

HOW GOD WORKS IN SINFUL UNIONS

I Kings 3: 1-27 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

There are second-hand consequences of making sinful affiliations, unions and alliances with unsaved people. Before I preach on these sinful unions, I must warn us about physical consequences of second-hand affiliations, namely with second-hand smoke. Second-hand smoke is a smoke from a burning cigarette end and smoke from a cigarette exhaled by smokers. Secondhand smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, hundreds of which are toxic and 70 can cause cancer. Since the 1964 Surgeon General's Report, 2.5 million nonsmoking adults have died from secondhand smoke. There is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Smoking during pregnancy results in more than 1,000 infant deaths in the home annually. Secondhand smoke causes nearly 34,000 premature deaths from heart disease each year in the US among nonsmokers. Nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke increase their risk of heart disease by 25–30%. Secondhand smoke exposure causes more than 8,000 deaths from stroke annually. Brief exposure to secondhand smoke damages blood vessel linings and causes blood platelets to become stickier which causes deadly heart attacks. Secondhand smoke causes more than 7,300 lung cancer deaths in nonsmokers in the US each year. Chemicals in secondhand smoke affect the brain in ways that interfere with its regulation of infants' breathing and can cause SIDS. Older children of smoking parents get sick more often, their lungs grow less than children not breathing secondhand smoke. They get more asthma, bronchitis, wheezing, pneumonia, coughing, and operations to put tubes in children's ears for drainage. Nicotine in cigarette smoke raises blood pressure and heart rate, narrows arteries and hardens their walls, and makes blood more likely to clot, setting up heart attacks or stroke. Today, I sense God's call for me to tell you that far beyond the scope of breathing second-hand smoke is the danger of making careless choices regarding whom we ally ourselves, whom we run with, affiliate with, associate with, and join in union with. God the Holy Spirit has alerted me to eight admonitions about our choices. They are:

CHOOSE WISELY IN MAKING ALLIANCES WITH THE UNGODLY BECAUSE OF SAD CONSEQUENCES THAT COME IN OUR FAMILY. (I.)

Notice II Kings 3: 7. "And he (King Jehoram of Israel) went and sent word to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to battle against Moab? And he (Jehoshaphat) said, "I will go. I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." So, what was the issue for the call for Jehoshaphat to help King Jehoram of Israel? We read about it here in II Kings 3: 4- 6. (Read it!) Mesha, this king of Moab was tired of paying tribute to the king of Israel—100,000 lambs and wool from 100,000 rams. So, when Ahab died, Mesha was striking while the iron was hot. King Jehoram didn't

seem as tough as Ahab, so King Mesha and all Moab rebelled against King Jehoram, who mustered Israel to win the battle against Moab, to keep their tribute.

We must choose wisely every day, the path we'll walk before God, because there are consequences to our choices. Jehoshaphat was, over-all, a very godly king. He walked in the ways of King David, his ancestor. But Jehoshaphat had one significant character flaw as a godly king. He repeatedly made alliances with ungodly kings of Israel and Edom. Those alliances nearly destroyed him. King Jehoram was a bad king—verses 1-4. By Jehoshaphat entering into these ungodly alliances, God's strong rebuke came down upon him more than once. You remember Jehoshaphat nearly lost his life joining with Ahab in an alliance to recapture Ramoth-Gilead back for Israel in I Kings 22: 4. In that encounter, Jehoshaphat told king Ahab, "I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses." Then Ahab talked Jehoshaphat into wearing his kingly robes into battle while Ahab disguised himself. The Syrian army closed in on Jehoshaphat thinking he was Ahab. Only by crying out was Jehoshaphat's life saved. You may remember in II Chronicles 19: 2. We read, "But Jehu the son of Hanani the seer/prophet, went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked, and love those who hate the Lord? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the Lord." We also saw in I Kings 22: 44 that Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel, Ahaziah, the son of Ahab and they made ships together at Ezion-Geber which God destroyed with a mighty wind from heaven. II Chronicles 20: 35 -37, found Jehoshaphat facing God's second rebuke. Eliezer, the son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied saying, "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 and on to India to secure gold. So, here we find Jehoshaphat in his third alliance with Israel's third King Jehoram. Jehoshaphat refused to learn his lesson. It was three kings of Israel in a row—Ahab, then Ahaziah, who had no son, and then one of Ahab's younger sons, Jehoram, all who roped Jehoshaphat into alliances with them.

Think about the impact of King Jehoshaphat's alliances of Judah with Israel. What an impact it made on his son, also named Jehoram. History records that Jehoshaphat went to war with Ahab against Ramoth-Gilead, and he probably appointed his son Jehoram as co-regent while he was gone. Then in II Kings 8:16 we find that Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, again took the throne in Judah during the fifth year of Jehoram's, the younger son of Ahab, fifth year of reigning in Israel. But Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram was watching his father. It's sad when a man of God gains a reputation of going along with the ungodly—three times! After all the three alliances with the three kings of Israel, what happened to King Jehoram of Judah? II Chronicles 21: 5-7 tells us King Jehoram of Judah, son and successor of the godly King Jehoshaphat, must be remembered as one of the most

decidedly wicked kings in Judah's history. Before becoming king, he was married to Athaliah, daughter of Israel's wicked King Ahab, and her mother was Jezebel. Athaliah was second only in wickedness to Jezebel. She was an evil woman who influenced Jehoram of Judah to reject the LORD and practice evil. So, I warn us all—as I have warned us before. What we do in moderation our children often do in excess. Jehoshaphat's playing with fire in wicked alliances definitely came back to bite him in the outcome of how his son Jehoram lived and reigned in Judah. II Chronicles 21: 7 tells us, "Yet the Lord was not willing to destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that He had made with David, and since He had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever. Beloved, a good daddy can have an evil son, and the spiritual second-hand smoke of his spiritually evil alliances can bite his son in a most deadly way. Heed this warning. Secondly,

CHOOSE WISELY IN MAKING ALLIANCES WITH THE UNGODLY BECAUSE OF SAD CONSEQUENCES IN YOUR WALK WITH GOD. (II.)

Notice II Kings 3: 10. "Then the king of Israel said, "Alas! The Lord has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab." When King Jehoshaphat asked Ahab's younger son, King Jehoram, in v. 8, "By which way shall we march? Jehoram answered, "By the way of the wilderness of Edom." This is how the three kings got together. Jehoshaphat kept going along with the plan, almost blindly. The three kings of Israel, Judah, and now Edom were in league together. Jehoshaphat had committed his people, his army, his horses, and his troops to the king of Israel to put down the rebellion of the people of Moab against Israel. King Jehoram had a shrewd plan to come upon Moab from underneath, that is, to approach Moab through the wilderness of Edom. This would gain a surprise against Moab, and by going that way, King Jehoram had the aid of the king of Edom, who probably wanted to settle the score with Moab, because of the battle when Mt Seir, the Ammonites, and the Moabites had joined together against Jehoshaphat in II Chronicles 20: 33. That was when God told Jehoshaphat to send out his singers in holy attire to sing in front of their army—"Give thanks to the Lord, for His steadfast love endures forever." That was when the Moabites and Ammonites turned on Mt. Seir or the Edomites and made an end to them before the Moabites and Ammonites turned on each other. So now—it may have been that the king of Edom wanted to settle the score against Moab. The problem was—the seven day trip of the three kings and their armies to surprise Moab left them in the wilderness with no water for the army or for their animals that followed them. Then evil king Jehoram of Israel saw that the three kings were trapped and he cried out, "Alas, the Lord has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab." Even this evil man knew God was the one who was entrapping their plan. Alas, is a good word to use when you realize you may be fighting with God. Jehoram was not a happy camper and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom were all in alliance without God's smile upon them. I wonder if this lack of

water wasn't primarily to wake up king Jehoshaphat from his slumber of making a foolish alliance with two evil kings. Thirdly,

CHOOSE WISELY TO ASK FOR GODLY COUNSEL BEFORE MAKING UNGODLY ALLIANCES, RATHER THAN AFTER THE FACT. (III.)

Notice the words of Jehoshaphat in II Kings 3: 11. "Is there no prophet of the Lord here, through whom we may inquire of the Lord?" Then one of the King of Israel's servants answered, "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah." When God turns off the spigot, and there's no water in the well or out of the faucet, it's high time and past time to seek the Lord. We often seek God when all else fails, rather than first. This roundabout route to trap Moab with no water for the army or the animals had everyone's attention. Have you ever found yourself stuck in a situation where you regretted you ever got into a partnership with the ungodly? I can assure you that Jehoshaphat was kicking himself at this point in the wilderness, and saying, "This is my third mistake of doing the same rotten thing—making alliances with a third king of Israel. What a mess we all are in! Why oh, why can't I learn my lesson? Why did I do this same awful thing again? Yet, beloved, in the midst of our own beating up of ourselves, it is not too late to start asking the right question. Finally, Jehoshaphat asked the proper question, "Is there no prophet of the Lord here, through whom we may inquire of the Lord?" King Jehoram of Israel didn't jump at this. He knew how much his dad, Ahab hated the prophet of God, Elijah. But God always has a remnant. One of the king's servants piped up and said, "Elisha, the son of Shaphat is here, the one who poured water on the hands of Elijah." That was the Jewish way of saying that Elisha had been at Elijah's beck and call faithfully for years. Jehoshaphat once again was back on track, even though he was oh so thirsty, and trapped in the wilderness of Edom. Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the Lord is with him." Wow! Aren't you glad God doesn't leave us when we step into traps of sin, evil unions, wicked partnerships? Jehoshaphat again is starting to shine. So, the three kings went down to find Elisha. Surely, it was late to ask the right question, but with God, as long-as there's life, there's hope. Finally, the three trapped kings, under Jehoshaphat's leadership were heading for Elisha, wherever he was which may have been a ways, but no distance is too far to go to turn things around. They made it to the prophet of God. Jehoshaphat was back on track. 4thly,

CHOOSE WISELY TO RESPECT GOD'S ANOINTED SERVANTS EVEN IF THEY HAVE FAILED IN MAKING ALLIANCES WITH THE UNGODLY. (IV.)

Notice II Kings 3: 14 in Elisha's words to King Jehoram. "And Elisha said, "As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I have regard for Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look at you nor see you." I am more than amazed at the candid response of Elisha to evil king Jehoram, the king of Israel. Fearlessly, he said, "What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father—the prophets of Baal, and to the prophets of your mother, Athaliah and Jezebel—the prophets of Asherah." Jehoram didn't flinch. He was desperate for help. He said,

“No; it is the Lord who has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab.” Jehoram was saying, in essence, “Please help us. It’s bad news! God, the Lord, whose prophet you are, it’s God who has us in this fix, trapped without water in the wilderness of Edom.” Now Elisha looked into the eyes of the other two kings. There was king Jehoshaphat whom he knew, looking into his eyes. And Elisha made a wise choice. Because of this godly king’s presence, he said to King Jehoram, “As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I have regard for Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would neither look at you, nor see you. But now bring me a musician.” This is the point at which Elisha must have said to God, “I need to calm myself before You and before everyone else. This wasn’t a fun meeting with King Jehoram. There was nothing magical or mystical about music, but Elisha was willing to help an anointed servant of God who had failed a third time in making alliances with a bad, evil king. The servant of Elisha brought a musician to play and when he played, the hand of the Lord came upon Elisha. I have watched for years how God moves in men and women’s hearts, and I have seen hundreds of times that God uses music, beautifully played and sung to melt hearts of stone. And I can say from personal experience, even this week, I have asked God to calm my soul, when repeatedly, I have often faced a situation this past week, where the enemy has tried to entrap both Pastor Larry and myself in running out of options to help people. Right at this spot in my message, I stopped and listened to the Maranatha Singers sing— Psalm 131, “I Have Stilled And Quieted My Soul.” I wept and God moved in me to continue to prepare this message. Sometimes what I must say is, “Bring me a musician.” Thank God for Elisha not giving up on Jehoshaphat, and not letting the presence of Jehoram keep him from listening to God’s voice in his heart. Fifthly,

CHOOSE WISELY TO OBEY GOD’S DIRECTION, HIS BIDDING AND PROMPTING, EVEN IT SEEMS PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT. (V.)

Notice II Kings 3: 16 .“And Elisha said, “Thus says the Lord, ‘I will make this dry streambed full of pools.’” The most literal translation of this phrase is “Thus says the Lord,” ‘make this valley full of trenches/ditches.” What God wants to do over and over is to employ us to do our part in fulfilling His will and His prompting. The rest is up to God. Sometimes, we are called to do work we do not choose or ever wish to do. “Dig ditches in this rocky wilderness. Dig trenches.” Why trenches, Elisha? The answer from God was, “I am sending you the water you need, but we need a place to store it for you to drink, you, your armies and your animals.” Often God will never defeat the attack of the enemy in our lives until we are obedient to the human responsibility that He has assigned us. Before God sends His rain, His miracle, we must demonstrate to Him our dependence on the Lord. Without the Lord’s advice, they went into the wilderness and were entrapped, hungry, thirsty, and hopeless. Without seeking God, all help and hope was gone. Now, in this seeming God-forsaken wilderness valley of Zered on Moab’s southern boundary, the three armies were encamped in the Arabah, between the highlands of Moab on the east and those

of Judah on the west, just south of the Dead Sea. When the ditches were dug, and the three armies did it, God solved the problem. In v. 20 we read, “by way of Edom,” far away in the mountains to the south, God caused a flash flood to happen it would appear, and by the time of the morning sacrifice, by the time of morning devotions we would say, the valley in the Arabah was full of water. You can bet the army and the animals took no time in going to the trenches and ditches to find their miracle and drink deeply. God did it again, after His command to dig the ditches was obeyed. God could have dug the ditches Himself, but His command had to be obeyed before the miracle came. What is there in our lives that we must obey before God’s miracles come! Sixthly,

CHOOSE WISELY TO BELIEVE GOD CAN DO ANYTHING NEEDED TO SOLVE YOUR PROBLEM AS NOTHING IS TOO SMALL OR GREAT. (VI.)

Notice II Kings 3: 18. “This is a light thing in the sight of the Lord. He will also give the Moabites into your hand...” Double back and hear the Word of the Lord. “This is a light thing in the sight of the Lord. He will also give the Moabites into your hand, and you shall attack every fortified city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree and stop up all the springs of water and ruin every good place of land with stones.” This was God’s command to end the Moabite rebellion. As surely as God could create a flood without any audible sound of lightning or thunder or storm, He would use those ditches, trenches, and pools to deceive and defeat the Moabite army. God announced a complete victory—a decisive victory. Elisha didn’t want any of them to think God had to work hard to do all this—it was a small thing for God, and beloved, whatever you need, it is a small thing for God to supply. Trust Him! 7thly,

CHOOSE WISELY TO COME TO NO CONCLUSION THAT MIGHT LEAVE YOU UNPROTECTED IF YOUR CONCLUSION IS IN ERROR.

(VII.) This is a warning from the Moabite army. Notice the Moabites response to God’s miracle of filling the valley with pools of red water. Notice II Kings 3: 23. “And they said, “This is blood; the kings have surely fought together and struck one another down. Now then, Moab to the spoil!” Wow! One thing the Moabites remembered was the victory for Jehoshaphat as his singers sang, “Give thanks to the Lord with all your heart. His love, His mercy endures forever.” That was when God made the Moabites, the Ammonites and the Edomites of Mt. Seir turn on each other. Now look God was doing it again, and God must be fighting for them. Read v. 21-24. What a foolish conclusion the Moabites made. Not expecting water in that barren Arabah, the Moabites assumed the water shining in the sunlight was blood. Running through the red rocks, perhaps it was red, but the sun on it was conclusive. All the Moabite army leaders believed the three kings and their armies had a falling out, slaughtered each other, and it was spoil time. So advancing without caution or weapons, they ran to plunder the dead soldiers’ armies and weaponry. Instead, they ran into waiting ranks of the three armies. Defenseless, they fled as they and their

people in their cities were slaughtered in cities, towns, and their trees, their fields, their springs—all of Moab was completely laid waste, and the king had one last stronghold, Kir Hareseth, their city of the sun. The sun had deceived them making the water look like blood, and now their last city would deceive them—and fail them. Eighthly, and lastly,

CHOOSE WISELY TO COUNT THE COST OF MAKING UNGODLY ALLIANCES THAT CAN SHOCK YOUR VISION OR BLUNT VICTORIES.

(VIII.) Notice in II Kings 3: 27 what the king of Moab did as his defeat looked certain. “Then he took his oldest son who was to reign in his place and offered him for a burnt offering on the wall. And there came great wrath against Israel. And they withdrew from him and returned to their own land.” The king of Moab had his kingdom and his back up against the wall. The battle was going against him. In desperation, the king of Moab took his 700 best swordsmen and tried to break through the Edomite army he thought was weakest, but he failed. v. 26. Then the desperate king did a dastardly, wicked, abominable thing. He took his eldest son, who was to reign in his place. He placed him in full view of the three armies and offered him to Chemosh, their evil god. It was a shocking sight that turned the stomachs of the three armies as they were trying to propitiate their god with this pagan rite. At this death, the Moabite army became insanely full of wrath. The Israelites were so frightened at what this desperate Moabite king and his army did, that they stopped short of total annihilation of the Moabite army. This child sacrifice stopped the war, but Jehoshaphat to the day of his death, as thousands of his other soldiers, had a wicked picture in their minds that would never leave. They had allied together, and they had seen a tragedy that would never quit haunting them. They all returned to their countries, but no one went home the winner—they went home whipped with an evil sight that is still evil today, as over 60 million American babies have been sacrificed on the altar, not of Chemosh, but on the altar of convenience, and we shrink back too as we see it in our country. Beloved, choose wisely and count the cost of making ungodly alliances that can shock your vision, blunt your victories, and break your heart. Choose wisely before you join your time, your vision, and your desire to watching porn. You may struggle for years trying to wipe the vulgar, shocking, evil things you have seen. Don’t be legalist separatists. Do be separated unto God, from joining in sin with sinners. As I close, I call us all to separate ourselves from the sins of this world, but never may we ever separate ourselves from the fallen people of this world, but rather, share the love of Christ with them. We must untangle ourselves from the sins of this world, and be in the world, but not of it. God help us see that affiliating with the ungodly in their sin will not remove our salvation or keep God from working, but it will color all our lives with memories that will haunt us, hurt us, and break our hearts. May the sin of Jehoshaphat be ended, stopped completely in our lives, for Jesus sake, Amen.