

## The Case for Accountability

In a long line of stinkers, Joash was one of the finest kings of Judah in the years leading up to the Babylonian exile. He became king at the age of seven. He had two wives, which was not a good thing, but the chronicler still treats him as a vast improvement over many of his predecessors. During his reign, he called for and oversaw a major restoration of the temple of the LORD. This project was necessitated by the vandalism and looting of the temple that was authorized by his wicked grandmother, Athaliah, who ruled in Jerusalem for six years after the murder of Ahaziah, her son and Joash's father. He raised a ton of money for the project. He secured talented and honorable craftsmen. He also activated the priests and the Levites from an era of spiritual lethargy. It was a remarkable twenty-three year reign. But there was a problem:

<sup>1</sup>Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem forty years. – 2 Chronicles 24:1

Joash was a great king for twenty-three years, but he reigned for forty years. For the remaining seventeen years of Joash's reign, he became one of the worst of the long line of stinker-kings of Judah. The worship of the LORD was abandoned as idols and Asherah poles popped-up once again throughout the land. God sent a series of prophets to Joash to steer him back on course, but he ignored them. One prophet, Zechariah, proved to be a particular nuisance to the king, so Joash ordered his murder. Zechariah was stoned in the courtyard of the very temple that Joash had restored. Eventually, the king was wounded in a battle with the Arameans. Some of his own officials conspired against him and assassinated him in his own bed. He was buried in Jerusalem, "but not in the tombs of the kings" (2 Chronicles 24:25). This was a conspicuously inglorious end to a man who had once ruled so well.

What happened? How does the switch simply flip from "good king" to "bad king"? The key seems to lie with a man named Jehoiada:

<sup>2</sup>Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the years of Jehoiada the priest. – 2 Chronicles 24:2

<sup>15</sup>Now Jehoiada was old and full of years, and he died at the age of a hundred and thirty. <sup>16</sup>He was buried with the kings in the City of David, because of the good he had done in Israel for God and his temple.

<sup>17</sup>After the death of Jehoiada, the officials of Judah came and paid homage to the king, and he listened to them. – 2 Chronicles 24:15-17

Jehoiada was a priest with a passion for the rule of God. Long before he was an advisor to Joash, he had led the nation through a degree of political and religious renewal. When Joash was only an infant, Jehoiada was instrumental in saving the life of the young heir to the throne. Athaliah had slaughtered all her other grandchildren in a mad attempt to hold onto power. Most poignantly, the loyal Jehoiada was the father of Zechariah, the prophet

of God that Joash would order to be murdered. When Jehoiada died, he was buried with the kings even though he was not a king, so appreciated was his legacy.

Accountability is a powerful thing. Authentic Christian community is vital. We need others to walk with us. We need others who love us thoroughly enough to help us muddle through our flaws and correct us when correction is needed. A king of Judah left a dual legacy that seemed directly tied to those who advised him.

In one area of Africa where Christianity began to spread, converts were zealous about daily devotions. They would find their own spot within the wild thickets and pour their hearts out to God. After some time the spots became well-worn, and paths were created. Soon, one's prayer life was made public. If someone began to neglect his or her devotional life, it would soon be noticed by others. Believers would then gently and lovingly remind those in neglect, "The grass grows on your path." - *Today in the Word*

Whether it is our devotional time, our practice of purity, our obedience to the Lord, the energy with which we exercise our gift, our tendency to justify personal sin, *etc.* – we need authentic brothers and sister who are willing to call us into account and to help us stand.

<sup>9</sup>Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:

<sup>10</sup>If one falls down, his friend can help him up.

But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

<sup>11</sup>Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.

But how can one keep warm alone?

<sup>12</sup>Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. – Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

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