**Faith of our Fathers**

2 Kings 11 and 2 Chronicles 22-23 tell a fascinating story of Jehoiada the priest and his wife Jehosheba, saving the one-year old grandson of the wicked Athaliah who was in the process of murdering all the royal heirs to solidify her political power. They hid young Jehoash for six years, then crowned him as the rightful king at the age of seven. Athaliah was executed for her murderous treason and Jehoash began his forty-year reign. Needless to say, a seven-year-old king needed a lot of guidance and training.

A statement in 2 Kings 12:2 is both revealing and sad. “Jehoash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him.” In fact, every indication is that, during his reign, Jehoash’s heart was in the right place. He commanded that the dedicated gifts brought to the temple be used to make badly needed repairs.

Unfortunately, the dedication of Jehoash appeared to vaporize at the death of his mentor, Jehoiada. The officials of Judah preferred idol worship and took advantage of the priest’s death to make their appeal to Jehoash and he heeded their requests. They abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their fathers and served the Asherim and the idols. God sent them prophets to warn them, but they would not listen.

2 Chronicles 24:20 tells us that the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest and he delivered an important message to the people of Judah. “Thus God has said, ‘Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD and do not prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He has also forsaken you.’” The murder of Zechariah by Jehoash the king is one of the most heartbreaking stories in all of Scripture. Jehoiada and Jehosheba had risked their lives saving Jehoash as a child and had given him his rightful place on the throne. Jehoiada had devoted his life to teaching and guiding Jehoash through the difficult task of governing a great people. But when Jehoiada’s son brought him an important message from Jehovah Himself, he gave the command for Zechariah to be stoned to death in the court of the temple. *How could he?*

I don’t know what Jehoiada could have done differently; perhaps nothing. But there is a lesson in the story for all of us. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” In so doing, one thing is critical: ***I must help my children develop their own faith, not simply accept mine.***

Paul praised Timothy’s mother and grandmother for teaching him the Scriptures and for passing their faith along to him. But Paul also emphasized Timothy’s personal responsibility for his own faith. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

We must train our children in the skills to accurately handle the word of truth. It is not enough for me to tell them what the Book says, I must teach them to use the Scriptures in such a way that they may “understand what the will of the Lord is” themselves (Ephesians 5:17). I must impress on their minds the importance of the diligent effort necessary for them to present themselves approved to God. If I do my job right, my children’s confidence and trust will be in God’s word long after I am gone.

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