

JEHOSHAPHAT . . . the king who sank his navy
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(2 CHRONICLES 20: 35-37)

Unholy alliances between saint and sinner were never in the will of God, and Christians who enter into such partnership cannot expect to receive the blessing of the Almighty. This applies to business, matrimony, and any other realm where temptation seeks to undermine the righteous. Against the sombre background of history, the command of God is clearly written: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6: 14). It is an indisputable fact that most of the people who have made shipwreck of their Christian testimony have done so because they failed to observe this important command. History is filled with examples of this type; but one of the most startling is that of Jehoshaphat, whose madness sent a fleet of great vessels to the bottom of the sea.

A Great Faith Singing

The silly monarch who entered into a fatal alliance with evil should have known better! Previous experience had taught him the value of obedience to the will of God; and for the tragedy which eventually overwhelmed him, he had no one to blame but himself. Years before he had faced an army of invaders, and had realized the hopelessness of his task. He had desperately cried to God, and his petition had been granted. He spoke to the people and said, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper ~" (2 Chron. 20 : 20). Then he appointed a choir to lead his troops into battle, "And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir . . . and they were smitten" (v. 22). Jehoshaphat went forth to collect the spoils of war, but he was a stupid man! He continued to stare at the treasure, and the gold dust entered his veins.

A Great Fool Slipping

"And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziab king of Israel, who did wickedly: and he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Ezion-gaber" (vv. 35, 36). Unless a man abides in the shadow of the Almighty, the possession of much money can be dangerous. At first the king of Judah refused to enter into a pact with the king of Israel, for the ancient writer has said, "Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold . Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not" (1 Kings 22 :48, 49). This earlier refusal was, however, followed by an acceptance of the offer of help, and soon the workers were very busy in the shipyards of Ezion-gaber. Slowly a splendid navy began to take shape, and the entire nation spoke of the expedition soon to set sail in search of the gold of Ophir. Poor Jehoshaphat! He had forgotten the advice of the wise man, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Prov. 1:10).

A Great Fleet Sinking

"Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy

JEHOSHAPHAT . . . the king who sank his navy works" (2 Chron. 20 : 37). Probably Ahaziah smiled at the prediction, for no prophet should interfere with his plans. And if Jehoshaphat felt afraid, he had not the courage to renounce his unholy alliance. Thus the scene was set for the greatest shipping disaster of the ancient world. The gathering crowds had little idea of the impending tragedy as they filled the streets on that colourful day. The men whose skill had created the ships patiently waited to cheer as their vessels sailed toward the horizon. Only the prophet of God remained pensive and sad. The cheering broke out afresh as the royal friends gave their blessing to the expedition; but suddenly, with devastating fury, a tempest came to drive the great vessels to destruction. The plunging ships carried Jehoshaphat's hopes and reputation to the bed of the ocean, and he never recovered from the shock of that awful catastrophe. God removed him from high office, and soon a funeral procession made its way through the streets of his capital city. The expedition had been ruinous. He had forgotten that a poor king can be happier than a wealthy corpse!

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