

14. Compromises with the ungodly

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Proverbs 25:26 If the godly compromise with the wicked, it is like polluting a fountain or muddying a spring.

About 4 months ago we started this Book – 1 Kings with twilight of king David’s life and the start of king Solomon. I am sure that you all remember that king Solomon started his reign with a loud bang, but he ended up with a pathetic spiritual fizzle because of his compromise.

This book ends with a great lesson for a godly king from Judah with his compromise. I believe that the Lord has another important lesson for us tonight.

A. A POUTING KING, A WICKED QUEEN

1 Kings 21:4-10 So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, “I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.” And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food. 5 But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, “Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?” 6 He said to her, “Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, ‘Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.’ And he answered, ‘I will not give you my vineyard.’ “ 7 Then Jezebel his wife said to him, “You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.” 8 And she wrote letters in Ahab’s name, sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth. 9 She wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; 10 and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, “You have blasphemed God and the king.” Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die.

The more I read about Jezebel in 1 Kings, the more I think about a certain female politician who falsely claimed that she was under sniper attack when she arrived at the Bosnia airport. Both of them are liars and are willing to take the nations to ruin for their selfish personal ambition.

Jezebel was committing just about every sin against the Lord and His Ten Commandments by signing this death warrant against Naboth – idolatry, covetousness, false witness, murder and stealing. She used royal stationery, royal seal and royal command to murder an innocent man for his vineyard.

B. GOD’S SENTENCE AND AHAB’S REPENTANCE

1 Kings 21:23-29 And concerning Jezebel the Lord also spoke, saying, ‘The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.’ 24 The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field.” 25 But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up. 26 And he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. 27 So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning. 28 And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 “See

how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house."

We have heard nothing from or about Elijah since he called Elisha to be his successor, but now God brings His servant into center stage to confront the king again. The Lord told Elijah just what to say to the evil king. Ahab had shed innocent blood and his guilty blood would be licked up by the dogs. What a way for the king of Israel to end his reign!

Instead of going home to pout as usual, Ahab actually repented. Maybe his wife was not around to see this, but the Lord who sees the heart accepted his humility and told it to His servant Elijah. The Lord didn't cancel the announced judgments but postponed them until the reign of Ahab's son Joram.

Later we will find out that Ahab died in Samaria, not at Naboth's vineyard. Does this mean God's prophecy wasn't fulfilled? Yes, it was fulfilled, but it was changed due to Ahab's repentance. But Ahab still died and the dogs licked his blood and his son was killed and dumped in Naboth's vineyard later as the second prophecy stated.

C. AN ALLIANCE WITH UNGODLY

1 Kings 22:1-5 Now three years passed without war between Syria and Israel. 2 Then it came to pass, in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to visit the king of Israel. 3 And the king of Israel said to his servants, "Do you know that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, but we hesitate to take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?" 4 So he said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to fight at Ramoth Gilead?" Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." 5 Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire for the word of the Lord today."

Ahab's repentance to the Lord didn't last long. He was back on his sins. We now are introduced to king Jehoshaphat who was godly.

Jehoshaphat was a good king and a godly leader, but he got involved in three costly compromises. The first was the "bride compromise" when he married his son to a daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. This led to the "battle compromise," when Jehoshaphat got entangled in affairs of his son's father-in-law when Syria attacked Israel which almost cost his life. The third compromise was the "ship compromise," when Jehoshaphat foolishly joined forces with Ahab's son Ahaziah and tried to get rich by importing foreign goods. The Lord wrecked his fleet and rebuked him for his sinful alliance later.

King Ahab of Israel asked King Jehoshaphat of Judah to help him in this dispute against Syria. This made some sense to the king from Judah, because Ramoth-Gilead was only 40 miles from Jerusalem.

Jehoshaphat had enough sense to ask for God's will through a prophet. But what he got was 400 "Yes Men" choir in v6. It is a great temptation to put this kind of people around us who would agree with us or allow us to do whatever we desire. They cannot be true helpers, rather they can destroy us far worse than the ones who actually stand against us by fanning our pride.

D. THE TRUTH IS NOT EASY TO HEAR

1 Kings 22:13-28 Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, "Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement." 14 And Micaiah said, "As the Lord lives, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak."

15 Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall we refrain?" And he answered him, "Go and prosper, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king!" 16 So the king said to him, "How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?" 17 Then he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the Lord said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.'" 18 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?" 19 Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. 20 And the Lord said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. 21 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, and said, 'I will persuade him.' 22 The Lord said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the Lord said, 'You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.' 23 Therefore look! The Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the Lord has declared disaster against you." 24 Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, "Which way did the spirit from the Lord go from me to speak to you?" 25 And Micaiah said, "Indeed, you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!" 26 So the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son; 27 and say, 'Thus says the king: "Put this fellow in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I come in peace.'" 28 But Micaiah said, "If you ever return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me." And he said, "Take heed, all you people!"

This was a dramatic scene. Micaiah was brought out from prison. I am sure he was in rags and chains stood before two kings, ready to speak on behalf of the Lord. But what he said to Ahab was filled with a sarcasm. He said similar words to the 400 unfaithful prophets, but delivered it in a completely different tone.

Even though Ahab demanded the truth, he couldn't handle the truth in reality. Hatred of the messenger of God is clear evidence of willful wickedness. We see many people around the world, especially America, hate the messengers of the truth. They persecute them and are hoping that the Christians to be disappeared will disappear from their sight. They will get their wishes someday. Christians will be gone, but hell on earth will start for them.

Here are two camps regarding the second vision of Micaiah:

- 1) A group of people who believe that there can be no evil in heaven and the devil and his cohorts only can stand outside of heaven to converse with God.
- 2) Another group who believes that the Lord allows evil in His presence in heaven still, though He can have no fellowship with evil and one day all evil will be removed from His presence.

I am not going to insist which one is correct, because this is not the important issue.

Apparently, one of the fallen angels volunteered for this task. Since Ahab wanted to be deceived, God would give him what He wanted, using a willing fallen angel who worked through willing unfaithful prophets.

E. WHY, JEHOSEPHAT?

1 Kings 22:29-40 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. 30 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 battle. 31 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." 32 So it was, when the captains 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. 33 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. 34 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." 35 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. 36 Then, as the sun was going down, a shout went throughout the army, saying, "Every man to his city, and every man to his own country!" 37 So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria. 38 Then someone washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood while the harlots bathed, according to the word of the Lord which He had spoken. 39 Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, the ivory house which he built and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 40 So Ahab rested with his fathers. Then Ahaziah his son reigned in his place.

I am puzzled by Jehoshaphat's action. He was told by a godly prophet that Ahab was going to die in battle. That should have been the first hint that the battle would not go the way they planned it. But he chose to go into the battle. Either he was a dummy or didn't understand Hebrew language. No habla Hebrew?

It got worse. Ahab asked him to wear his kingly robe while he disguised himself as an infantry man. That should be the second clue that he would be the one the enemy was going to concentrate on. How do you spell Jehoshaphat? "D-U-H!!!"

If Jehoshaphat was killed in battle, Ahab then united the two kingdoms and blended the Davidic line with his own line. What would have happened to the Davidic covenant and the Messianic line? But God is sovereign in all things and protected Jehoshaphat, while at the same time allowing a random arrow to hit an opening in Ahab's armor and kill him. Ahab was disguised and yet was killed, while Jehoshaphat was in his royal robes and never touched.

After the close call at Ramoth Gilead, Jehoshaphat rededicated himself to the spiritual reform of Judah.

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Active wickedness is always stronger than a half-hearted godliness.
- 2) Compromise is simply changing the question to fit the answer.