

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 2

In our last message, we were illustrating Paul's command in I Corinthians 9:24-27 to run in such a way as to receive a prize and not be disqualified. We were doing this by examining a story from the Old Testament of a man who began to run after the LORD very well, only to be disqualified later when he refused to continue that run after Him as he should have. The example we were looking at was that of the man Jehu.

In our last message, we saw how the king of Israel, Joram, was a wicked man and the heir of a line of kings that God had cursed and promised to destroy. Now Jehu, a man who had been the army commander, had been anointed by God's prophet and was told that he was to take the throne and carry out God's vengeance against the wicked house of Ahab that ruled before him. Jehu's men had enthusiastically embraced him as king when they heard of what the prophet had done, and then Jehu began to carry out the LORD's instructions to him. He had seen how the LORD had delivered the wicked king Joram to him to be killed in the very field of Naboth, a righteous man whom Ahab, Joram's grandfather, had murdered. He had then killed Joram's cousin, the wicked king of Judah, and had proceeded to kill Jezebel, the godless queen mother of Ahab's line, who had then been eaten by dogs according to the word of the LORD. Last time we had just seen that Jehu realized that Jezebel's being thus devoured was according to the word of the LORD regarding what would happen to her. Jehu has been seeing more and more how God is behind all the success he is having.

Now we continue the story in II Kings 10, as Jehu continues his campaign against the family of Ahab, carrying out the mission the LORD gave him to wipe them out.

1. Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. And Jehu wrote and sent letters to Samaria, to the rulers of Jezreel, to the elders, and to those who reared Ahab's sons, saying:

Here, we learn that Ahab had seventy sons. This probably included grandsons, and perhaps even great grandsons. Notice that they are at Samaria, the capital city. So Jehu writes letters to the rulers of Jezreel, who had charge of these sons. Take note here that these were the rulers of Jezreel, not of Samaria. Yet they were apparently in Samaria, and had charge of Ahab's family. So they were the rulers of Jezreel, but they were in Samaria with the royal family.

2. Now as soon as this letter comes to you, since your master's sons are with you, and you have chariots and horses, a fortified city also, and weapons, 3. choose the best qualified of your master's sons, set him on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house.

Jehu challenges these men to take him on, more or less. He tells them to choose whoever they think is most qualified of Ahab's line, set him on the throne, and fight for him.

4. But they were exceedingly afraid, and said, "Look, two kings could not stand up to him; how then can we stand?"

The rulers of Jezreel, however, are unwilling to take on Jehu. They are fearful of him, knowing that he has destroyed two kings, and they do not believe that they can stand against him. Once again

we can see the LORD's hand in this, for it was His will to set Jehu on the throne, and thus He once again works things out for him and against the wicked family of Ahab.

5. And he who was in charge of the house, and he who was in charge of the city, the elders also, and those who reared the sons, sent to Jehu, saying, "We are your servants, we will do all you tell us; but we will not make anyone king. Do what is good in your sight."

These rulers of Jezreel, along with those in charge of Samaria, offer themselves in service to Jehu, and refuse to stand for the family of Ahab.

6. Then he wrote a second letter to them, saying: If you are for me and will obey my voice, take the heads of the men, your master's sons, and come to me at Jezreel by this time tomorrow. Now the king's sons, seventy persons, were with the great men of the city, who were rearing them. 7. So it was, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons and slaughtered seventy persons, put their heads in baskets and sent them to him at Jezreel.

Jehu commands that, if they are on his side, they are to send him the seventy heads of these seventy sons of the king. Obediently, they do so. Remember, this may seem a bloody and violent deed of murder to us, yet this was all according to God's plan. He had promised vengeance upon Ahab's family, and it was His will that these men should die. This was all His judgment, not just Jehu's actions. Jehu was obeying the mandate God had given him to wipe out Ahab's wicked family.

8. Then a messenger came and told him, saying, "They have brought the heads of the king's sons." And he said, "Lay them in two heaps at the entrance of the gate until morning."

When he receives the heads, Jehu commands his servants to lay them in two heaps at the entrance of the gate of Jezreel in a grisly display. We will see his purpose for doing this in the next verse.

9. So it was, in the morning, that he went out and stood, and said to all the people, "You are righteous. Indeed I conspired against my master and killed him; but who killed all these?"

In the morning, Jehu speaks to the people of this city. He points out to them that, though he had conspired against his master and killed him, now their very leaders, the rulers of Jezreel, had helped him by slaughtering all these sons of the king. His point seems to be that their city is in this conspiracy with him now, and so they might as well help him wholeheartedly.

10. Know now that nothing shall fall to the earth of the word of the LORD which the LORD spoke concerning the house of Ahab; for the LORD has done what He spoke by His servant Elijah."

Jehu has indeed learned through all this. He realizes now that all this has happened by the word of the LORD, and he tells the people of Jezreel so. He claims, and rightfully so, that the LORD is on his side. What better reason for the people of Jezreel to join him could there be?

11. So Jehu killed all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men and his close acquaintances and his priests, until he left him none remaining.

It seems that Jehu's argument to the people of Jezreel worked, for they now join him in destroying all who remain of the house of Ahab. And this was in Jezreel, Ahab's hometown! The LORD was behind Jehu's conspiracy indeed, and no help was found anywhere for the wicked house of Ahab.

Yet here Jehu goes beyond his mandate, killing not just all the house of Ahab in Jezreel, but also his close acquaintances and his priests. The priests might have been rightfully killed if they were priests of false gods. Yet the LORD had never commanded Jehu to kill Ahab's close acquaintances. This would no doubt help strengthen Jehu's position, to get rid of anyone who was close to Ahab.

Yet the LORD had not commanded that Jehu do this, and it was a step beyond what he was supposed to do. Nothing will come of it now, but this was wrong of Jehu to do this, and the LORD will remember the killing of those whom He had not commanded Jehu to kill later.

Now, we come to a bit of a different event from what has come before.

12. And he arose and departed and went to Samaria. On the way, at Beth Eked of the Shepherds, 13. Jehu met with the brothers of Ahaziah king of Judah, and said, "Who are you?"

So they answered, "We are the brothers of Ahaziah; we have come down to greet the sons of the king and the sons of the queen mother."

14. And he said, "Take them alive!" So they took them alive, and killed them at the well of Beth Eked, forty-two men; and he left none of them.

These men, the brothers of Ahaziah, though they were royalty in the southern kingdom of Judah, were also descended from Ahab through his daughter, and so were part of God's promised vengeance upon the house of Ahab. Thus, Jehu orders that they be taken alive, and then executes them at the well of Beth Eked. Again, though this was a bloody act, it was all a part of God's plan, as Jehu well knew, and thus was a righteous act. Jehu was again acting in faith, carrying out God's will as he knew it to be.

Now, we read an interesting portion in the next verses.

15. Now when he departed from there, he met Jehonadab the son of Rechab, coming to meet him; and he greeted him and said to him, "Is your heart right, as my heart is toward your heart?"

And Jehonadab answered, "It is."

Jehu said, "If it is, give me your hand." So he gave him his hand, and he took him up to him into the chariot. 16. Then he said, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD." So they had him ride in his chariot.

Here we have the event recorded of Jehu meeting a man who apparently was his good friend. He takes this man Jehonadab, after learning for certain that he is on his side in the matter of destroying Ahab's family, up into his chariot, and then tells him, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD." We can sense Jehu's excitement here. He has been responding in faith and carrying out God's will, and every step of the way everything has opened up for him, and nothing has been able to stop him. Now, Jehu's heart is catching fire, and the excitement of serving the LORD is upon him. Now, he wants his friend Jehonadab to share in this with him, and to see his zeal for the LORD in action. It's like he's saying, "Just watch me, Jehonadab. See how great my zeal for the LORD is going to be. Just watch me!" We almost imagine him jumping up and down in his chariot as he says this, so eager is he to render further service to the LORD.

It is always a blessing, I think, to those of us who have known the LORD for a long time, to see the excitement and zeal of those who have come to the LORD only recently. Often they are so excited, so fired up, so full of love and gratitude to the LORD, that it warms our hearts and cheers us greatly just to see them. This is what the actions of Jehu remind me of here. He has come to know the LORD, and he is excited and fired up, and what a great thing that is to see!

Now, we read of how his zeal continued in the next verse.

17. And when he came to Samaria, he killed all who remained to Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed them, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to Elijah.

Jehu goes on to destroy all who were left of Ahab's family in Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. They are wiped out, and the LORD's word through Elijah is fulfilled. Again, Jehu's actions are actions of faith, and he carries out the LORD's will in doing this.

Now, we come to a verse that at first seems confusing to us.

18. Then Jehu gathered all the people together, and said to them, "Ahab served Baal a little, Jehu will serve him much."

At first, as we read this verse, it seems alarmingly as if Jehu has given up his great zeal for the LORD, and is about to let Him down in a major way. But we mustn't jump the gun here, for we learn what is really going on in the next verse.

19. Now therefore, call to me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests. Let no one be missing, for I have a great sacrifice for Baal. Whoever is missing shall not live." But Jehu acted deceptively, with the intent of destroying the worshipers of Baal.

Here, we see that the impression we might have gotten at first in the last verse was wrong. Jehu was not turning his back on the LORD. Instead, he is now planning to go far beyond simply wiping out the wicked family of Ahab. Now, he wishes to wipe out the idolatrous worship of Baal that Ahab and Jezebel had imported into the land of Israel. He was being zealous indeed! He was moving beyond merely keeping the command the LORD had given him, and was attempting to serve Him with all his heart and life. Now, we see how his plans worked out in the next verses.

20. And Jehu said, "Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal." So they proclaimed it. 21. Then Jehu sent throughout all Israel; and all the worshipers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left who did not come. So they came into the temple of Baal, and the temple of Baal was full from one end to the other. 22. And he said to the one in charge of the wardrobe, "Bring out vestments for all the worshipers of Baal." So he brought out vestments for them.

We see the great care Jehu is taking to see to it that he misses none of the worshippers of Baal. He calls every one of them to come to this solemn assembly. Then, he actually clothes them in special clothes, so that they cannot be missed. Jehu clearly wished none of Baal's servants to escape his trap!

23. Then Jehu and Jehonadab the son of Rechab went into the temple of Baal, and said to the worshipers of Baal, "Search and see that no servants of the LORD are here with you, but only the worshipers of Baal."

Now we see how zealous for the LORD Jehu and his friend Jehonadab really were. For they did not just want to wipe out the followers of Baal, but they also wanted to be very certain that none of the worshippers of the LORD accidentally got killed too. Thus, they double-check, trying to make certain that no worshippers of the LORD could possibly be present to get caught in the trap with the worshippers of Baal. Now that he is assured of this, Jehu is ready to carry out his plan.

24. So they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had appointed for himself eighty men on the outside, and had said, "If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escapes, whoever lets him escape, it shall be his life for the life of the other."

Again, this command shows how eager Jehu was to see to it that none of the worshippers of Baal escape.

25. Now it happened, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, "Go in and kill them; let no one come out!" And they killed them with the edge of the sword; then the guards and the officers threw them out, and went into the inner room of the temple of Baal.

Interestingly, Jehu actually performs a burnt offering to Baal before springing his trap. I believe that he was being careful again. If any of those present had not sacrificed to Baal before, he wanted to be certain that they had now, so that they would at least be guilty of that before he had them slain. Thus, he ensured with all finality that none who were innocent would be slain with the

guilty. Then, once this is finished, the trap is sprung, and the worshippers of Baal wiped out by the soldiers of Jehu.

26. And they brought the sacred pillars out of the temple of Baal and burned them. 27. Then they broke down the sacred pillar of Baal, and tore down the temple of Baal and made it a refuse dump to this day. 28. Thus Jehu destroyed Baal from Israel.

So, Jehu carries out his plan, and is completely successful. He succeeds in destroying every last remnant of Baal worship in the land of Israel. And remember, this was not something that God had commanded him to do. This was done on Jehu's own initiative. The LORD had only commanded Jehu to wipe out the family of Ahab. Yet in his zeal, Jehu did this, and the LORD blessed him in it. This seems like a very harsh thing to do to us, to slaughter all these people like this, worshippers of false gods or not. Yet what Jehu did was just as he should have done according to the law of Moses. For in Deuteronomy 17:2-5 we read,

2. "If there is found among you, within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you, a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing His covenant, 3. who has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, either the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded, 4. and it is told you, and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination has been committed in Israel, 5. then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing, and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones.

So, though the punishment for individuals was to be by stoning, it was very true that God had commanded execution as the punishment for those in His land who dared to worship a false god. By carrying out this slaughter of the worshippers of Baal, Jehu was obeying the commandment of Deuteronomy 17, and was again acting in faith and serving the LORD. And what faith he had, to take on such a huge undertaking for the LORD, and to carry it out so carefully and thoroughly and successfully. We cannot help but be very proud of Jehu at this point.

Yet now, unfortunately, we come to the statement made in the next verse.

29. However Jehu did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin, that is, from the golden calves that were at Bethel and Dan.

I think this has to be one of the most disappointing verses in the entire Bible. After all Jehu's good start, and all his apparent zeal and success up until now, to see him falter at this point seems almost unbelievable. After all the success he had had in serving the LORD, after all that he had done for the LORD, after starting out so well and so promising, after seeing the LORD's will being done and rejoicing in zealously carrying out that will, how could Jehu turn his back on the LORD now and adhere to the wicked policies of King Jeroboam before him? We don't want to believe that this could be. Say it ain't so, Jehu! How could he do this?

30. And the LORD said to Jehu, "Because you have done well in doing what is right in My sight, and have done to the house of Ahab all that was in My heart, your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation."

It seems that the LORD tries to give Jehu some encouragement here. It's almost like He is saying, "Come on, Jehu, you've done well up until now. Now, I'll give you this promise for all you have done for Me. Why don't you take that promise and take up where you left off to serve Me like you should?"

31. But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart; for he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin.

Alas! Jehu does not respond to the LORD's promise to him. Instead, he continues stubbornly in the same, wicked way he had chosen, supporting the golden calves just as Jeroboam had done years before. It seems that he can no more stand to send Israel back to Jerusalem to worship the LORD than any of the wicked kings before him had been.

I cannot help but be a little amazed at Jehu's failure. It does seem like, after all his success and zeal for the LORD, that he should have been able to keep it up and not trip up at this point. And yet, he did, and I think we can analyze why he probably did. You see, in all the courageous acts Jehu had committed up until this point, though he was responding in faith to all the LORD had told him to do, he was nevertheless still somewhat in control, at least in his eyes. While he was wiping out the followers of Ahab, he was the captain leading his men to victory. While he was wiping out the worshippers of Baal, he had his plan, and his faithful men beside him to help him carry it out. Yet, if he had responded in faith as he should have at this point, it would have meant letting his people return to Jerusalem to worship the LORD in Judah, a country that could very well have been considered his rival. And once he did that, matters were completely out of his hands. Once his people were gone in Judah, once they were in the realm of the kingly line of David, they were totally out of his hands. There was nothing Jehu could do to bring them back. He could not assure that they would not return their allegiance to the family of David as well. He could not assure that they would not decide to revolt against him and treat him just as he had treated the family of Ahab. To adopt this new policy, one that none of the kings before him had adopted, would have been a risk, and one that he could not control. In short, all he could do would be to trust in the LORD.

Now, the LORD had assured Jehu that He was the One giving him the kingdom. Moreover, the LORD gave Him this further promise that his line would retain the kingship to the fourth generation. Jehu could have responded in faith to this and trusted that, if he allowed the people to go and worship the LORD, the LORD would bring them back to him. Yet this still would have meant trusting matters totally into the LORD's hands. And it seems that this Jehu was unwilling to do. He could trust the LORD with a sword in his hands. He could trust the LORD while he had his own plan. Yet he could not trust the LORD when he was helpless, when there was nothing he could do, and when it all would have been up to the LORD and not to him. He could not trust the LORD when it meant striking off on his own, and doing what none of the kings before him had been willing to risk and do. Here, his faith ended. Here, he chose to fall back on the traditional, man-made method of rebellion, rather than trust to a risky course of faith. Sadly, he simply was not willing to lay his life completely in the LORD's hands.

We, too, in our walks with the LORD and running the race He desires for us to run, face a choice as to how far we are willing to trust Him. Many among believers today take the same kind of attitude as Jehu took. They are willing to trust the LORD in certain, minor things, especially as long as they are able to feel like they are in control the whole time. But when it comes to trusting Him in ways that we have no control over, we hesitate. When it comes to adopting ways of life that have not been done by those around us, or that are likely to cause us personal injury or loss, we are simply not willing to trust in the LORD then. Unlike Jehu, we need to be willing to take a different path than the worldly course that others have taken before us. We need to give up on what is safe or traditional in order to do what we know would be pleasing to Him. Rather than being willing to compromise in order to maintain what we want, we need to be willing to risk personal loss in order to please Him. This is the kind of attitude and reliance on Him that the LORD sought in Jehu, but didn't find, and this is the attitude that He seeks in us as well.

So, in our lives, as we run after the LORD and seek to win the prize that He sets before us, let us seek always to please Him first, and to do what we feel benefits ourselves second. Only then will we begin to run the kind of race after Him that would keep us from being disqualified, but rather would see us run in such a way as to obtain the prize.

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