

Knowing God in the Word

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. Philippians 3:10.

Jehu's Way Part 1

I Corinthians 9:24 reads:

24. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

When we consider this verse, we see that God's desire for those who follow Him is that they run in such a way as to obtain a prize. Yet he points out that only one receives the prize in any given race. Many run in races, but many less are winners.

25. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

Here, the Holy Spirit through Paul points out that those who compete for the prize condition themselves to run the race. When we apply this to our lives as believers, we realize that running after God as He desires requires conditioning on our part as well. There are certain things that are essential for training believers, such as Bible study, prayer, and fellowship with other believers. Those who neglect the training are not prepared to run in such a way as to receive the prize.

26. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.

One who has been "temperate in all things," one who has conditioned himself, does not run uncertainly or fight as one who beats the air. In our race after the Lord, it seems that many Christians spend a good deal of time running in the wrong directions, or beating at the air uselessly. When we are not trained properly in God's truth and have not developed a close relationship with Him, we end up looking unprofessional and ridiculous when we try to run God's race.

27. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Now Paul reveals that he does discipline his body and brings it into subjection so that, though he has preached to others, he himself shall not become disqualified. So there are those to are disqualified for the prize that the Lord holds out to us through the fact that they simply have not disciplined themselves properly to be able to run a good race.

Examples around us abound of those who do not run in such a way as to obtain the prize. Many weight themselves down with the religious traditions and commandments of the world, and thus cannot run properly due to the burden they must carry. Others spend little time conditioning, and so run as those who are inexperienced and out of shape. Others seem to just become tired of it all and drop out of running altogether. Perhaps most sad of all is those whom Paul desired never to be: those who started out running well, but who, through one reason or another, did not maintain the kind of race they should have run, and thus drop out of contention for the prize.

There are numerous examples in the Word of God of those who, though they truly had a relationship to God and had started out at first running the race He had for them, eventually

decided that other things in their lives were more important and dropped out of the race that was before them. This is always sad to see, but I think we can learn many valuable lessons from it when we come upon it. In this message, I would like to examine the life of one such man in the Old Testament, and why, though he started running so well for the LORD, he still eventually dropped out of the race and ended up disqualifying himself. The example I would like to look at is that of the man Jehu.

At the time of Jehu, the children of Israel were split into two, distinct nations. The one, the southern nation of Judah, stayed loyal to the kingly line of David, and had as their capital the city of Jerusalem. The northern kingdom, often called just Israel, broke off from the line of David under a man named Jeroboam, and had as their capital during much of their existence the city of Samaria.

Now Jeroboam, after he broke off from the tribes of the southern kingdom of Judah, realized that he had a problem to deal with. The religion that God had given Israel demanded that, in order to worship Him, they had to go up a minimum of three times a year to the place that He would choose in order to worship Him there. The place He had eventually chosen was the city of Jerusalem, and the temple that was there was the only rightful place for an Israelite to go on the holy feast days of the year to worship God as He demanded. So Jeroboam got to thinking about this, and we read in I Kings 12:26-27:

26. And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: 27. If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah."

Jeroboam realized that, since he had broken his people off from the nation of Judah, that if the people returned to Judah and Jerusalem to worship God as the law demanded, that they might then regret their rebellion and the split between the tribes. If they did, they could revolt against Jeroboam and return to the line of David, their former rulers. Jeroboam knew that, as a rebel, his life would be forfeit at that point.

Jeroboam should have trusted the Lord in this. He had received the kingship over ten of the tribes of Israel from God, as we read in I Kings 11:30-31, when he had an encounter with Ahijah the prophet.

30. Then Ahijah took hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. 31. And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to you.'"

So God was going to split the nation of Israel into two parts, leaving two tribes for the family of David to rule over, and giving ten tribes to the family of Jeroboam. These two countries are often called Judah, which is the two tribes, and Israel, which is the ten tribes.

Now on top of this, Jeroboam receives a promise from God, in verse 38 of I Kings 11.

38. "Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you."

So Jeroboam had no real reason to be afraid like this. God had given him the throne, and if he had followed God, He would have seen to it that his fears did not come to pass. Yet Jeroboam was not willing to trust God. Instead, he came up with his own plan to solve this problem, as we read back in I Kings 12:28-30.

28. Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" 29. And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30. Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan.

To solve his problem, Jeroboam asks for advice. Yet he asks the wrong people, for he did not ask the Lord! The result is that he set up two golden calves, similar to the one Israel worshipped in the wilderness under Moses when they broke God's covenant with them. Then, he gives the people an excuse to worship these calves, saying that it is too much for them to go up to Jerusalem to worship. Of course, this was just an excuse to get them to worship these calves instead of the Lord. But the people listened to him, and many of them worshipped these calves, as Jeroboam commanded. And the hypocrisy of his argument is clear in the fact that some of them traveled all the way to Dan to worship the calf there. If they could travel to Dan, then why not Jerusalem? Obviously, this was just an excuse for Jeroboam to keep them away from Jerusalem, and an excuse for the people to worship false gods who would allow them to sin.

So the policy of Jeroboam continued for a long time in Israel. Jeroboam's line of kings came to an end through God's punishment because of what he did. Another kingly line rose up after him, but they followed this same policy, and likewise were destroyed. Now, a third line of kings reigned in Israel, descended from the man Omri. This line was worse than those who came before, not only worshipping these golden calves, but also introducing the worship of the false god Baal into Israel.

So finally we come to the story of the man Jehu in II Kings 9. God has a new plan, and He sets it in motion by His prophet, Elisha.

1. And Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets, and said to him, "Get yourself ready, take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth Gilead. 2. Now when you arrive at that place, look there for Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, and go in and make him rise up from among his associates, and take him to an inner room. 3. Then take the flask of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, 'Thus says the LORD: "I have anointed you king over Israel."' Then open the door and flee, and do not delay."

God chooses this man Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat to start a new line of kings over the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel. Hopefully, this line will prove more faithful to God than the three that have come before it. So Elisha sends his servant to give this news to Jehu.

4. So the young man, the servant of the prophet, went to Ramoth Gilead. 5. And when he arrived, there were the captains of the army sitting; and he said, "I have a message for you, Commander." Jehu said, "For which one of us?" And he said, "For you, Commander."

So the servant finds Jehu. We learn here that Jehu was no small man already, being the Commander of Israel's army. Yet God is going to promote him to king, which is quite a step up from Commander!

6. Then he arose and went into the house. And he poured the oil on his head, and said to him, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I have anointed you king over the people of the LORD, over Israel. 7. You shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. 8. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; and I will cut off from Ahab all the males in Israel, both bond and free. 9. So I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. 10. The dogs shall eat Jezebel on the plot of ground at Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her.'" And he opened the door and fled.

When they are alone in the house, Elisha's servant carries out the commission he was given. He anoints Jehu, and promises him that the Lord has chosen to make him king of Israel in the place of the house of Ahab. (Though Omri started this line, Ahab was the most famous king in it, and so the kingly line is called after him.) Also, the LORD gives Jehu a command. He is to strike down the house of Ahab his master. The LORD commands this to avenge the blood of His servants the prophets and the blood of all the servants of the LORD shed by Ahab's wicked wife Jezebel. This is what God wants, and He commands Jehu to do it, telling him of the destruction He has determined to bring against Ahab's house and the queen Jezebel. Then, following his instructions, the servant of Elisha flees, leaving Jehu to ponder over the things that had been told him. He certainly had a lot to think about, now that he had received this message from the LORD!

11. Then Jehu came out to the servants of his master, and one said to him, "Is all well? Why did this madman come to you?"

Jehu comes out to the other servants of his master. I cannot help but wonder if he had wiped himself off, or if this anointing oil was still dripping from his head. At any rate, the others are curious, and one asks him what is going on. We see that these men have little respect for God's prophets, for he merely calls the prophet a "madman."

And he said to them, "You know the man and his babble."

Jehu almost seems to laugh off what had happened to him, yet I do not think that is really what he was doing. Jehu liked the idea of being king, yet he knew that a traitor could certainly be executed, and he had no desire to die. Thus, he is sort of feeling out his men, to see how they will respond to the news that he has now been crowned king. To do this, he belittles what the man said, so if it is necessary, he can just laugh it off with them, and not be considered guilty of any treason.

12. And they said, "A lie! Tell us now."

These men protest. They do not know this prophet, or the kinds of things he says. This is a sad commentary on the state of Israel at the time. We have little doubt that they did not know the kinds of things God says, or have any idea of what He is likely to do. So they again question Jehu, now more curious than ever to know what was going on.

So he said, "Thus and thus he spoke to me, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "I have anointed you king over Israel."'"

Jehu decides just to bite the bullet and say what had been told him. He has already set up his out, so if his men respond with anger and condemnation, he can just give the excuse that he did not believe the prophet anyway, and protest his loyalty. Yet Jehu had a promise from God, and we know that He would not abandon Jehu to death here. Still, Jehu knew little of God, just like his men. This was his opportunity to find out.

13. Then each man hastened to take his garment and put it under him on the top of the steps; and they blew trumpets, saying, "Jehu is king!"

Jehu's men waste no time upon learning this. Immediately, they declare him their king. Part of this is certainly that the wicked and selfish house of Ahab inspired little loyalty. Part of it may have been that Jehu was a man who was popular with his men. But mostly, we know that this had God's hand in it, for it was His will to make Jehu king.

14. So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, conspired against Joram.

So Jehu conspires against King Joram. Yet remember that this was not some sinful rebellion or scheme thought up by Jehu to revolt against his lord. Rather, this was a rebellion planned and commanded by God Himself, Who had the perfect right to place any king he wanted on the throne

of Israel, and to remove any king from that throne that He so desired. Jehu was acting in accordance with the will of God when he started this rebellion.

(Now Joram had been defending Ramoth Gilead, he and all Israel, against Hazael king of Syria. 15. But King Joram had returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds which the Syrians had inflicted on him when he fought with Hazael king of Syria.)

So we read that all this was happening at a time when Israel was at war. King Joram and the army were fighting against Syria, their neighbors to the north. Joram had been wounded during a battle, and now was recovering at Jezreel, the hometown of Ahab's family.

And Jehu said, "If you are so minded, let no one leave or escape from the city to go and tell it in Jezreel."

Finding the army willing to cooperate with making him king, Jehu now commands them to be certain that no spy of Joram's can leave the city to warn him of their conspiracy. He wants to take the king by surprise.

16. So Jehu rode in a chariot and went to Jezreel, for Joram was laid up there; and Ahaziah king of Judah had come down to see Joram.

Now Ahaziah the king of Judah also enters into the picture. He was the grandson of Jehoshaphat, a righteous king. Yet Jehoshaphat had made one grave mistake. For some reason, he had allied himself with the wicked family of Ahab, perhaps in an attempt to bring Israel and Judah closer together. He had allowed his son to marry Ahab's daughter, and so Ahaziah was now related not just to David's line, but also to the line of wicked Ahab. Thus, Ahaziah is Joram's cousin, and comes to visit him in his illness.

17. Now a watchman stood on the tower in Jezreel, and he saw the company of Jehu as he came, and said, "I see a company of men."

And Joram said, "Get a horseman and send him to meet them, and let him say, 'Is it peace?'"

A watchman sees Jehu's company approaching and reports it to Joram. He sends out a horseman to see if this company is coming peacefully. Of course, he hoped that they were.

18. So the horseman went to meet him, and said, "Thus says the king: 'Is it peace?'"

And Jehu said, "What have you to do with peace? Turn around and follow me."

So the watchman reported, saying, "The messenger went to them, but is not coming back."

At Jehu's command, the very messenger of Joram switches sides and joins with him in his conspiracy. Jehu's rebellion did indeed have the blessing of God!

19. Then he sent out a second horseman who came to them, and said, "Thus says the king: 'Is it peace?'"

And Jehu answered, "What have you to do with peace? Turn around and follow me."

Joram sends out another messenger with the same result.

20. So the watchman reported, saying, "He went up to them and is not coming back; and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi, for he drives furiously!"

Now the company is getting close, and the watchman is able to correctly identify the leader as Jehu, recognizing him by his reckless driving.

21. Then Joram said, "Make ready." And his chariot was made ready. Then Joram king of Israel and

Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot; and they went out to meet Jehu, and met him on the property of Naboth the Jezreelite.

Joram has no reason to suspect any danger from Jehu, his army commander. Thus, he goes out to meet him in his chariot, taking his cousin Ahaziah along with him.

We could almost start to feel sorry for these men, riding to their doom. Yet the Spirit here reminds us of exactly what is going on here. For Joram and Ahaziah meet Jehu, not in any random location, but on the very property of Naboth the Jezreelite. Naboth was a man who owned a field close by Ahab's that he wanted for his own. Yet Naboth had not been willing to sell the field to Ahab since it was his family's possession, given to them by God. So Jezebel, Ahab's wife, had had Naboth murdered, and then Ahab had stolen the field for himself. This had angered God, and he had promised both to have Ahab killed on that same plot of ground, and to bring an end to his wicked kingly line. Now, on this same plot of ground, both his wicked grandson and his kingly line are to come to an end. So we are reminded that this is all justice, and is working out as God desired it to.

22. Now it happened, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" So he answered, "What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many?"

Joram is probably wondering if an army is pursuing Jehu, so he asks him again if he comes in peace. Now, Jehu reveals himself to Joram, reminding him of the wickedness of his grandmother and all the evil things she had caused in Israel.

23. Then Joram turned around and fled, and said to Ahaziah, "Treachery, Ahaziah!" 24. Now Jehu drew his bow with full strength and shot Jehoram between his arms; and the arrow came out at his heart, and he sank down in his chariot.

Joram tries to flee, crying out a warning to his cousin, but it is too late. Jehu shoots him with an arrow, and kills him. Note here that "Jehoram" is a Hebrew variant of the name "Joram," so it means the same man.

25. Then Jehu said to Bidkar his captain, "Pick him up, and throw him into the tract of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite; for remember, when you and I were riding together behind Ahab his father, that the LORD laid this burden upon him: 26. 'Surely I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons,' says the LORD, 'and I will repay you in this plot,' says the LORD. Now therefore, take and throw him on the plot of ground, according to the word of the LORD."

Jehu seems to know very well where exactly they are, and his mind goes back to the word of the LORD that he had heard many years before when they served Ahab. (Notice that there is no word for "grandfather" in Hebrew, so they just called Ahab Joram's "father," even though he was actually his grandfather.) He remembers that the LORD had promised vengeance against Ahab on that very plot of ground that he had stolen. Now, through no plan of his own, Jehu realizes that he has met Joram on that very plot of ground, and he realizes that the LORD truly was behind what he had just done. Thus, he commands Joram's body to be thrown there on that plot of ground, acknowledging that this was a fulfillment of what the LORD had said. Jehu is now starting to realize that the LORD's words are coming true. This was more than just a convenient excuse for him to seize the kingship. The LORD truly is with him.

27. But when Ahaziah king of Judah saw this, he fled by the road to Beth Haggan. So Jehu pursued him, and said, "Shoot him also in the chariot." And they shot him at the Ascent of Gur, which is by Ibleam. Then he fled to Megiddo, and died there. 28. And his servants carried him in the chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his tomb with his fathers in the City of David. 29. In the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab, Ahaziah had become king over Judah.

Now, at Jehu's command, Jehu kills Ahaziah king of Judah as well. He was part of Ahab's wicked family, and so falls under Ahab's curse. This is what came of Jehoshaphat's ill-advised alliance with the wicked king Ahab! It would have been far better for his family if he had never involved them with this wicked line. Yet perhaps his advisors told him that an alliance with Israel, their close kinsmen, was the best thing to do. Far better it would have been, however, if Jehoshaphat had asked God's advice instead!

30. Now when Jehu had come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she put paint on her eyes and adorned her head, and looked through a window.

One thing we cannot accuse the wicked Jezebel of, and that is cowardice. She is bold to the last, just as she was bold in dishonoring the LORD in every way she could in support of her own, false god Baal. Now, she hears of Jehu and what he has done. She responds by painting her face and going boldly to her window to speak to Jehu. Perhaps she thought that her best hope was a show of strength and confidence against this man. Or perhaps she had been obeyed and catered to for so long that she simply didn't believe that Jehu would actually carry out God's judgment against her.

31. Then, as Jehu entered at the gate, she said, "Is it peace, Zimri, murderer of your master?"

Jezebel mocks Jehu, God's choice for the throne, by comparing him to Zimri, the man who had conspired against the kingly line of Israel that had reigned before Omri and Ahab's line. He had succeeded in destroying the former royal family, but then Omri and the army had come and killed him and brought an end to his schemes. Now Jezebel mocks Jehu with this story, seeming to suggest that her family will do the same thing to his attempt to take the throne. But Jezebel's mockery was an empty boast, for the LORD was against her, and His plan was to punish her for her many wicked deeds.

32. And he looked up at the window, and said, "Who is on my side? Who?" So two or three eunuchs looked out at him.

Jehu calls for anyone to join him, and two or three eunuchs, Jezebel's own servants, respond! This is how empty her boast was, and how little power her wicked family really had. Her own closest servants were willing to betray her! Yet remember once again that the LORD was behind this, and He was bringing Jehu success in everything he tried to do in this conspiracy.

33. Then he said, "Throw her down." So they threw her down, and some of her blood spattered on the wall and on the horses; and he trampled her underfoot.

Jehu calls upon the eunuchs who responded to his call to throw Jezebel down out of her window. They do this, and Jehu tramples her. This was a fitting end for this wicked queen, a great enemy of the LORD.

34. And when he had gone in, he ate and drank. Then he said, "Go now, see to this accursed woman, and bury her, for she was a king's daughter."

It seems that Jehu, after he has eaten and drunk, feels in a compassionate mood. He commands his servants to go and bury Jezebel, noting that she was a king's daughter, feeling perhaps that that earns her the right to some dignity in death.

35. So they went to bury her, but they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. 36. Therefore they came back and told him. And he said, "This is the word of the LORD, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 'On the plot of ground at Jezreel dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; 37. and the corpse of Jezebel shall be as refuse on the surface of the field, in the plot at Jezreel, so that they shall not say, "Here lies Jezebel."'"

The servants go to carry out this command, but they find nothing left of Jezebel but her skull and feet and the palms of her hands. They report this to Jehu, and he realizes again that this is the work of the LORD, for he remembers that He spoke through Elijah the prophet that dogs would eat Jezebel on the plot of ground at Jezreel. Now, this very thing has happened, and Jehu realizes once again that the word of the LORD has come to pass through him. It is becoming more and more clear to him that God is behind all that is taking place.

So, at this point we see Jehu running well. He is carrying out the mission the LORD gave him, he is seeing how the LORD's word is being fulfilled again and again in all that he is accomplishing, and he is growing in faith both in what the LORD can do and in the plan the LORD has for him to accomplish. At this point Jehu seems to be running very well. Might we all respond this obediently if God gave us a mission to carry out! And yet, as we will see later, Jehu did not continue to the end running as well as he started out. We will see how far he was willing to run with God and what sidetracked him in our next message.

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