

Introduction: We might be tempted towards discouragement when we see how often *believers* fall into foolish sins with disastrous consequences. We will see this in the life of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, this week as he makes foolish alliances with the idol-worshipping house of Ahab. Sadly, in his folly the king of Judah epitomizes what our Westminster Confession, chapter 17.3, says regarding the serious sins of believers:

Nevertheless, believers may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalence of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and, for a time, continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve his Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.

Yet, may God help us in this week's notes never to forget – that God, in the end, can draw the straight lines of final blessing and happiness – even when using the “crooked sticks” of our lives. He is able to “work all things for good for those who love God.” (Romans 8:28)

Monday: read 2 Chronicles 17:1-10. The secret to Jehoshaphat's success as the king of Judah becomes clear in 2 Chronicles 17:3 – “The LORD was with Jehoshaphat.” Here is the only source of all blessing in the life of every believer – whether Old Testament or New Testament. It is God's fundamental promise to be “with us” as our indwelling, protecting and saving God. This is why, in 2 Chronicles 17:10, “the fear of the LORD fell upon all the neighboring nations” – because God was “with” this king. This is also why in 2 Chronicles 19:3 the LORD finds “good” in Jehoshaphat and spares him the full consequences of his sin – because God Himself indwelt this king, and the fruits of the indwelling Spirit were in the king's life. *So too with us, all that is good and of eternal value in our lives comes from the LORD's mercy and grace – and not from we ourselves!*

Meditate and Pray: Let's begin this week by giving thanks for the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit. Even when living in the dangerous days of 1&2 Chronicles (1&2 Chronicles being written with a focus on the kingdom of David and his descendants in all their trials, whereas 1&2 Kings focus is on the break-away kingdom of Israel and their wicked kings), all that was good in these kings came from God's presence. So in our lives we did not choose God – He chose us. Our fruitful Christian living comes from His commitment to live inside us and never leave! Thanks be to His Name for the fruit only He can produce in our sin-scarred lives!

Tues/Weds: read John 14:15-18 & 2 Chronicles 19:1-3. The books of Kings and Chronicles were both written for the exiled people of God during their time as aliens in the land of Babylon. But we see the Holy Spirit at work even in those dark Old Testament days. Of course, in the New Testament, the promise of God to be “with us” flowers into the full promise of His indwelling Spirit in John 14:15-18:

¹⁵“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for **he dwells with you and will be in you.** ¹⁸“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

But as Dr. Sinclair Ferguson points out in his book, “Lessons From The Upper Room,” John 14:17 does not mean that only in the New Testament did the Holy Spirit work by indwelling believers. It is not accurate to say that, in the Old Testament, the work of God's Spirit was merely external. If that were true, then there would be no “Hall of Faith”, speaking of the power of Old Testament believers' faith as the Spirit worked that faith into them (Hebrews 11).

So, when the LORD was “with” Jehoshaphat it is no surprise to see the blessings of God’s indwelling Spirit realized in his life. This explains how, when the prophet Jehu declares that the LORD will “spare” Jehoshaphat from the full consequences of his sin “because some good is found in the king” (2 Chronicles 19:3), what is spoken of as “good” is a result of the indwelling presence of God’s Spirit, who was “with” Jehoshaphat in all he did (2 Chronicles 17:3).

Meditate and Pray: Use hymn # 545 as your clear testimony today that all the good which is in you is from the presence and daily mercy of God – and not from your own fallen nature or good works:

1 When this passing world is done,
when has sunk yon glaring sun,
when we stand with Christ in glory,
looking o'er life's finished story,
then, Lord, shall I fully know,
not till then, how much I owe.

2 When I hear the wicked call
on the rocks and hills to fall,
when I see them start and shrink
on the fiery deluge brink,
then, Lord, shall I fully know,
not till then, how much I owe.

3 When I stand before the throne,
dressed in beauty not my own,
when I see thee as thou art,
love thee with unsinning heart,
then, Lord, shall I fully know,
not till then, how much I owe.

4 When the praise of heav'n I hear,
loud as thunders to the ear,
loud as many waters' noise,
sweet as harp's melodious voice,
then, Lord, shall I fully know,
not till then, how much I owe.

5 Chosen not for good in me,
wakened up from wrath to flee,
hidden in the Savior's side,
by the Spirit sanctified,
teach me, Lord, on earth to show,
by my love, how much I owe.

Thurs/Fri: read Psalm 103:8-10; 1 Kings 22:1-4 & 2 Chronicles 18:1-3. Despite God’s presence, Jehoshaphat made a profound mistake in forming a marriage alliance with the wicked house of Ahab in 2 Chronicles 18:1. It is for this sinful alliance with idolaters that God sends the prophet Jehu to rebuke the king of Judah with these words in 2 Chronicles 19:2:

² But 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? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD...”

Jehoshaphat, king of Jerusalem, and bearer of the holy seed of the kingdom of David, had no business making a marriage alliance with Ahab’s daughter! Because of this marriage, he felt obligated to join Ahab in battle against the Syrians – a decision which almost cost him his life in 2 Chronicles 18:31.

Meditate and Pray: “LORD, as we grow older, we grieve over the ill-advised decisions and even bad alliances in our families. No one is immune from having to live with bad decisions. We flee to you because your Son is the only Man ever to have lived without any bad consequences from bad decisions. We need and ask, along with our families, to be clothed in the righteous life and integrity which Jesus has. Please do not treat us as our sins deserve (Psalm 103:10). Amen.

Sat/Sun: read 2 Chronicles 18:1-3 & Matthew 19:1-9. We are dealing in these notes with the ungodly marriage between wicked Ahab's family and godly Jehoshaphat. Such mixed marriages often prove to be the doom of godliness in the home. So often, the unbelieving spouse triumphs in weakening the profession of the believing husband or wife. All such corruption in marriage stems, according to Jesus, from hardness of heart. Let's turn today to Jesus' view of marriage as our conclusion to this week's meditations.

Driven by hatred of Jesus, and lording it over the poor and lowly of their day, including the women who suffered from unjust divorces, the Pharisees' goal in Matthew 19's stirring controversy about divorce was to tempt our Lord to respond in a way that would offend one or the other side of the Jewish population. If Jesus answered the question of Matthew 19:3 with, "Yes – a man can divorce his wife for any reason," then they could say to conservatives that their criticism of Jesus was valid in that Jesus was "loose" towards God's Law in areas like marriage. If He answered with, "No – a man cannot divorce his wife for any reason," then, in their thinking, Jesus would offend the many people of that day who taught and believed that men could divorce their wives for the flimsiest of reasons, including, it was said, if they merely burned supper! That is the low view of marriage which Jesus' foes display in Matthew 19 and which is also seen in the days of "no-fault divorce" in which we live.

Meditate and Pray: Please note how the question of Jesus' foes indicates their hardness of hearts towards the Savior (Matthew 19:7-9). They were not interested in being corrected. Their minds were made up. For them, when it came to the question of marriage, it was simply a matter of debating what was "legal," not what was just. I remember hearing a Christian attorney some years ago in a public speech, saying that in our country, we should no longer speak of our "Justice system," since it has degenerated into a mere "Legal system." Worth pondering, isn't it?