

1 Kings 22:37-53

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[0 : 00] Tonight we're in this little section that rounds off the book of 1 Kings. The book of 1 and 2 Kings was originally just one book, but probably on two scrolls.

And at the end of the first scroll, we get these kind of interval remarks or these interim remarks on some of the kings that we've come to know in the last few chapters.

So we get Ahab's summary from verse 37 and his son's summary, Ahaziah, just at the end. But in between those two kings, we get some comments on King Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah. And these verses are inspired.

They may feel strange to us, but there's a lot we can learn from them, actually. And I think we get three emotions arising from these verses about Jehoshaphat. And the first emotion tonight is relief. It is so refreshing, first of all, to see a good king in 1 Kings for once. The kings of Israel have become predictably tragic, haven't they, in this book.

[1 : 10] King Ahab, we've seen that he's shown great weakness. He's shown selfishness and he ignores God, like we saw last week. And it has brought disaster for himself and for the people of Israel.

It's been the same old story over and over again of injustice and corruption. But with Jehoshaphat, there's a bit of a breath of fresh air, isn't there? There's relief.

And look at verse 43. Hallelujah, we say.

Finally, there is a king that we can get excited about. A ruler who will treat his people well, who will do what is right in the sight of the Lord and provide a kingdom worth living in.

And he did what his father Asa did. And if you know about Asa in 1 Kings 15, he was a really, really good king. It says there that his heart was wholly true to the Lord all of his days.

[2 : 20] And that is so refreshing, isn't it? Because when a king is godly, he does what is right, you are going to be blessed living in his kingdom.

But actually, Jehoshaphat was even better than his dad, wasn't he? Look at verse 46. He exterminated the remnants of the male cult prostitutes who remained in the days of his father Asa. So if you thought Asa was good, Jehoshaphat was even better. He managed to put his foot down where his father hadn't and got rid of idols and evil better than he did.

And what we're learning, all three kings actually, it's not just good enough to have a king who has the right succession, has a proper line and proper family.

It's not enough to have a king who has the legal right to rule over you. Ahab had all of those things and he didn't turn out to be a good king. What people really need is a good king who does what is right in the sight of God.

[3 : 27] We need and want a ruler who has dignity and purity. We want a good king, don't we?

To follow God's ways, to deal justly with people, to be kind, to give security. So it's so refreshing to see that at the end of one kings, to see Jehoshaphat.

But then the next emotion that we have very quickly after that, the relief, is disappointment.

Because secondly, it is so disappointing to see a naive king like Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat is a godly and a good man with a pious and a good heart. Do you remember last time Ahab wanted to go to war with him, didn't he?

And Ahab, Jehoshaphat said, hang on, hang on Ahab, let's listen to the Lord first of all. He was a Bible man, he was a good man, but he's disappointingly flawed.

[4 : 33] If you look at verse 43 again, it goes on to say, doesn't it, he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, yet the high places weren't taken away and people were still sacrificing to false gods.

Although he is good and he does a lot of good, there is just this little chink in his character. The feeling is disappointment.

Especially when we learn about his shipbuilding exploits. It's really odd, isn't it? The author throws in verse 48 and 49.

Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold, but they didn't go, for the ships were wrecked at Izzy and Geber. And you're thinking, why mention that as a feature of Jehoshaphat's reign?

He built some ships to go and get some gold from this place called Ophir. But before they set sail, they are wrecked in the harbour. They're turned into driftwood at Izzy and Geber.

[5 : 39] Well, the original readers would remember that place, Izzy and Geber, as the launch pad for a successful shipbuilding project led by King Solomon, the great King Solomon.

And you can go back to 1 Kings 9, and you can revel in Solomon's kingdom, how great that was, the abundance, the security, the wisdom of King Solomon.

Serving him was really wonderful. And in 1 Kings 9, 26, we learn King Solomon built a fleet of ships at the same place, Ezzy and Geber.

And from there, we know that he brought in gold and luxury items to enrich the kingdom. So Jehoshaphat could be the one, couldn't he, to bring back the glory days.

He's such a breath of fresh air. It's so refreshing to see him. And yet it's so disappointing because his ships are wrecked before they get a chance to set sail.

[6 : 43] He is so good, isn't he? And yet he's not quite good enough. And the problem with him wasn't that he just had a bit of bad luck, a bit of bad weather. The shipwreck story actually gives us a glimpse into the deeper problem with Jehoshaphat's.

What was the source of his chink, of his little imperfection? Just bad weather? Well, actually, no, it was down, I think, to his naivety in a spiritually naive partnership that he'd made.

Now, I need you to be detective with me now. What was the problem with him? He was so good, but the problem was his friends. And he could be manipulated and influenced by others who were evil because whose name is also connected with the ship catastrophe.

Verse 49, Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, said to Jehoshaphat, let my servants go with your servants in the ships. Now, this is very subtle, but we're told that Ahaziah, Ahab's son, had some kind of involvement.

How did he know about the ships being wrecked, we wonder? Why would he offer servants to go and help? And alarm bells start to ring because one king's ends with the final words on this guy, Ahaziah, this king.

[8 : 08] Verse 53, he served Baal and provoked God to anger in every way his father Ahab did. So if Ahaziah's name is anywhere near this project, it is not going to go well, is it?

And here is the rub with Jehoshaphat. He himself may be a good king, but it's his willingness to partner with and make peace with those who are not that makes him a disappointment.

We get a clearer picture of this in 2 Chronicles, chapter 20, where God confronts Jehoshaphat about this.

He says to him, Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the Lord will destroy what you have made. And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish.

Do you see, that was the problem. Jehoshaphat was good, but he was too quick to be influenced by others. That caused the shipwreck.

[9 : 14] It was an immoral partnership that led to maritime disaster. And actually, we've seen this trait in Jehoshaphat before, haven't we?

He's, in a way, too nice or he's too naive. This trait of allowing himself to be influenced. Last Sunday evening, Ahab came to him and said, Will you go to war with me?

And immediately, he responds, I am as you are. My people are as your people. Let my horses be like your horses. And then he almost gets killed, doesn't he?

In the Ramoth Gilead charade. And then our author adds a comment in verse 44. Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel.

And we think, oh, how lovely that is. Well, a lovely guy. But it's not a compliment. He was a good man who'd allowed evil to influence him.

[10 : 17] And he made a partnership with ungodliness, thinking that he could keep his personal godliness. He thought somehow light could have partnership with darkness, that he could compromise on distinctivity for the sake of some mutual activity.

Paul uses the analogy of farming in 2 Corinthians. He says, it's like being unequally yoked with somebody.

That you can't get much done in God's kingdom in partnership with those who don't want to serve God. It's like having two animals pulling a plough yoked together, but they are unequal.

One is an elephant and one is a mouse. It's just not going to work. It's like trying to get light and darkness to work together or righteousness and wickedness or Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah.

It's just not going to work. To his credit, we're told that he refuses to let Ahaziah send down another load of servants to attempt the project again.

[11 : 27] So it's only a little partnership, isn't it? There's a limit to it for him. But it is a little chink in his integrity that is going to mushroom into an awful problem later on.

It's often the little compromises, isn't it, that we make that lead to big problems later on. I was reading about a mushroom that they've discovered in a national park in the US.

It's called the honey mushroom. And the thing about this mushroom is that it's been growing underground for a few years, unbeknown to the kind of park wardens.

And it slowly spread its filaments underground, infecting the roots of the trees and destroying them. It started off as a microscopic spore that was too small even to see with the naked eye.

But it's now grown to be the largest known living organism on planet Earth. It's this giant mushroom. It covers 2,200 square acres of forest.

[12 : 41] A little, little bit of something bad can grow, can't it, into something huge later on. A little leaven leavens the whole lump as Jesus said.

And later in 2 Kings we'll see that Jehoshaphat's little alliance gets completely out of hand. Because his son ends up marrying Ahaziah's sister.

He thought there could be a little alliance between good and evil. But it nearly ends up with Ahab's daughter killing off the entire Davidic line to the throne in 2 Kings 11.

Jehoshaphat puts redemptive history at risk with a little bit of friendship with evil. With a little partnership with darkness. Just a little bad influence that he lets in.

And this is Jehoshaphat's problem, isn't it? He's a good godly guy. But he can't hang around and allow the ungodly to influence him too much and remain untainted himself.

[13 : 49] He is a good king but he is a corruptible king. Just a little diplomacy with evil, just a little partnership, just a little is enough to ruin his kingdom though.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. And it's so disappointing. Now it's really important just as an aside that we see we are not meant to be in the shoes of King Jehoshaphat.

We are not kings of God's kingdom are we? We're not in the same situation. He was God's chosen king and his work and responsibilities are different to ours in many ways.

But the Apostle Paul has the same attention to detail actually for the Christian life too. On watching who we're influenced by and what we let into our kind of circle of trust if you like.

He commands the Ephesian Christians not to partner with those who do wicked things. Ephesians 4 Therefore don't become partners with them for at one time you were darkness but now you are light in the Lord.

[15 : 00] Walk as children of light. Try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord and take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness but instead expose them.

He's saying there isn't he good people good Christians still have to watch who they are influenced by. As the saying goes a little bad company ruins good morals.

But let's think about that for a minute. Does that mean we can have no exposure to any kind of sinful thing that we've got to lock ourselves away in a monastery.

We can't read the newspapers. We can't watch any movies with anything sinful in it. Or we can't have friends who aren't Christians yet. Or we can't build ships with non-believers and have work colleagues.

I don't think it's right to take that application. I think it is possible to witness sin, to read about sin, to be exposed to sin in some ways and not to sin yourself.

[16 : 09] Or to spend time with people who maybe aren't trusting in Jesus yet and living for him. I think that's possible. Otherwise we wouldn't even be allowed to read the Bible, would we?

We wouldn't be allowed to read Judges or 1 Corinthians which are full of descriptions of people's sins. We wouldn't be allowed to work for non-believing bosses, would we?

Or stay married to unbelieving spouses, all of which Paul commands that we should do. So we don't want to go too far, but I'm just warning us that we shouldn't think that we are too pious to be untouchable and we're not to be gullible in taking in sinful values into our lives in just little doses, in welcoming evil into our circle of trust, in our homes, on our tellies.

Paul in that same passage in Ephesians says, all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you as is proper among saints.

Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk, nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. It's not good enough to say, is it, I'm not doing those things that other people do, but I'll watch them do them on telly.

[17 : 41] I'll watch them do those things for my entertainment, or I'll listen to their jokes about those things, or I'll let them set the tone for how I think about those things.

We need to be aware of that. Somebody once said that the devil doesn't want to fight the church, he wants to join the church, and he'll do that, won't he, by cuddling up to us on the sofa, cuddling up to nice, good, godly people, where just the little things can change the atmosphere of your home and of your mind, into a place where shameful things are made slightly more tolerable and even come to promote their practice.

Just a little leaven can leaven the whole lump. So if we're honest, we're all a bit like Jehoshaphat, aren't we? We're all susceptible, we're all open to corruption from outside and from our own hearts. We're all naive. And that leads us to our last point. It's refreshing to see a good king. It's disappointing to see a naive king. But finally and wonderfully, we rejoice to have an impeccable king.

We rejoice to have an impeccable king. In all of this, we realise we don't just need a king who has the rightful rule, rightful legal rule over us.

[19 : 10] We don't even need a good king. We need a perfect king. And actually, even more than that, we don't even need just a perfect king, but a king who is impossible to be made imperfect, if that makes sense.

A good king who cannot be made bad. That's the problem with Jehoshaphat. king who cannot be tainted and cannot be influenced.

Because if he's no better than us in that way, if he's just as naive and as affected by evil as us, then he can't possibly save us, can he? No, his holiness and his goodness needs to be unchanging to even the most minute degree.

And so quite simply, one kings at the end here is giving us a desire for King Jesus. And I use the word impeccable to describe him.

I think we've lost the sense of what that word actually means. It means that something is not just good, not even perfect, but actually it's impossible to make it any less than perfect.

[20 : 26] That's what impeccable means. And King Jesus is impeccable. He is a king who came into contact with a dark world, but the darkness could not overcome him.

He was in immediate contact with wickedness and evil all around him all of the time, wasn't he? Yet he could never ever in the slightest degree be contaminated by it.

He could never be influenced by evil. evil. Jesus came close to this world and he was in this world and yet all of the time he remained holy from the evil of this world.

Peter says that he did no sin. John says that in him is no sin. Paul said that he knew no sin.

Hebrews says that he was without sin. he can sit and eat with the nastiest grossest people in the world. He can sit with tax collectors and sinners like us.

[21 : 35] Yet Hebrews says that he is holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens. And that means that his rule is perfect and wonderful because it is incorruptible not just good, not even perfect, but impossible to make bad, not even slightly.

Because no one can master him, no one can influence him. This is what the church has taught about the impeccability of Jesus. It means not just that Jesus didn't sin, but that he cannot sin, that he cannot possibly be made to sin.

Now, I wonder what you think about that. We often mention the fact that Hebrews says that Jesus is able to sympathise with us because he was tempted in every way that we are and that's wonderfully true.

And yet at the same time there is a sense where he wasn't tempted in exactly the same ways that we are. it's that he isn't tempted by his own internal desires within him or his inner proneness to

wander away from God like we are.

He didn't have a sinful flesh like we do which wages a war against our souls. He's never tempted in that way. He's only tempted by evil outside of himself seeking to influence him.

[23 : 15] and get a hold of him. But no one could do that with Jesus and it was impossible to do that with Jesus. Being impeccable though doesn't mean that he wasn't tempted from the outside.

It's like saying just because an army cannot be defeated you can't attack it. Jesus was attacked from the outside but his own voluntary resistance to those attacks was impeccable.

He could not be broken. Sin had no place with him. It couldn't have. It was impossible for death to hold him. Sin had no grip on him.

Now as we close just on a slight tangent King Solomon and King Jehoshaphat that the sign of their success was to control the seas.

Solomon did it and Jehoshaphat for all of his goodness failed. And all through the Old Testament the leader who can control the dark forces of the sea is supreme isn't he?

[24 : 27] that's the hope of the Old Testament that the sea was kind of a picture of evil and it's the hope at the end of Revelation isn't it? In the new creation where the sea where evil is no more it's removed because the Lord Jesus is in control.

Jehoshaphat was a disappointment because he got wrecked by the storms of the sea. Solomon was great because he managed to dodge those storms but Jesus is all the more glorious because he doesn't even have to dodge them does he?

He is impeccable and as the driftwood of Jehoshaphat's ships flows into the meds Jesus' boat reaches the other side and there is so much in that because he doesn't even have to dodge the wind and waves he commands them because nobody or nothing commands or masters him.

Nobody influences him or corrupts him or taints him in his power. He is impeccable and so he can deal with the dirt and the failures and the taints of our own hearts and lives, can't he?

From the outside and from the inside. In God's law we're told that if you touch something unclean you become unclean yourself.

[25 : 56] If you touch a leper you become unclean. The lesson is that sin is contagious isn't it? It spreads. We're so easily influenced.

But do you remember Jesus is the king who defies the way that normally works. Remember when Jesus comes and touches unclean things, he comes and touches an unclean leper in the gospels, what should happen?

Jesus should become unclean shouldn't he? But instead of that he ends up making the leper clean. From him flows righteousness to his people.

He imparts righteousness without himself becoming unrighteous. He is close to us but he is always holy.

we are living in a world full of selfishness and evil and wickedness aren't we today? Of injustice and fear and war. And it's really refreshing when somebody good comes along who is a good leader in our world but no man or woman is incorruptible are they?

[27 : 13] Peter wasn't this morning. You and I aren't. we're all prone to letting the Lord down so what we need is something more than a good king and a good person.

We need a perfect king and even more than that we need an impeccable king and we need Jesus. Let's pray.

Amen.