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How Did We Get Here Jehoshaphat? Don't Walk, Stand or Sit but Instead Delight, Meditate and Yield

Raj Nathaniel; 08 April 2018

Psalm 1:1-3 Blessed *is* the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. ³He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

2 Chronicles 17:3-4 The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals, ⁴but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel.

2 Chronicles 18:28, 30, 31 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead...Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of his chariots, "Fight with neither small nor great, but only with the king of Israel.".. As soon as the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, "It is the king of Israel." So they turned to fight against him. And Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him; God drew them away from him.

We are going to look at the life of Jehoshaphat who started out as King of Judah with the LORD's blessing...but as we read, he was soon jumping Jehoshaphat as he was trying to get away from the Syrian army. How did this happen and what practical advice does the bible give us to avoid becoming jumping Jehoshaphat.

Background:

King David's son Solomon had spiritually declined. Solomon had started worshiping idols. His son Rehoboam was a mixture of faithfulness to God but continual worship of idols. In Rehoboam's time, 10 tribes of Israel decided to rebel because of high taxes and set up the northern kingdom of Israel under the kingship of Jeroboam who was a servant of Solomon and had run away into exile during Solomon's reign and was the rebel leader. Rehoboam's son Abijah was a follower of God and Abijah's son was Asa who was the father of Jehoshaphat..

Jehoshaphat becomes King of Judah at 35 years of age. And by this time he had seen and experienced God's hand in the life of his father Asa.

Towards the end of Asa's reign, Israel encroached on Judah's territory and took control of the main road coming into Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat would have been 29 years old at that time and would have surely remembered the account. And war breaks out for the next couple of years. Instead of turning to God for help, Asa turns to the King of Syria. Asa bribes the King of Syria with temple gold to attack Israel and the plot works beautifully. As a military tactic, it was a brilliant move, but in God's sight it was a disaster.

2 Chronicles 16:7-12 At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, "Because you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you.⁸ Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the LORD, he gave them into your hand. ⁹For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart *is* loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars." ¹⁰Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in the stocks in prison, for he was in a rage with him because of this. And Asa inflicted cruelties upon some of the people at the same time. ¹¹The acts of Asa, from first to last, are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. ¹²In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe. Yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but sought help from physicians.¹³And Asa slept with his fathers, dying in the forty-first year of his reign.

Couple of things to note here, firstly, the LORD had already shown himself strong on behalf of Asa some 23 years earlier (Jehoshaphat would have been a 6 year old boy). At that time the Ethiopian king attacked Asa with a million strong army. Asa had ½ that size of army and far less resources. But at that time, Asa humbled his heart and sought the LORD. We read his prayer in 2 Chronicles 14:11.

How did God answer Asa? The bible says the LORD struck the Ethiopians and they fled. It took 23 years for Asa to slowly forget the LORD. And here we are square one again. The bible says there was no war all these years. Everything was prosperous. Perhaps it was the prosperity that made Asa attach himself to the gifts and forget the giver.

The LORD Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. His eyes are still going throughout the earth looking for those who will come to Him in humility and repentance so that He may show Himself strong on their behalf.

God wants us to realize who we are in His sight, sinners fallen short of His plan and goal for our lives. And to fix the problem, He Himself paid the penalty for our sins by dying on the cross. Not only that, He rose again from the dead to show us how to live a new life in Christ Jesus led by the Holy Spirit. And all we have to do is simply accept this gift that God is offering to us. And the best part is that God is patient and relentless, He is continually knocking on our heart's door wanting to us to let Him in.

1. God will bring about circumstances in our life to turn our heart towards Him.

For Asa, war was a tool that God was using. It was a tool of mercy to draw Asa's attention back to God.

Are you in a hope less situation today? Do you feel like you are surrounded by badness with no hope or future? God wants us to draw close to Him.

Hebrews 11:6

But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

So firstly we saw that Asa has already experienced God working on his behalf. Secondly, we see that Asa refused to seek the LORD in this time of difficulty. Asa was rich, and believed that he could hire himself salvation from the armies of Israel. And so Asa sends the King of Syria temple treasure in order to get the Syrian army to attack Israel. And it worked.

So what is wrong with what Asa did? God blessed Asa and Asa became rich. One might say, Asa rightly used them and rather cleverly to escape tragedy.

We all have to die one day. But which is more tragic? Dying with God on our side or dying Godless? Dying without God is the greatest tragedy a human can ever face. Why? Because without God, we die in our sin. And the bible says the wages of sin is death or separation from God with no second chance. But for a Christian, God guarantees that to be absent in the body is to be present with the LORD, therefore we sing O death where is your sting? O grave where is your victory? Jesus Christ defeated both sin and death through His death and resurrection. And when we accept Him

into our lives, He promises us new life. Literally, new life. One has to experience it. We will talk more about this later.

Back to Asa and his son Jehoshaphat. After this encounter of rebuke from the LORD, one would think Asa would have humbled himself. Finally, comes another test...disease. Jehoshaphat is 29 years old at this time.

2 Chronicles 16:12 In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe. Yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but sought help from physicians.

The bible is not saying that going to the doctor is bad, instead notice the emphasis, “YET, IN SPITE OF, or Even in this impossible situation...Asa did not seek the LORD”. It seems his heart had turned away from the LORD as he relied on his ability to hire physicians for healing. A tragedy indeed.

It is believed that at this point Jehoshaphat became co-regent with his father until King Asa dies in the third year of foot disease. Also of note is that up in the northern kingdom of Israel King Ahab comes to the throne about a year before Asa gets his foot disease. And King Ahab is an evil king and the bible records God saying “there was none as evil as Ahab and his wife Jezebel” 1 Kings 21:25.

All that was background. We will now look at Jehoshaphat’s life and the choices he is faced with. Jehoshaphat has heard the stories of King David and his ancestors. He also has firsthand knowledge of Yahweh the sovereign LORD and has heard with his own ears the prophetic words that God is going throughout the land looking for those whose heart is blameless that He, God can show Himself strong on their behalf.

Jehoshaphat makes his first choice. He realized that he needed a blameless heart before God only then will God be pleased to hear and answer prayers.

2 Chronicles 17:3-4 The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father David. He did not seek the Baals, ⁴but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the practices of Israel.

Jehoshaphat was a believer who practiced what he preached. He set himself and his kingdom apart from Israel that had become idolatrous. He

walked in the ways of his father David and NOT according to the ways or practices of Israel. Acknowledging who we are in God's eyes and accepting His way of salvation for us is an excellent start. That was David's ways whom the bible describes as a man after God's own heart. Jehoshaphat is described here in the same way as someone who emulated David. The thing with walking is that you are always on the move. This is a good thing if only you are going the right way!!

Psalm 1:1 Blessed *is* the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly

Jehoshaphat did not WALK in the ways of ungodly Israel. In addition he obeyed the laws that God gave to the people of Israel in the time of Moses...which was to be set apart or distinct from all the idolatry that was prevalent in the region at that time.

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.

These high places were literally hills on top of which stood altars and temples for sacrifice to idols made of wood or stone. Here Jehoshaphat removes these from all of Judah. But notice that before the removal of these things Jehoshaphat did something else. What was that? Jehoshaphat's heart took DELIGHT in the ways or laws of the Lord. Where else have we seen that?

Psalm 1:2 But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

What do you think this means? My son Nik takes great delight in the game of American football. He has a handful of football trading cards. And he can recite the vital statistics of all his dozen or more favorite players. How does he remember such information? He meditates on these statistics over and over again soaking in all the information he can get because he delights in the game. What is our delight today? Is it a game, or the latest toy, something perishable? Or is it a person? Everything in thing in this world will decay, be stolen or will perish. Jesus Christ is the only one worth delighting over.

2. As a Christian our delight must be in Christ.

And if Jesus is not our delight, ask..and the delighting nature will be given to you.

Jehoshaphat prospers in all his ways. In fact the rest chapter 17 lists his assets but we won't go into that. We are going to move onto another choice he makes.

2 Chronicles 18:1 & 21:5-6 Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab., 21:5-6 Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. ⁶And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD.

Psalm 1 tells us: Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly. Check. Jehoshaphat got that right.

Nor stands around with sinners. Oops! What happened? Rather how did this happen?

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober minded, be vigilant; your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

So while we are walking in the ways of the LORD, someone else is also walking around. The devil always walks against us, looking for every opportunity to stop us walking. In Psalm 1, it is the devil's goal to get us to STOP walking and to STAND with the world around us so that the corrupt world and its system can influence us...sinners are simply being used by the devil to lure us and entice us to STOP WALKING.

And what does the bible say when we get into such situations?

There's a song that goes like this: You've got to know when to hold 'em, Know when to fold 'em, Know when to walk away, And know when to run I don't think Kenny Rogers meant this to be remotely theological, but this song verse out of the gambling context holds a lot of truth!

But what does the bible say? Exactly the same thing. Flee idolatry. Flee youthful passions. Video games got you standing? Flee from it. Browsing the internet got you standing? Facebooking got you standing? For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils...got you standing? Flee all these things.

Notice that all of these references to fleeing are to feelings and emotions that arise from inside US, from within our hearts. Idolatry, covetousness, youthful passions, the love of money. That's why Jesus said it's not what's on the outside that defiles a person but rather what comes from the inside. What is Jesus talking about?

Matthew 15:19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.²⁰ These are what defile a person.

Paul says I die daily. So are these things dealt with on a daily basis? How? By crucifixion. By putting to death these thoughts, emotions and feelings as they arise daily. How? Paul mentions in several places..one of them is **Galatians 5:24** And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

3. We need to die daily to our selfish desires and passions of our body.

The bible also instructs us to get on the offensive.

James 4:7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

The bible does mention that the devil can never live inside a Christian, but can influence our thought process. So how do we know if what we are thinking is of the devil or of God. One way is to see if a certain thought lines up with what the bible says.

And there is with but who walks with us or as the bible says alongside us? The Holy Spirit and His job is to help us in our time of need. That's what submission to God does for us, it enables the Holy Spirit to fight on our behalf. The eyes of the LORD are always looking for someone with a changed blameless heart to show the power of the Holy Spirit in that person's behalf.

Jehoshaphat marrying off his son to Ahab's daughter is simply the outward exhibition of a long process that started in the heart of Jehoshaphat. Here is a man who started off being very careful in making sure no practice of Israel defiled Judah. Israel's practices were treated as garbage, needed to be removed. Then at some point detestable Ahab and Israel, had have become not detestable in Jehoshaphat's mind...in other words, equality sets into the mind. Ahab and Israel's practices are simply preferences or cultural

artifacts. We have our temple and way of worship, they have their temple and way of worship life. Equality. Notice the removal of any reference to the LORD in the thinking process. That is the sin that has occurred, God's ways are not rejected outright, but are given equal standing with the system of the world in our hearts and mind. Jehoshaphat's worldview has undergone a shift. The final change in Jehoshaphat's mind is when Ahab and Israel become so superior that they become desirable. Mirage. Deception. While the devil is the father of deception, we sometimes help him by our covetousness!

Isn't that what got Adam and Eve in trouble? The dangerous "do not touch" thought became "it's not dangerous to touch" thought, which finally became "I must have it at all costs" thought.

And when evil thoughts give birth SIN occurs! James talks about this process too.

So all of the things we call SIN, have a long process that begins in our hearts and mind. That's why, we are given NEW hearts, installed with the Holy Spirit app. (Ezekiel 36:26). Can our NEW heart commit SIN? not if the Holy Spirit is in control! All we need to do is use the Holy Spirit App. Every minute of Every day. The NEW hearts that God installs in us is for us to use to renew our mind. God will not force mind renewal. This is something we have to invite the Holy Spirit to accomplish in our life.

4. We must utilize the gift of the Holy Spirit to renew our minds daily.

For a Christian NEW heart installation is permanent, but mind renewal can be stagnant or can even go backwards as we see here in the case of Jehoshaphat.

For Jehoshaphat, he began to forget, that it was God who had prospered him and blessed him. A marriage alliance usually is done for economic reasons. Here it was done to ensure peace so that the 2 kingdoms would quit fighting and therefore collaborate economically.

But the marriage brought Jehoshaphat close to death. Once two families are joined in matrimony, they begin to STAND together. Jehoshaphat didn't realize what had happened until much later and to his credit, he did make amends to his ways.

2 Chronicles 18:2-3 ²After 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. ³So Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me *against* Ramoth Gilead?" (Syria) And Jehoshaphat answered him, "I *am* as you *are*, and my people as your people; *we will be* with you in the war." (Notice the mind change! We are the same type of people! In Jehoshaphat's mind, Israel became superior and desirable and must have relationship. Jehoshaphat thought he was pulling himself up to become an equal by the marriage alliance. After the marriage he was happy because now he thinks they are equals! One is led by the Holy Spirit and the other by the devil, how can these ever become equal?).

⁴Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire for the word of the LORD today."

Mark of the NEW heart..it will want to know WWJD?

The story goes comically bizarre from this point forward. I will summarize the rest of the story found in 2 Chronicles 18:5-27

Ahab has 400 prophets of Baal show up for consultation. All of them assure Ahab that God will give victory. Jehoshaphat, is able to recognize that these are not prophets of the LORD, because, he specifically asks isn't there another prophet of the LORD that we can hear from. Here is where comedy sets in.

2 Chronicles 18:7-9 ⁷So 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." (Notice that Ahab said the prophet always prophesies bad news concerning me. Ahab was only interested in himself. He could not care to know what the LORD was going to tell him. It was always bad news when Ahab was involved. Ahab missed the whole point of prophesy. In fact the bible says whom God loves, he chastises to help set us walking on the right path. Therefore if Ahab understood that it was God's mercy at every step in every prophecy in every so called bad news. We too are like Ahab sometimes. We want to hear only good news from God when He speaks to us from His word. We don't want correction or reproof or training towards righteousness. We are like kids and Santa Claus. We only want our prayers answered according to our ways, and are not interested in hearing or seeing what God is doing in the world.) And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say such things!"

⁸Then the king of Israel called one *of his* officers and said, "Bring Micaiah the son of Imla quickly!"

⁹The 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.

What were they sitting on? Thrones. What was Ahab doing? Scorning the prophet of the LORD and the word of the LORD.

Sitting in the seat of the scornful.

When Jehoshaphat forsook walking in God's ways, we find him standing along the path of Ahab in a marriage alliance. A few years later, Jehoshaphat is now literally sitting in the seat of the scornful.

What a tragedy. But the only silver lining here is that Jehoshaphat wants direction from the LORD not good news.

2 Chronicles 18:14-17 ¹⁴Then 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!" ¹⁵So 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?" ¹⁶Then 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.'"

¹⁷And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

Ahab completely missed the mercy message from the LORD. The LORD was literally telling him to refrain from going this route.

Have we continued on a certain path based on majority vote? 400 yes votes and 1 No vote. That's a 99.75% Yes ballot. God is not a ballot box. The real tragedy is not that Ahab refuses to listen, but that Jehoshaphat lost his sense of DISCERNMENT.

Hebrews 5:13-14 or everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

The Word of God needs to be read and used in our life, that's the constant practice mentioned here to enable us to distinguish good from evil. Evil will always be dressed up to look appealing. This was true in the garden of Eden and it is still true today. But the Holy Spirit in us will help us.

5. We must treasure our relationship with the LORD above all else.