



LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

“Church and State IV”

Ps. James Lowe - July 26, 2015

WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. *No right or wrong answers.*

- Were you more of a leader or a follower among your friends when you were growing up?
- Of all your friends throughout your life, who influenced you the most?
- Who or what from the entertainment or sports world influenced you as a teenager?

WORD (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at <http://www.bethelworld.org>

Psalm 1:1-6 ESV *“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”*

What words are we listening to? Are we are meditating on? What is shaping our thoughts and influencing our lives? Is it what God says? Is it the Word of God, the Bible?

1 Kings 22:1-5 ESV

“For three years Syria and Israel continued without war. But in the third year Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. And the king of Israel said to his servants, “Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, and we keep quiet and do not take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?” And he said to Jehoshaphat, “Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?” And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.” And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “Inquire first for the word of the Lord.””

Jehoshaphat made the egregious error of thinking he could join with king Ahab in the two nations' interest. Light cannot mix with darkness. What has righteousness to do with unrighteousness? We must avoid entangling alliances that would cause us to go in directions contrary to God's will.

1 Kings 22:6-7 ESV *“Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, “Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?” And they said, “Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king.” But Jehoshaphat said, “Is there not here another prophet of the Lord of whom we may inquire?””*

There are always plenty of people who will tell us their own wisdom, counsel, and thoughts for how we should live and what we should do. Jehoshaphat knew that the counsel of people who don't walk in God's ways was not what he needed in order to do God's will. We need God's counsel in all areas of our lives, not the counsel of the world which doesn't walk in God's ways.

1 Kings 22:13-14 ESV *“And the messenger who went to summon Micaiah said to him, “Behold, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king. Let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably.” But Micaiah said, “As the Lord lives, what the Lord says to me, that I will speak.””*

We need to hear what God says, not what we want to hear. We need the truth, not a false comfort or hope. God's word will always lead us to him, which always results in mercy, grace, and restoration. Sometimes, however, we may first need to repent and perhaps even endure some difficulty.

1 Kings 22:17 ESV *“And he said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the Lord said, ‘These have no master; let each return to his home in peace.’””*

Micaiah warned Jehoshaphat of what would come because of his partnership with Ahab. They would fail in battle. Jehoshaphat had already foolishly committed himself to Ahab, which was a terrible decision. We must not bind ourselves to those who stand against the Lord and his ways.

1 Kings 22:29-32 ESV *“So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your robes.” And the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle. Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, “Fight with neither small nor great, but only with the king of Israel.” And when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, “It is surely the king of Israel.” So they turned to fight against him. And Jehoshaphat cried out.”*

God's mercy and providence spared Jehoshaphat in battle that day. Ahab, however, was killed in battle. Jehoshaphat could have been spared this entire ordeal, if he had consulted the Lord first before committing himself in an alliance with King Ahab of Israel. Jehoshaphat should have never made an alliance with Ahab. Once he did, he should have broken it off because he knew better.

Jehoshaphat learned from his failure. He avoided entangling affairs with the backslidden northern kingdom in the future (1 Kings 22:48-49). Later in his reign, Jehoshaphat and the kingdom of Judah were being threatened by several nearby nations. He and the people cried out to the Lord, who spoke to them through a prophet and delivered them from their enemies (2 Chronicles 20). Jehoshaphat trusted in God and put God's word first. He didn't make the mistake he had made in the time of Ahab.

We must always desire to know and do God's counsel for every area of our lives. Scripture provides us with the foundation for understanding God's will and ways. Most of our lives can be clearly ordered simply by knowing and understanding Scripture well. To this we must add prayer, because God responds to us and will guide us by his Holy Spirit when we pray. This is important when Scripture doesn't speak directly to some issue or decision we are facing. And we also need godly counsel from godly people who know us and with whom we walk together in pursuit of Jesus and his kingdom.

PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.

- Why does God not want us to become deeply entangled with ungodly people? Under what circumstances is this especially true?
- Are you entangled with anyone in such a way that you are being led into compromise?
- How should a Christian honor and love their spouse, if their spouse is an unbeliever? (Note: God's Word teaches us to keep our marriage covenant even if our spouse is an unbeliever.)

PRAYER (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Ask God to reveal any entangling relationships to you that need to be either adjusted or ended. Ask God to show you what you need to do.
- Ask God to reveal his counsel to you regarding any matters about which you are uncertain regarding his will.
- Ask God to give you both courage and wisdom to do his will, especially concerning anything that you consider to be difficult and challenging.