

Last week both King Ahab and Jehoshaphat went into battle that was ill-advised by one of God's true prophets, Micaiah, who had warned Ahab that if he took on this battle he would die on the battlefield.

Ahab's response was to first put Micaiah in jail and then go into the battle with a disguise, as if God couldn't recognize him. And of course, an enemy archer randomly shoots an arrow toward the Israelites and his arrow hits in the only place it could, between the joint in the armor which led to Ahab's death. And so ends chapter 18.

As we come to chapter 19 we find that Jehoshaphat comes through the battle and then returns to Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 19:1 ^{NAU} Then Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem.

And as he is on his way back one of the seers meets him and gives him a message from the Lord.

2 Chronicles 19:2-3 ² 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 and so *bring* wrath on yourself from the LORD? ³ "But there is *some* good in you, for you have removed the Asheroth from the land and you have set your heart to seek God."

Part of this warning is actually coming after the fact that Jehoshaphat made a military alliance with Ahab who was wicked, who hated the Lord and suffered God's wrath on the battlefield.

And so, this warning wasn't coming with any empty promises, but was fresh in the mind of Jehoshaphat. But then the seer reminds Jehoshaphat that there was some good in him.

Now this is a common approach in our world today as it was even back then and that is that men are basically good. Yes, they're capable of doing bad, but we're still basically good.

But as we look at this we need to distinguish between the good that men do and whether or not men are basically good. There is a difference.

Let's consider the good that men do. Al Capone was a ruthless, blood-thirsty murderer back in the 1930's, especially during prohibition. His rise to the top of the Mafia was paved with the blood of all of his enemies.

And yet, it was not uncommon for people who lived in Chicago to admire and love Al Capone. And one of the reasons is that he would often take his ill-gotten money and spend a little on the people of Chicago. Remember, this was during the great depression and there was very little that people had.

Al Capone would purchase food for many poor neighborhoods and form, what was called in those days, soup kitchens. People from all around would come to these soup kitchens to get a hot meal with bread and soup and a cup of hot coffee.

And as a result Al Capone had a very good name in Chicago among such people, even though they all knew that he was a killer. Part of their justification for admiring him, under the circumstances, despite their knowledge of his mafia connections, was that at least the people he was killing were by and large other bad guys.

But the question needs to be asked in light of Scripture's mandate to feed the poor, was Al Capone doing good works when feeding the poor?

Absolutely.

So, could we then say of him, as was said of Jehoshaphat, that there was some good in Al Capone?

It depends how we define good. If man defines good then just about anything can be good depending on how man defines it at the time. For example, when Adolph Hitler was exterminating the Jews and other unacceptable people who opposed the Nazi party, was it not good for the people of Germany since Hitler was simply putting into practice the survival of the fittest so as to purge any who would not be useful to advance the German people?

The extermination of a few to protect and prosper the many can actually be seen as a noble thing by those who define good as good for them or good for those they desire to see prosper.

But is this the kind of good that the word of God refers to when the word good is attached to someone like Jehosaphat or Abraham, Isaac or Jacob, all of whom were deemed good?

When the word of God uses the word good it is defined by the only one who is truly good and that is God Himself.

And so, the question again needs to be asked is there any human being who is good as God defines good, which is nothing short of perfection?

No, in fact, the word of God goes to great lengths to show how man is not good by nature.

Jeremiah 17:9 ⁹ "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"

^{NAU} **Ecclesiastes 9:3** This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men. Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they *go* to the dead.

Psalms 14:1-3 ^{NAU} For the choir director. *A Psalm* of David. The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good. ² The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. ³ They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.

And of course the apostle Paul picks up on this when writing to the Romans.

Romans 3:10-12 ¹⁰ as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; ¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

So, if there is not one who can do good how is it that the seer Jehu can say to Jehoshaphat, that there is some good in you?

According to that same verse in 2Chronicles the context tells us.

2 Chronicles 19:3 for you have removed the Asheroth from the land and you have set your heart to seek God."

Two things to notice here. He is regarded as good because of what he has done, which is what?

He removed the idols.

But the second thing that shows that he is good is what?

He has set his heart to seek God.

Well, if according to Jeremiah the heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? How is it possible that Jehoshaphat could conceivably have a heart that seeks after God and is shown in the way he desires to please God with his actions?

Because even the O.T. saints, as well as the New needed a new heart that only God could give them.

Ezekiel 36:25-28 ²⁵ "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. ²⁸ "You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

This is precisely what Jesus Christ told the Jews.

^{NAU} **John 3:3** Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born ¹again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

This is why Paul could equate being born again as being something you were not prior to God taking out your heart of stone and giving you a heart of flesh. Being born from above is becoming something new, something foreign to this world of sin and curse.

^{NAU} **2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

The only reason Jehoshaphat could be good is because the goodness of God was put to his account through the faith of Jehoshaphat; and even that faith was a gift from God to Jehoshaphat.

This is why his faith produced good works that were actually deemed good by God. And it is this exact same kind of faith that James speaks of.

James 2:20-26 ²⁰ But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²⁵ In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁶ For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

James is not saying that faith plus works equals righteousness. Rather he is saying faith which results in works to please God demonstrates an existing righteousness given to Abraham because he believed God.

And Paul confirms this.

Romans 3:19-20 ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are ¹under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

Romans 4:1-3 ^{NAU} What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

And so, the faith of Jehoshaphat in the promises of God and His kingdom was that which enabled him to pursue the things of God and it was demonstrated in a variety of ways, from tearing down the altars and idols to declaring to the people, particularly the

judges he appointed, that they must seek after God and judge according to God's ways.

2 Chronicles 19:4-6 ⁴ So Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem and went out again among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their fathers. ⁵ He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city. ⁶ He said to the judges, "Consider what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD who is with you ¹when you render judgment.

In this way Jehoshaphat was bearing witness to the Creator God who rules over His creation and has given the authority and responsibility to have men rule over other men in a way that brings honor to God.

It's a remarkable thing to have a leader actually have God and the people he rules over as the main focus of his leadership. Most leaders only have their interests in mind and we see this every election cycle. They lie, they cheat and they will climb over anyone to make sure they get elected.

The people they serve don't mean anything to them, and to think that any of them really desires to honor God in the process is a joke. In the final analysis all leaders will stand before God and more of them, not less, will have the same fate as Ahab even if they aren't shot by an arrow in this world, they will find the next world to be less accommodating than this one as they stand before God as judge.

But Jehoshaphat knew that God and only God was able to direct and protect the people of God and so he spent the rest of his days seeking and trusting God. And it came about that the enemies of Judah arose and sought to destroy them.

2 Chronicles 20:1-2 ^{NAU} Now it came about after this that the sons of Moab and the sons of Ammon, together with some of the Meunites, came to make war against Jehoshaphat. ² Then some came and reported to Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, out of Aram and behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar (that is Engedi)."

This is not good news. And knowing that the last military alliance Jehoshaphat entered into was not very good, that with King Ahab, he decided to seek someone else to face this battle.

2 Chronicles 20:3-4 ³ Jehoshaphat was afraid and turned his attention to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴ So Judah gathered together to seek help from the LORD; they even came from all the cities of Judah to seek the LORD.

And as all Judah comes to Jerusalem to seek the Lord Jehoshaphat prays to God for help.

2 Chronicles 20:5-12 ⁵ Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD before the new court, ⁶ and he said, "O LORD, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You. ⁷ "Did You not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel and give it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? ⁸ "They have lived in it, and have built You a sanctuary there for Your name, saying, ⁹ 'Should evil come upon us, the sword, *or* judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before You (for Your name is in this house) and cry to You in our distress, and You will hear and deliver *us*.' ¹⁰ "Now behold, the sons of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom You did not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt (they turned aside from them and did not destroy them), ¹¹ see *how* they are rewarding us by coming to drive us out from Your possession which You have given us as an inheritance. ¹² "O our God, will You not judge them? For we are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on You."

This is a prayer of total reliance on the only One who can rescue them. And the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will be faithful to His covenant with them and will assure Jehoshaphat that his enemies will not prevail.

2 Chronicles 20:14-17 ¹⁴ Then in the midst of the assembly the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, the Levite of the sons of Asaph; ¹⁵ and he said, "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's. ¹⁶ 'Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the valley in front of the wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷ 'You *need* not fight in this *battle*; station yourselves, stand and see the salvation of the LORD on your

behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not fear or be dismayed;
tomorrow go out to face them, for the LORD is with you."

Next week we'll see how the Lord was with them and how the life
of Jehoshaphat took a turn that we would not expect.