



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Words from a godly man with application for today



Matthew Henry's comments on the Lord's rebuke to Jehoshaphat because of his sinful alliance with Ahab the murderous persecutor of God's people.

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CHRONICLES CHAPTER 19

We have here a further account of the good reign of Jehoshaphat,

- I. His return in peace to Jerusalem, 2Ch 19:1.
- II. The reproof given him for his league with Ahab, and his acting in conjunction with him, 2Ch 19:2-3.
Verse 1. through verse 4.

Here is,

I. The great favour God showed to Jehoshaphat,

1. In bringing him back in safety from his dangerous expedition with Ahab, which had like to have cost him dearly (2Ch 19:1): *He returned to his house in peace*. Notice is taken of this to intimate,

(1.) That he fared better than he had expected. He had been in imminent peril, and yet came home in peace. Whenever we return in peace to our houses we ought to acknowledge God's providence in preserving our going out and our coming in. But, if we have been kept through more than ordinary dangers, we are in a special manner bound to be thankful. There was but a step perhaps between us and death, and yet we are alive.

(2.) That he fared better than he deserved. He was out of the way of his duty, had been out upon an expedition which he could not well account for to God and his conscience, and yet he returned in peace; for God is not extreme to mark what we do amiss, nor does he withdraw his protection every time we forfeit it.

(3.) That he fared better than Ahab king of Israel did, who was brought home slain. Though Jehoshaphat had said to Ahab, *I am as thou art*, God distinguished him; for he knows and owns *the way of the righteous*, but *the way of the ungodly shall perish*. Distinguishing mercies are very obliging. here were two kings in the field together, *one taken and the other left*, one brought home in blood, the other in peace.

2. In sending him a reproof for his affinity with Ahab. It is a great mercy to be made sensible of our faults, and to be told in time wherein we have erred, that we may repent and amend the error before it be too late. The prophet by whom the reproof is sent is Jehu the son of Hanani. The father was an eminent prophet in the last reign, as appeared by Asa's putting him in the stocks for his plain dealing; yet the son was not afraid to reprove another king. Paul would have his son Timothy not only discouraged, but animated by his sufferings, 2Ti 3:11,14.



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(1.) The prophet told him plainly that he had done very ill in joining with Ahab:

"Shouldest thou, a godly man, help the ungodly, give them a hand of fellowship, and lend them a hand of assistance?"

Or,

"Shouldest thou love those that hate the Lord; wilt thou lay those in thy bosom whom God beholds afar off?"

It is the black character of wicked people that they are *haters of God*, Ro 1:30. Idolaters are so reputed in the second commandment; and therefore it is not for those that love God to take delight in them or contract an intimacy with them. *Do I not hate those*, says David, *that hate thee?* Ps 139:21,22. Those whom the grace of God has dignified ought not to debase themselves. Let God's people be of God's mind.

(2.) That God was displeased with him for doing this:

"There is wrath upon thee from before the Lord, and thou must, by repentance, make thy peace with him, or it will be the worse for thee."

He did so, and God's anger was turned away. Yet his trouble, as recorded in the next chapter, was a rebuke to him for meddling with strife that belonged not to him. If he be so fond of war, he shall have enough of it. And the great mischief which his seed after him fell into by the house of Ahab was the just punishment of his affinity with that house.

(3.) Yet he took notice of that which was praiseworthy, as it is proper for us to do when we give a reproof (2Ch 19:3):

"There are good things found in thee; and therefore, though God be displeased with thee, he does not, he will not, cast thee off."

His abolishing idolatry with a heart fixed for God and engaged to seek him was a good thing, which God accepted and would have him go on with, notwithstanding the displeasure he had now incurred.

II. The return of duty which Jehoshaphat made to God for this favour. He took the reproof well, was not wroth with the seer as his father was, but submitted. *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness.* See what effect the reproof had upon him.

1. He *dwelt at Jerusalem* (2Ch 19:4), minded his own business at home, and would not expose himself by paying any more such visits to Ahab. *Rebuke a wise man, and he will be yet wiser, and will take warning*, Pr 9:8-9.



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2. To atone (as I may say) for the visit he had paid to Ahab, he made a pious profitable visitation of his own kingdom: He *went out through the people* in his own person from Beersheba in the south to Mount Ephraim in the north, and *brought them back to the Lord God of their fathers*, that is, did all he could towards recovering them.

(1.) By what the prophet said he perceived that his former attempts for reformation were well pleasing to God, and therefore he revived them, and did what was then left undone. It is good when commendations thus quicken us to our duty, and when the more we are praised for doing well the more vigorous we are in well-doing.

(2.) Perhaps he found that his late affinity with the idolatrous house of Ahab and kingdom of Israel had had a bad influence upon his own kingdom.

Many, we may suppose, were emboldened to revolt to idolatry when they saw even their reforming king so intimate with idolaters; and therefore he thought himself doubly obliged to do all he could to restore them. If we truly repent of our sin, we shall do our utmost to repair the damage we have any way done by it to religion or the souls of others. We are particularly concerned to recover those that have fallen into sin, or been hardened in it, by our example.