

Turning Against a Good Mentor

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[0 : 00] Return with me now please to the passage we read, 2 Chronicles chapter 24. We're going to look at this chapter this morning for some time as we look at this portrait of Joash.

We're missing out a few portraits in this gallery of the kings. We last looked at Jehoshaphat in chapter 20 and looked at three different elements within that portrait of Jehoshaphat which is the biggest portrait apart from a couple of others in the gallery of 2 Chronicles.

When we come to Joash, as you read through these chapters from Jehoshaphat's reign to the reign of Joash the years in between these two kings were very turbulent ones.

We read there about Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat who reigned for a relatively short time of eight years and it was a bad reign. You find in chapter 21 verse 20 the summary of his death there which really speaks for itself.

Chapter 21 verse 20 He was 32 years old when he began to reign and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem and he departed with no one's regret. Well that sums up the kind of reign that Jehoram had because he led the people away from the Lord revolted from the worship of God into further idolatry.

[1 : 28] Then Amaziah his son reigned for only one year. Not such a brief reign yet it's mentioned and after one year's reign he was killed by Jehu who belonged to the northern kingdom of Israel.

remember that there was an alliance made between the southern kingdom of Judah in Jehoshaphat's time he married his son to one of Ahab's daughters and so that influence carried on for a good number of years to the detriment really mainly of Judah's kings and Judah's spiritual condition as well.

So he was killed and then for six years Athaliah the queen or queen mother actually ruled and she was a pretty ruthless person herself so as soon as Amaziah was killed Athaliah actually destroyed all the royal family except for Jehosh who because of Jehoshaphat the daughter of the king and her husband Jehoiada this priest that we read about here who was a great man at that time and a great leader though he wasn't a king he was a priest but through their courage really they took the very young Joash and hid him in the temple of the Lord and for six years they looked after him nobody knew he was there but themselves and they brought him up as we see in the ways of the Lord and then in the seventh year

Jehoiada secretly or without the knowledge of Athaliah he organized a coup or an overthrow or a revolt a revolution you might call it so that the heads of the various sections of the army were brought into it and they arranged that Athaliah would actually be put to death would be executed and that Joash the young king would then be pronounced as the rightful king so that's the background to chapter 24 when Joash began to reign in his own right and he was seven years old when he began to reign and he reigned for 40 years he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest now these words will see are very important he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest what we really want to look at today is how after Jehoiada died

Joash left the way of the Lord for as long as Jehoiada lived externally in every sort of formal way even to the extent as you see there of repairing the temple Joash kept the ways of the Lord but as soon as Jehoiada died the main influence in his life the man who had spared his life the man who had actually protected his life we should say and brought him up for these early years if it hadn't been for that he would have been killed with the rest and yet as soon as Jehoiada died Joash went away from the ways that he had been taught as the ways of the Lord and there's a lot to be looked at in that which we'll look at in a moment and then when it came to later on in his reign we'll see that he actually went away from the Lord more and more and even though the Lord sent prophets and one of these prophets even was

[5 : 12] Zechariah the son of Jehoiada by the command of Joash he was put to death now that says a lot about this man it says a lot about the kind of failure that you see in regard to him and it's in many ways a very solemn reminder to ourselves that it's not quite enough not at all enough really to have an outward sort of shell to our religion or to our devotion to God that there must be more than that that there must in fact be a devotion from our hearts and a commitment in our hearts so let's look at Joash let's look at this particular chapter and what it tells us about him in regard to this main part of his reign he was brought up first of all in the ways of the Lord you can see there in the previous chapter chapter 22 rather Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah when she saw that her son was dead in verse 10 she arose and destroyed all the royal family of the house of Judah but Jehoshua and Jehoshabath the daughter of the king took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the king's sons who were about to be put to death and she put him and his nurse in a bedroom then Jehoshabath the daughter of King Jehoram the wife of Jehoiada the priest because she was a sister of Ahaziah hidden from Athaliah so that she did not put him to death and he remained with them six years hidden in the house of God while Athaliah reigned over the land now you can just get a glimpse into that it doesn't say much for us but it says enough about the kind of upbringing for these six years that this young king actually had from Jehoiada and his wife

Jehoshabath he was brought up in the ways of the Lord he was brought up even within the confines of the temple here is a young child actually brought up every single day of his life surrounded with the things of the temple of God surrounded by the worship of God surrounded by the activities of the temple surrounded by what Jehoiada the priest would be doing and would be teaching him and given the opportunity of a mother who actually taught him the things of the way of the Lord who in obedience to God thought that he would be protected to eventually come to head up the Lord's cause in Jerusalem and in Judah and all I'm going to say about that is that it's a powerful reminder to ourselves of the importance of bringing up our children and our families and in the church's setting in the context of the worship of God of the ways of the Lord of the following of the Lord in many ways what you find here for Joash was early years of training he was trained under Jehoiada he was trained in the ways of the Lord and in fact when you go to what Paul writes to the Ephesian church when it comes to speaking about relationships between parents and children husbands and wives and so on you'll find when it comes to Ephesians in chapter 6 that he actually says children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right honor you father and mother this is the first commandment with a promise that it may go well with you that you may live long in the land fathers do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord and the words there literally have to do with training and education education and training you might say the education that we receive from the Bible that's conveyed to us throughout parents that we as parents have a duty and a privilege and a responsibility to carry out for the Lord with our children whether it's at home or in Sunday school classes or wherever it is it is an education and at the same time a program of training because the word of God shapes our lives it should give a shape to our thinking how we think about things what our opinion of various things is especially the most important issues of life moral issues spiritual issues where do we get our minds actually trained and shaped in the right way in looking at these issues here in the word of God in the training of the temple if you like in the training of the house of God of the cause of God of the gospel of the church of God in this world that's what it really is saying to us about this important issue right through the Bible of course you can see it in Israel in the Old Testament the instructions that were given to parents for example when it came to the Passover every year the children themselves were to ask questions of their parents what does this what does this observance what does this ritual actually mean what do these things actually mean for ourselves spiritually why do we have to do these things why is there this

Passover lamb why is it accompanied with these bitter herbs and with unleavened bread where does it go back to where is this rooted what is its history what is its spiritual meaning why am I taking part in it are we explaining the things of the gospel to our children are we leaving it to others to do that for us are we leaving it without it being done at all because here is something that is so crucially important in the whole shaping of our lives so that when we come to be adults hopefully we will not be like George to depart from these things but that our thinking will always be governed by and shaped by the word of God and its teaching and its authority and all that it conveys to us so he was brought up in the ways of the Lord but secondly he came to abandon the ways of the Lord and particularly so after

Jehoiada the priest had died now we've seen that he followed the ways of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest and then when you come to verse 15 Jehoiada grew old and full of days and died and they buried him then immediately you read after the death of Jehoiada the princes of Judah came and paid homage to the king now that says a lot as well but let's look at first of all the particular mention that's made here of the house of the Lord and how Joash carried out a program of restoration for the house of the Lord that's interesting as part of what it's telling us about his life because it had been neglected particularly under the regime of Athaliah queen mother she had allowed in verse 7 sons of Athaliah that was more than her literal family these would be her supporters as well she had allowed them to break into the house of God used all the dedicated things there that were for the Lord to use them in the worship of the Baals the Canaanite gods the idols of the Canaanites the temple had become disrepaired the temple had fallen into neglect the house of God had actually come to be badly neglected and abandoned so Joash set out a program of restoration he started collecting money again which had again been stopped and he started that himself to restore and the people joined in with that very gladly and that's always the case for the church that's always what we have to do there will be years when the church in its times of revival in its times of coming back to the ways of the Lord will have a lot of debris to clear away from the house of God you read about that later when we come to that portrait

God willing of King Josiah one of the great kings and that's what he had to do the book of the law of God was discovered in the temple you imagine coming to church formally every day but not having your bible coming to church to do all kinds of activities but not actually be aware of the stipulations the words that God had written for your guidance they discovered the book of the law that become lost in the days of Josiah and something like that it happened maybe not to the same extent but it had happened in the days of Athaliah as well and that's the program that Joash set in motion but when Jehoiada died all of that changed and notice what it says about Jehoiada we're just mentioning it in passing but it's important he was 130 years old when he died that's a very long life even by

[14 : 44] Old Testament standards by the time of Joash people's lives were much less than that people lived a long long time way back in the days of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and in fact you've got to go right back to the life of Jacob to find somebody who lived longer than Jehoiada that's incredible itself he lived the length of time that people way back in Jacob's time lived and that shows you the influence that he had and how God spared him and how God was good to these people in giving them the likes of Jehoiada when the situation with the kingship when the situation with the ruler was so chaotic or so uncertain the country the nation the people were led by this faithful priest this Jehoiada and so much was he respected that when he died he was actually buried not only in the city of David but he was buried among the kings he's the only priest mentioned in the whole of the Old

Testament who was buried with the kings who had a king's burial and that shows you how important this man was at this particular time and in the history of the people of Judah and following his death Joash left the ways of the Lord first of all he followed the wrong advice because these princes people who would be pretty much his own age I'm sure or slightly older came and paid homage to the king they came and professed their loyalty to him they came and did him all this honour they bowed in his presence but really their motives were that they would take him under their advice and their counsel and he would become their king and they would actually be in charge of the policies that Joash would follow from now on now that Jehoiada the man whose influence was now gone now that he was no longer there they would actually take over and they would influence

Joash which is what happened see what's true about this Joash is interesting while Jehoiada lived Joash was pretty much carrying out the policies that Jehoiada was setting up and behind and steering and by his influence actually setting in motion in the country Joash had never really learned to think for himself and when it came to the point that Jehoiada died and here's a wind if you like from another direction from these princes because he had never really learned to think for himself and was depending on Jehoiada's thoughts and Jehoiada thinking things through for him as soon as this wind from another direction hit him he just went with that wind that's so important a point for yourself and especially for the young ones here today because this young man was brought up in the ways of the

Lord that's the way the wind was blowing while Jehoiada lived and for many years that's the way the wind was blowing in his life as a king but he had never really learned himself to think these things through for himself why do I believe what I believe why am I carrying out these things the way I'm doing it with regard to repairing the house of the Lord why am I engaged in the worship of God in the house of the Lord the way I've been of all these years he had never really in his heart pondered these things he had never really got to grips in his heart with these important issues and when the wind changed he just went along with it and that's what happens when you don't think for yourself when your own mind is not fully engaged in the things that you're doing or in the things that you've learned then the danger is that you're just going to leave them when something that is more influential comes along so to the young ones today I'm saying this it's a great thing that you have the teaching of the gospel given to you at home in Sunday school in the church in Bible class in point to life wherever that teaching of the gospel has come to impact upon to touch your life to come into your mind but it's so important that you think for yourself that you don't say well I'm a

Christian because I go to church and because so and so is a Christian you have to be able to say well I'm a Christian because that's where my heart is because that is what I really want to be because I really want to follow the Lord I'm a Christian not because so and so loves the Lord not because some Jehoiada says that's what I should be I'm a Christian because I love the Lord myself and when I love the Lord myself it doesn't matter who comes from whatever other direction with another teaching I'm going to stay true to the Lord when I'm in love with him when I'm in love with his ways when I really follow him sincerely and wholeheartedly it doesn't really matter who comes to me and says well look that's alright that was okay when Jehoiada lived but he was an old man latterly and we've moved on from these things and this is what you should now believe if Joash in his heart had really loved the Lord he would have said to these princes but I'm not just following the ways of the Lord because Jehoiada did and because Jehoiada taught me

[20 : 51] I'm following the ways of the Lord because that's what I want because I know this is right because I love the Lord he followed the wrong advice his heart turned when the influence turned from Jehoiada to the princes really that's such an important issue and question for all of us today it doesn't matter how age it doesn't matter whether we're young or moved on to middle age or even to old age it's this issue isn't it why do I come to church why do I engage in services that worship the Lord why do I really do that regularly just as a matter of practice and as you get down into it and into the things of the heart it's then you have to realize really how important it is to be doing them for the right reason nobody is suggesting for a moment that this teaching in this chapter is so that we will say well I don't think I should go on anymore with this it's so that you and I will really say of ourselves

I want to be following the Lord and I want to be following the Lord for the right reasons and I want to be a worshipper of God and I want to be a member of his church and I want to belong to that congregation or whatever congregation I've come to belong to not because somebody else is or not because my friends are there though that's important I want to be there because God is there because I'm following the Lord because I love him because I trust in him because he's my savior because he is my friend and that's really such a crucial issue as you look at the way that that was absent from Joash's experience Matthew Henry that old Puritan commentator says in regard to this people may go far in the external performances of religion and keep long to them merely by the power of their education and the influences of their friends while they have no heart affection for divine things nor any inward relish of them that's a very apt description of Joash for as long as

Jehoiada his friend and mentor lived he was happy enough to go along with these ways of the Lord when he died when someone else took their place when a different way of thinking came his way he just joined himself up with that please today whatever you do be grounded properly in the ways of the Lord be firmly rooted for the right reasons in the Lord Jesus Christ in being a follower of him as we'll see this evening from Luke's gospel the Lord's setting out of the terms of discipleship and really pretty much what he's saying is exactly the same thing in many ways as we're finding the lesson from Joash's life that we need to be sincere earnest wholehearted in our discipleship and our following of the Lord so he first of all followed the wrong advice secondly he turned from the ways of the Lord because he rejected the word of God you notice verse 19 there the Lord sent prophets amongst them and this is interesting because verse 18 there says the wrath of God the anger of God came was directed upon

Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt they abandoned the house of the Lord that was the influence of these princes that's what Joash now led an abandoning of the house just imagine a man who had spent all of these years and all of this effort in restoring the house of the Lord who seemed really to be such a devoted zealous religious leader of the people and as soon as this other influence comes he and they abandoned the house of the Lord the house that he had actually set these repairs in motion for now he's abandoning it that shows you where his heart was that shows you that all that he did was just a formality and now the wrath of the Lord came upon them yet the Lord sent prophets amongst them why to bring them back to the Lord isn't God so kind isn't

God so good to us wasn't he so good to them there they were having repaired the temple using the temple again as it should have been and now abandoning that temple of the Lord and the wrath of God and the anger of God directed against them he was not pleased at all with what they had done yet he kept sending them his word he kept sending prophets to them who spoke the word of God to them yet despite that kindness they would not pay attention they refused to listen to the very people that God kept sending them and you see the reason that God sent them it specified there it said out there in black and white to bring them back to the Lord to bring them back to the Lord was God's purpose in sending them these prophets but they did not pay attention they wouldn't have it they preferred the advice of the princes and of

[26 : 53] Joash who had now rebelled against the Lord and one of these prophets was the very son of Jehoiada very interesting what's said there in verse 20 the spirit of the Lord clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada now remember prophets in those days were specifically appointed by God and endowed by God and you remember we saw already that one of the problems was that people like Ahab the northern king he had prophets in his own pocket if you like he paid prophets to tell him what he wanted to hear they were known as the false prophets to the true prophets like this man Zechariah this man Zechariah was the son of Jehoiada who obviously had himself a great upbringing just as George had and this is the Zechariah that Jesus mentions when he at one time denounced the Pharisees and Jerusalem in fact as ruled by the ruling elite of the time those who kill the prophets and he mentioned this

Zechariah as one of the prophets that had been slain by people who didn't accept the word of God sent to them but what he says is that the spirit of the Lord clothed him now literally what it says is this the spirit of the Lord clothed himself with Zechariah now just think about that the spirit of God God himself he clothed himself with Zechariah what does that mean well it means that he took up residence in this man Zechariah in order that the words of Zechariah would in fact be the words of God he put on as it were Zechariah as an outward cloak so that when Zechariah spoke as a prophet it was God who was speaking that gives us an insight into how God endowed prophets when they spoke to speak his word that's why it says there that

Zechariah said he stood above the people and said thus says God why do you break the commandments of the Lord so that you cannot prosper what happened to him well he was actually put to death they conspired against him and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord the king who had been brought up by this man's father probably along with this man as he was brought up by Jehoiada and his wife Jehoshabeah they would have played together as friends growing up together in the ways of the Lord and here Jehoiada says stole him get rid of him put him to death isn't that solemn doesn't that tell you the kind of man

Jehoiada really was in his heart not only that but it mentions the court of the house of the Lord and if you go back to the previous chapter in chapter 23 you'll read there that when the preparations that Jehoiada had made for this young king to be announced as the rightful king when that was all in place and ready and he made the arrangements Jehoiada was brought out by Jehoiada and those who supported him and declared to be the rightful king where in the courts of the house of the Lord and here is Joash who was brought into the courts of the Lord as a young child seven years of age and announced thereby Jehoiada the priest to be the rightful king of Judah to the acclaim of the people here is that same

Joash who was brought out into that same court of the Lord here he is in that court of the house of the Lord putting the son of Jehoiada to death or at least arranging for it or commanding it what a devious man what a heart or heartless man what a rebel from the things of God to do in the very place that he was announced as king by Jehoiada such a thing as to arrange the death of Jehoiada's son in the same court of the house of the Lord if anything really shows you how Joash left the ways of the Lord and abandoned the house of the Lord and went completely in the other direction that says it all that he could do such a thing well the question you know the thought may come into my mind and into your own mind as you read about that and as you discover that that's exactly what he did and that's the way he did it and this is who he put to death how could he do such a thing how could he take the son of this

[32 : 34] Jehoiada who loved him and who had brought him up how could he take his son and arrange that he be put to death of course he could isn't that what people do all the time with the son of God wasn't his death the death of which those who rejected him said crucify him do away with him and in your heart and my heart we've done that with Jesus too because every time we reject him we're really saying effectively put him outside put him to the cross give me someone else instead of him leave me to myself he rejected the word of the

Lord and in his rejection of the word of the Lord he went so far as to have this prophet of the Lord this man that he knew so well that had been his friend to put him to death thirdly he brought destruction to Judah by abandoning the ways of the Lord verses 23 and 24 there you can see how the Lord actually sent the people of Syria the army of the Syrians against George now when Zechariah was dying in verse 22 he said may the Lord see and avenge or the word there is seek he wasn't being himself personally vengeful what he was saying was may the Lord act justly may the Lord do what is right in regard to this and God did and what was right in the eyes of the Lord was that

Joash would come to bring disaster on himself and upon his people for their abandoning of the ways of the Lord and for this particularly for this assassination or execution of Zechariah the army of the Syrians came up against him and they devastated the people the princes of the people you notice mentions that they destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people the people that had been giving this advice to Joash whose advice he had gone along with they were especially singled out by the Syrians for slaughter that's the justice of God and you see also it says that though the army of the Syrians had come with few men the Lord delivered into their hand a very great army the army of Judah the numbers of Judah's army were far superior to the army of the Syrians and yet the Syrians easily overpowered the army of

Judah why because Judah had forsaken the Lord the God of their fathers and if you compare that verse 24 with chapter 20 and verse 15 you remember you find there the account of Jehoshaphat's time where Jehoshaphat went out against that massive horde of combined Moabites and Ammonites that came against him chapter 15 and a great multitude had come from them he set his face to seek the Lord as we saw in that portrait and ended up with a great victory because he had come to trust in the Lord and to pray to him in other words the principle really that comes across from all of that it's very clear it's an equation if you like even if you are hopeless at mass like I was and am the equation is still pretty clear what does it say it says obedience to God brings blessing and success obedience to God equals or leads to blessing and success on the other hand disobedience to God equals or leads to well it leads to loss and even disaster that's the equation and it's all the way there through from what he had been told way back again in chapter 15 when again we've seen this verse and it's a verse that's followed us through these studies chapter 15 another man of God

Azariah who came out to meet Asa and said the Lord is with you while you are with him if you seek him he will be found of you but if you forsake him he will forsake you that's what George did he forsook the Lord what's the consequence the Lord forsook him if we forsake him that's what happens if we trust in him he will be with us that's the equation that's the simple mathematics the spiritual mathematics of the Bible's teaching and you notice too just one word in closing when he had departed from him verse 24 25 when they that's the army of the Syrians had departed from him leaving him severely wounded his servants conspired against him and they came and finished him off on his bed a sad end a solemn end but the thing is this the word departed there is exactly the same word as verse 24 that's translated forsaken and why is it important that we see that that's the same word well because that's where again things come together he was forsaken because he had forsaken the Lord he was left a forsaken man vulnerable open unprotected in his life which is why he ended up being killed in his wounded state he had been forsaken by God because he had forsaken the Lord that's again the teaching of the passage and his burial his burial was in the city of David but you notice they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings and that's deliberately said in contrast to the burial of his mentor

[39 : 30] Jehoiada very rarely is it said about any king that he was not buried among the tombs of the kings but it's said about Joash and in contrast as we saw the burial of Jehoiada the priest he was buried among the kings in the city of David there's the contrast a man of God who wasn't a king and he's buried with the kings because he was faithful to God a king of Judah who wasn't faithful to God when he was buried he was buried but not among the kings there's the contrast between faithfulness to God and unfaithfulness he was brought up in the ways of the Lord that was good but he abandoned them and that was disastrous as it will be for ourselves if we turn our backs on our godly upbringing let's pray we thank you again

Lord for giving to us these accounts in your word that are so relevant for our own lives and for our own age and we pray for grace that we might indeed learn from them how important it is to follow you with our whole heart and how important oh Lord that your own Holy Spirit should live within us that we should be ready and find ourselves protected and guarded against every strange wind of doctrine that would lead us away from faithfulness to God be with us now throughout the day we pray accept our worship and cleanse us from sin for Jesus sake Amen