at the beginning of chapter 22, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to visit Ahab, the king of Israel, and Ahab took the opportunity to ask Jehoshaphat whether he would go with him to fight at Ramoth-Gilead, the territory that he wanted to get back from Ben-Hadad king of Syria. Ahab had defeated Ben-Hadad and the Syrians twice in battle previously, but it was only by the miraculous intervention and mercy of the Lord that it was so. God had shown Ahab this severe mercy of delivering him and all Israel from the repeated attempts of Ben-Hadad to take over and ruin everything good in their country, but these mercies did not move his stony heart at all to repent of his sins and turn to the only true and living God to be instructed by Him. Instead, we find him, shortly after this, out of sinful covetousness, seizing Naboth’s vineyard, after agreeing to go along with Jezebel’s wicked plan to have Naboth falsely accused by scoundrels, his having him then tried for this supposed crime, and Naboth was convicted on the charge of blaspheming God and the king. He was then summarily and unjustly executed. Let us understand that God sees us in all of our sins, and his timing to deal with them, if we do not repent of them, will most certainly come, either sooner or later. Ahab’s sins were so wicked, that God had him confronted immediately. You will remember that God told Elijah to go down and confront Ahab just at the time he was going down to take possession of the vineyard.

Elijah confronted Ahab in the midst of his sins and said to him in chapter 21, verse 19 – “Have you murdered and also taken possession?” “Thus says the Lord – In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.” And all Ahab could say to Elijah was – “Have you found me, O my enemy?” An unrepentant person will often see the messenger of God, the prophet, a preacher, or pastor, as their enemy. In our last study we saw that Ahab hated Elijah, “because he did not prophesy good concerning him, but evil”. Well, let us understand that Elijah could have prophesied good of him, or Micaiah could have prophesied good of him, if Ahab had had any good in him at all. But Ahab had been pursuing a course of evil for many, many years, without any real thought of what repentance would mean, or what it would look like in his life.

Turn with me over to Proverbs chapter 29, verse 1. This is a verse which is very applicable to our study of Ahab's life. "He who is often reproved, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Ahab had been confronted time and time again by Elijah and just lately by Micaiah, and there had been a number of other prophets as well. In each and every case, he did not heed them; he hardened his neck.

You might say to me, but after Elijah confronted Ahab in regard to his sins in having Naboth unjustly murdered, and told him that both he and Jezebel were going to be eaten by dogs and his whole household would be cut off, every male both bond and free, it says that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth his body and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning. Is this not evidence of his repentance? The answer is, that it certainly is true that he humbled himself in this way, but there is no mention of his having prayed confessing his sins so that God would forgive him. It simply says that he went about mourning. There was no indication that he ever turned from his sins to God, promising that he would break them off. But look over at Proverbs chapter 28, verse 9. "One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." Let's say that Ahab really did pray to God because he was sad and sorry that he had committed these sins. I do not believe that he did, but if he did, would God hear him? This verse says that if he turned away his ear from hearing the law, that even his prayer would be an abomination.

In other words, a truly repentant person might have formerly turned away his ear from hearing the law, but he would do so no longer. We do not read anywhere that Ahab called for Elijah or one of the prophets and said – Show me, O messenger of the Lord, what I need to do to repent and find God's forgiveness. There was none of this with Ahab. Look at Proverbs 28: 13. Here is the verse that Ahab needed to heed, and he could have looked for it and found it, for King Solomon wrote it. "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy." This verse applies to Ahab, because this is what he regularly did; he covered his own sins. When we cover over our own sins and hide them from ourselves and from other men, we must understand that we will not prosper. But God covers our sins with the blood of Jesus when we will confess them, and determine by grace to put them away and forsake them. But you never find Ahab ever confessing his sins in that righteous way.

But let us now think about Jehoshaphat. Did he repent of his sins as a man and a king? Turn with me over to 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 17: 1. These verses tell us what Jehoshaphat was like when he first became king. "Then Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place (that is, king Asa's place), and he strengthened himself against Israel. (That is he saw that it was not a good thing to go along with Ahab in the things that he was doing; either politically, militarily, or spiritually. He knew that he needed to resist all of Ahab's attempts to control and influence him. "And he placed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa his father had taken. Here in verse 3, we find out why. "Now the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the former ways of his father David; he did not seek the Baals, but sought the God of his father, and walked in His commandments and not according to the acts of Israel." "Therefore the Lord established the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah gave presents to Jehoshaphat, and he had riches and honor in abundance." "And his heart took delight in the ways of the Lord; moreover he removed the high places and wooden images from Judah.

Now this was true repentance. You will notice the characteristics of repentance; that he did not trust in political alliance with Ahab, but he actually strengthened himself against that alliance, and the greatest strengthening of himself and the kingdom was that he did not seek the Baals; rather, he sought the God of his father David, and walked in God's commandments. It was for this reason that God established the kingdom in his hand. He went further and removed the high places that his father Asa had permitted to exist during his reign. The greatest blessing of all is found in verse 6 – "His heart took delight in the ways of the Lord." An unrepentant man will never do that; but a truly repentant man will begin and continue to do that very thing. Look at Psalm 37: 1-4 with me.

“Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.” “For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.” “Trust in the Lord, and do god; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.” “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” This was what Jehoshaphat did. I want you to take notice of the fact that he didn’t fret because of evil doers; and neither should you or I. Why? Because evil-doers shall be cut off. And then this wonderful picture is given of the believer’s delighting in the Lord. If you are a person of faith, you are not going to fret, if you are heeding what is said here. But you will rather delight yourself in the Lord.

**Now, 2<sup>nd</sup> - Ahab perished because he did not repent of his sins, while Jehoshaphat was rescued and delivered eternally from his.**

The king of Israel, who had covered his sins, would not prosper. It says in verse 30 chapter 22 – “And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, ‘I will disguise myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes.’” “So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into the battle.” “Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, saying, ‘Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel.’” “So it was, when the captain of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat that they said, ‘Surely it is the king of Israel!’” “Therefore they turned aside to fight against him, and Jehoshaphat cried out.” “And it happened, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.” Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor.” “So he said to the driver of his chariot, ‘Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded.’” “The battle increased that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Syrians, and died at evening.” “The blood ran out from the wound onto the floor of the chariot.”

I will not spend much time on the death of Ahab except to say this. God did not have any difficulty in rewarding him in accordance with his evil ways. Even in Ahab’s disguising himself, to keep from being killed, he could not escape the justice of God. How amazing is it, that a certain man drew a bow at random, and shot the arrow, and God providentially directed it to a very small place in the joints of king Ahab’s armor, and he was thus mortally wounded, and he died as the sun was going down. Ahab had fallen at Ramoth-Gilead, and all because he would not listen to the word of the Lord and repent of his wickedness. He believed the lying spirit in the mouth of all of his false prophets, and that very day that Micaiah had prophesied to him that he would die if he went up to Ramoth-Gilead. He did die, and he no doubt perished in his sins. We think of him as one of the worst of sinners, but the Lord Jesus says in Luke 13: 1 – “Do you suppose that these Galileans who blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things?” “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” Let us see the importance of repentance, even our own heart and life by looking at Jehoshaphat, following this battle.

Turn with me over to 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 19: 1 – “Then Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned safely to his house in Jerusalem.” Why did he return safely? Because he was a true believer in God and God wanted him to return safely, for he trusted in the Lord and the Lord had many things yet, for him to do for God. It says in verse 2 – “And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, ‘Should you help the wicked and save those who hate the Lord?’” “Therefore the wrath of the Lord is upon you.” “Nevertheless, good things are found in you, in that you have removed the wooden images from the land, have prepared your heart to seek God.” “So Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem; and he went out again among the people from Beersheba to the mountains of Ephraim, and brought them back to the Lord God of their fathers.”

What is this but his leading the way in national repentance? And the only way that it could have come about was if Jehoshaphat was in earnest about removing the wrath of God from himself concerning the matter of his having allied himself with Ahab for that time. The wrath of God mentioned here in verse 2 is not the eternal wrath of God, which comes upon all unrepentant sinners, but it was the anger of the Lord which was kindled against him because he had

unrighteously allied himself with Ahab; had allowed himself to be unduly influenced by Ahab, and thus he did not speak up to defend Micaiah when he was taken away to prison for his preaching the words of judgment against Ahab. The statement that good things were found in Jehoshaphat should lead us to understand that those good things were the good things of God's grace at work in him to help him to repent and bring forth good deeds, previously. It was because of this that he would do so again. He had removed the wooden images from the land before. He had prepared his heart to seek God before this, and therefore God would help him further to repent and bring forth good and righteous actions.

I want to show you the difference between God's wrath towards Jehoshaphat which was removed by his repentance and God's wrath toward Ahab which was never removed. Turn with me over to Ephesians 5, verse 3. "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks." "For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." "Therefore do not be partakers with them." This my brethren, is a good description of Ahab – a covetous man who was an idolater. Surely, he was under the wrath of God because he was a son of disobedience.

But Jehoshaphat was much different. The description of him is found in verses 8-11. "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord." "Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), proving what is acceptable to the Lord." (what is pleasing to the Lord) "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. This is what Jehoshaphat was doing; he was walking as a child of the light. He was proving what was acceptable, he was trying to learn what was pleasing, to the Lord. This is what every true Christian is doing. They have stopped having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; they will continue move away from those works as it is shown to them by Holy Spirit and the word of God. They will go on to expose the works of darkness and try to take steps through government, to prevent these sinful things from continuing to take place.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> – That Jehoshaphat did do the will of God in a timely fashion and he was blessed eternally because of it.**

In closing I want you to see that from that time, Jehoshaphat did many good things to evidence his sincerity in repentance, and he consciously engaged in trying to promote what was good and right throughout the kingdom of Judah. Verse 5 of 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles chapter 19 says – "Then he set judges in the land throughout all of the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, and said to the judges, Take heed to what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment." "Now therefore, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes." And in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 22: 46, it says – "And the rest of the perverted persons, who remained in the days of his father Asa, he banished from the land."

I think that it is very evident that Jehoshaphat was a man who repented of his sins in a timely fashion, and we should conclude from the example of his life, that as Christians we will do the same. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 7: 8-10 – "For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it." "For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while." "Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance." "For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing." "For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death." Ahab knew the sorrow of the world which led to death and eternal death. Jehoshaphat knew the godly sorrow that led to repentance and to renewed obedience to God. It led him to eternal life. May our repentance be like his.

