

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Kings: The Kings Of Israel And Judah From Solomon To The Babylonian Captivity

III. The Latter Era Of The Divided Kingdom, 2 Kings 2:1-27:41

II. Enduring The Hardship Of Facing Debilitating Apostasy (2 Kings 23:1-30; 2 Chronicles 35:20-27)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

The defection from the Christian faith known as apostasy is growing to the extent that the realization of that fact is beginning to wear on people, a matter we can readily illustrate (as follows):

(1) In the secular realm, a senior political analyst for the Washington Examiner, Michael Barone in his piece, "The 'Lemon' is squeezed dry" (Republican-American, July 2, 2019, p. 6A) lamented that in "(t)oday's America," the "news media, and university, corporate and government elites, stigmatize religious belief and expression."

(2) We face it in the Church: (a) a member last Sunday mentioned the news that the Associated Press story, "Carter Says Trump Lost, Russia Won" (Ibid., June 29, 2019, p. 5A) reported, namely, that "Former President Jimmy Carter" recently "said . . . President Donald Trump actually lost the 2016 election and is president only because of Russian interference." In reality, "U. S. intelligence agencies" have found "no evidence . . . that votes were changed improperly," Ibid. The member thus asked why self-professing evangelical and former U. S. President Jimmy Carter would use his influence with people to make such a charge when no hard evidence supports it, and I had to reply that the former President, like many evangelicals today, now holds to a number of unbiblical positions!

(b) Another member recently expressed concern over a survey by the Barna group that found 7 of the top 10 of the most post-Christian cities in America were in New England or the Northeast, and that the Hartford-New Haven belt was number 6 ahead of even the notoriously ungodly San Francisco Bay area! ("The Most Post-Christian Cities In America," July 11, 2017; barna.com) The member said it was not comforting to hear that we live in such a realm!

Need: *So we ask, "What does God advise that we do to endure the hardship of facing debilitating apostasy?!"*

- I. Though Josiah had responded so positively to his first exposure to written Scripture, Judah's apostasy was so advanced that God predicted He would STILL punish Judah, but out of respect for Josiah's response, God would postpone that judgment until Josiah had passed away, 2 Kings 22:1-20.**
- II. Deeply moved by this news, Josiah set his heart to HELP JUDAH, reestablishing godly worship both in Judah and in Israel's land to the north that was then under Assyrian control, 2 Kings 23:1-24 ESV:**
 - A. Josiah first called for the whole nation of Judah to gather at the temple to hear the reading of the Book of the Law he had heard, and then he and the people made a mutual covenant to obey God's Word, 2 Kings 23:1-3.
 - B. Following this covenant, Josiah then purged the land of idols in accord with Scripture, 2 Kings 23:4-14:
 1. He began with the temple, bringing out the idolatrous articles of Baal in it and burning them in the Kidron valley and carrying their ashes for deposit at Bethel, fully ridding Judah of Baalism, 2 Kings 23:4, 6.
 2. Josiah then deposed the pagan priests that former kings had appointed at the high places of worship and broke down the houses of male cult prostitutes who were in the temple of the Lord, 2 Kings 23:5, 7-8.
 3. King Josiah eradicated and desecrated every bit of idolatry in the temple and the land, 2 Kings 23:9-14.
 - C. Josiah even ventured into the Assyrian-controlled area of the fallen Northern Kingdom of Israel to purge it, fulfilling prophecy by the prophet from Judah made long before Josiah's era, 2 Kings 23:15-20.
 - D. Josiah then led Judah to observe the Passover in such conformity to the Law that no Passover like it had been observed since the era of the judges, 2 Kings 23:21-23; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to 2 Kings 23:22.
 - E. Even mediums, necromancers, common household gods and all such items were put away by Josiah, v. 23-24.
- III. Josiah's reforms were so great in scope and depth, he became known for doing more to turn to the Lord with ALL His HEART, SOUL and MIGHT than ANY OTHER KING in JUDAH, 2 Kings 23:25.**
- IV. However, Josiah FAILED to MANAGE his ZEAL so that he came to DISOBEY SCRIPTURE, leading to his untimely death to the the grief of the godly, 2 Kings 23:29-30 with 2 Chronicles 35:20-27:**
 - A. When Pharaoh Neco of Egypt advanced his army northward along the Mediterranean coastline in order to help Assyria fight Babylon, Josiah went out to fight Pharaoh to "frustrate any hope Assyria or Egypt might have had of regaining strength and attacking Judah," 2 Kings 23:28-29a; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 584.
 - B. The 2 Chronicles 35:20-21 record of this event reports that Pharaoh sent messengers to Josiah, indicating he did not want to fight Judah since he was headed north to fight another enemy, and that Josiah's God had actually commanded Pharaoh to hurry, explaining his use of Judah's seacoast to make his military advance.

- C. The Book of the Law Josiah had heard read to him at Deuteronomy 20:10-15 (Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Deut. 20:10-15) directed that if they approached a nation that was not of the Canaanite peoples in the Promised Land to fight against that nation, the Hebrews were to try to make peace with that nation before fighting against it.
- D. Since Egypt was a nation from **outside** the Promised Land, **Pharaoh's** efforts to **AVOID war with Judah** left Josiah at least in violation of the spirit of Deuteronomy 20:10-15 were he to attack Pharaoh, and violating Scripture by entering into such a conflict was to invite sure defeat in that conflict, Deuteronomy 28:15, 25a.
- E. However, Josiah was **so motivated** to see God **bless** Judah by eradicating idolatry not only from his own nation of Judah, but even from the former nation of Israel that was then held in Assyrian control, his **zeal** to help Judah **controlled** him, and he even disguised himself [as did wicked Ahab] so as not to be made an easy target to fight and defeat Pharaoh for what **Josiah** believed was in Judah's best interests, 2 Chronicles 35:22.
- F. Thus, lacking God's blessing for disobeying Deuteronomy 20:10-15, Josiah was wounded by Pharaoh's archers, and though this injury caused Josiah to realize God was not blessing his effort to fight Pharaoh so that he told his servants to take him away from the battlefield, he still died, 2 Chronicles 35:23-24a.
- G. All Judah and Jerusalem and even the prophet Jeremiah then lamented the loss of Josiah, for the godly realized that Josiah's passing meant God's judgment on Judah was only hastened, 2 Chron. 35:24b-25; 2 Kings 22:20.

Lesson: Upon hearing that God would wait to punish Judah until good king Josiah had passed, Josiah became so motivated to help Judah by purging it of idolatry that his zeal spilled over to protect the nation from an Egyptian army that did not want to fight him so that he fell victim by his zeal to violating Scripture in attacking Egypt. This sin only led to Josiah's early death and hastened God's judgment on Judah, much to the grief of the godly.

Application: (1) May we trust in Christ for salvation, John 3:16. (2) In facing debilitating apostasy, may we wisely manage our thinking that we not let our zeal cause us to violate Scripture and leave us adding to the problem!

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

To illustrate **how** to **apply** this sermon, we note that when the Apostle Paul wrote 2 Timothy, he was about to be martyred by Rome (2 Timothy 4:6; Ibid., Ryrie, p. 1716, "Intro. to the Second Letter of Paul to Timothy;" Ibid., p. 1723, "Intro. to the Letter of Paul to Titus"), so he urged Timothy to "suffer hardship together [with Paul] as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" in facing Rome's debilitating persecution. (2 Timothy 2:3; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 752)

To explain **how** Timothy was to do this, Paul gave three illustrations in 2 Timothy 2:4-6, that of a **soldier**, that of an **athlete** and that of a **farmer**, with rich applications on **wisely managing** one's thinking for blessing (as follows):

(1) First, like a **soldier**, the believer facing the hardship of apostasy must not entangle himself with otherwise acceptable, civilian pursuits, but stay focused on his calling from his Commanding Officer, God, 2 Timothy 2:4 ESV.

Josiah failed to do this: his zeal to help Judah by eradicating the nation's idolatry, including the idols up in Assyrian-held Israel, obeyed Scripture, for **Scripture** called for the removing of idols. However, **Scripture ALSO** did **not** allow Judah to attack Egypt if Egypt did **not** want war with Judah! Thus, letting his zeal control him left Josiah with mismanaged thinking that led him in spite of good intentions to disobey Scripture and thus face God's discipline!

(2) Second, like an **athlete**, the believer facing hardship in an apostate era must watch that his **methods** stay as upright as his **motives** lest he disqualify himself in his efforts, 2 Timothy 2:5. Josiah's zeal led him to **violate Scripture** as to his **METHOD, fighting Egypt, regardless** if his **MOTIVE, helping Judah, was right**. Josiah's life was thus lost in God's discipline, and the godly grieved his loss as divine judgment on Judah was thus only hastened.

(3) Third, like a **farmer**, the hard-working expositor of Scripture like Timothy of necessity is the first to partake of the spiritual benefits that his exposition yields, 2 Timothy 2:6.

Josiah, similar to Timothy, was required as a king by Deuteronomy 17:18-19a to **study Scripture daily** with the **result** that he would **revere** God and **heed** His Word **precisely**, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, and **doing** so would **bring** him **long life** (Deuteronomy 17:19b-20). Josiah failed to study Scripture daily so as to obey it **precisely**, so his great zeal for good so consumed him that he ended up violating the very Word of God he had begun so zealously to heed, resulting in his premature death and hastening the fall of Judah to the grief of the godly.

[Applied to us, we must keep focused on God's SCRIPTURAL calling, methodology and content to COUNTER the "false" propaganda we face and even moderate excessive emotional inflammation we get from "conservative" realms, that we might MANAGE our thinking and emotions to stay in God's will for blessing!]

May we trust in Christ for salvation. Then, to handle the hardship of facing debilitating apostasy, may we WISELY MANAGE our THINKING (1) by staying occupied with our calling from God, (2) by watching that our methods stay as upright as our motives and (3) by daily exposing our minds and hearts to Scripture.