

5. Compromise

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One of the most impressive structures humans have ever engineered is the Great Wall of China. Several walls were being built as early as the 7th century BC. These, later joined together and made bigger and stronger, are now collectively referred to as the Great Wall. Especially famous is the wall built between 220-206 BC by the first Emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang, however, little of that original wall remains. Since then, the Great Wall has on and off been rebuilt, maintained, and enhanced; the majority of the existing wall is from the Ming Dynasty.

The total length of the Great Wall of China is 13,171 miles stretching across the northern border of China. It was built to keep the enemy, especially their archenemy Mongolia at bay. But the two times when they invaded China, they came through without breaking through the wall. Because they simply bribed the gate guards. I am sure that you've heard a phrase, "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link." In the case of the Great Wall, the weakest link was the compromising gate guards.

Last week we studied about king Asa of Judah who started wonderfully with the Lord, yet he finished his life horribly by being defiant to Him until his last breath. In chapters 17 through 20, we will meet Asa's son Jehoshaphat who also started his reign with the right foot with the Lord, but only to find himself away from in the end. I guess, an apple didn't fall far from the tree. This king compromised his walk with God and ended it with fizzle.

A. A GREAT START

2 Chronicles 17:6 And his heart took delight in the ways of the Lord; moreover he removed the high places and wooden images from Judah.

2 Chronicles 17:9 So they taught in Judah, and had the Book of the Law of the Lord with them; they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people.

This was the wisest and best policy a security-conscious king of Judah could promote. Because Jehoshaphat sought God first, God sent fear upon the neighboring kingdoms, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat.

Because Jehoshaphat found delight in the ways of the Lord, he wanted the people of Judah to learn more about their God through the Levites. This is so important. It is not good enough for a new Christian to remove the former carnal lifestyle with the power of the Holy Spirit. He or she must fill the empty part of one's life with the Word of God.

B. ALLYING WITH ENEMY

2 Chronicles 18:1-3 Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab. 2 After some years he went down to visit Ahab in Samaria; and Ahab killed sheep and oxen in abundance for him and the people who were with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramoth Gilead. 3 So Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?" And he answered him, "I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will be with you in the war."

Jehoshaphat had everything going for him, then he did something utterly stupid by allying himself with the most wicked king in Israel, Ahab. Obviously he learned this from his father Asa.

1 Kings 16:29-33 tells us just how bad Ahab was. He introduced the worship of completely new, pagan gods. In his disobedience Jeroboam, the first king of Israel said, "I will worship the Lord, but do it my way." But Ahab said, "I want to forget about the Lord completely and worship Baal." But in reality Ahab was nothing more than a puppet of his far more wicked wife Jezebel.

Why would a godly man ally himself with an enemy of God? Don't think that we wouldn't do it. All of us are capable of it. By the grace of God, we don't put ourselves in that kind of situation.

C. ASKING GOD'S BLESSING FOR THE PLAN THAT GOD IS NOT IN

2 Chronicles 18:4-27 And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire for the word of the Lord today." 5 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" And they said, "Go up, for God will deliver it into the king's hand." 6 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not still a prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of Him?" 7 So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him, because he never prophesies good concerning me, but always evil. He is Micaiah the son of Imla." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say such things!" 8 Then the king of Israel called one of his officers and said, "Bring Micaiah the son of Imla quickly!" 9 The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah, clothed in their robes, sat each on his throne; and they sat at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. 10 Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, "Thus says the Lord: 'With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.'" 11 And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the Lord will deliver it into the king's hand." 12 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. Therefore please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement." 13 And Micaiah said, "As the Lord lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak." 14 Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" And he said, "Go and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand!" 15 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?" 16 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.'" 17 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?" 18 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 on His right hand and His left. 19 And the Lord said, 'Who will persuade Ahab king of Israel to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. 20 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The Lord said to him, 'In what way?' 21 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.' 22 Therefore look! The Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets of yours, and the Lord has declared disaster against

you." 23 Then 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?" 24 And Micaiah said, "Indeed you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!" 25 Then the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son; 26 and say, 'Thus says the king: "Put this fellow in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction until I return in peace.'" 27 Then Micaiah said, "If you ever return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me." And he said, "Take heed, all you people!"

What was the point for Jehoshaphat to seek God's counsel for their joint attack plan that God was not in? He was not really seeking the Lord, but he only wanted God to bless what he wanted to do. He didn't seek the Lord in prayer before he said, "Yes" to Ahab. He shouldn't have taken Ahab's daughter as his son's wife from the first place.

I believe that we sometimes do this type of dumb thing. We want to do something that the Lord is not in even though we knew it from the beginning, but we want the Lord to bless it anyway. Is He going to? Of course not. He is not going to bless it because He is not obligated to us. He doesn't want us to be happy in everything, rather He wants us to be godly and be obedient to Him contrary to what so-called pastor Victoria Osteen, wife of Joel Osteen, wanted people to believe.

In this August, she told her congregation making God happy is first making oneself happy. Osteen continued:

"When we obey God, we're not doing it for God. We're doing it for ourselves.

Because God takes pleasure when we're happy. Do good 'cause God wants you to be happy. When you come to church, when you worship Him, you're not doing it for God, really. You're doing it for yourself because that's what makes God happy."

How shallow and how demonic that is!

Ahab's 400 prophets were the prophets of the golden calf that was made by Jeroboam to keep his people in Israel so that they didn't have to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the feasts according to what the Lord told them to do. In other words, these prophets were not from the Lord and they served the demons and they would not speak the truth. Ahab hated Micaiah, the godly messenger because of the godly message. His real conflict was with God. How typical!!!

Can you see Micaiah's sarcasm in v14? Ahab said that he wanted the truth, but he couldn't handle the truth. Micaiah wasn't afraid of what king Ahab would do to him. He was a true prophet of God.

D. THE RESULT OF IGNORING THE TRUTH

2 Chronicles 18:28-34 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. 29 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 they went into battle. 30 Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots who were with him, saying, "Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel." 31 So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, "It is the king of Israel!" Therefore they surrounded him to attack; but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him, and God diverted them from him. 32 For so it was, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was

not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. 33 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." 34 The battle increased that day, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot facing the Syrians until evening; and about the time of sunset he died.

What was the purpose of Jehoshaphat's request to hear from a godly prophet when he completely ignored what he was told? Have we ever done that in our life? We knew what the Bible says about what we were about to do, but we did it anyway? Did we deserve punishment from the Lord for what we've done knowingly that it was wrong? Oh, yes. But the mercy of the Lord endures forever. In Jehoshaphat's case, he was spared.

You know, when Ahab asked Jehoshaphat to keep his king's robe on but he would disguise himself as a soldier, that should have been a very good clue that the thing was not going to go well in the battlefield? But he didn't get it. I don't think that he was the sharpest tool in the drawer.

The Lord used a random man's arrow to fulfill His prophecy and judged the wicked king. To unbelievers, "It just happened."; but to believers, "The Lord did it."

The majority of dedicated Christians will fight to their death to honor their God's name and to keep their faith in their hearts if someone tries to take their faith away from them. That would be an attack from the outside. But the same majority of the believers are not prepared for the internal attack as much as they are for an outside attack. What do I mean? Corruption from within – compromise to allow outside temptations to reside inside of the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Remember what I said about the Great Wall of China at the beginning of this study? The wall could hold itself against the outside attack, but it was useless when the corrupted gatekeeper decided to open the gate to the enemy. Great danger lies in the notion that we can reason with the devil. WE CANNOT AND WE SHOULD NOT.

E. A STERN REBUKE FROM A PROPHET

2 Chronicles 19:1-3 Then Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned safely to his house in Jerusalem. 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 love those who hate the Lord? Therefore the wrath of the Lord is upon you. 3 Nevertheless good things are found in you, in that you have removed the wooden images from the land, and have prepared your heart to seek God."

Talk about the enduring mercy of God here. One of the great blessings of being a Christian is that God gives us second chances. He knows we are not flawless. He knows we are not perfect. He knows our true nature and gives us the opportunity to put our sin behind us – even when we have failed miserably like this king Jehoshaphat. God possesses the power to turn things around dramatically.

But when it comes to second chances, we have a choice in the matter. As we approach the subject of sin, we have two ways to address it. We can confess it, turn from it, and experience the joy of forgiveness from the Lord. Or we can conceal our sin and know the misery of reaping the repercussions of our sins:

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love

the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days.

It's amazing that some of those people consciously chose death. And it 's even more amazing that people today still choose death. You see, choosing death is essentially what we do when we choose to go against God and His W ord.

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) A great start with the Lord does not guarantee a great finish.
- 2) Active wickedness is always stronger than a half-hearted godliness.