



Joash: Tripping at the Finish Line

Lesson 13

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: (2 Timothy 4:7)

Few things are more devastating than watching a runner train, prepare, and qualify for the big race, only to be part of the way through and trip and crash. There is a sense of loss and disappointment over the wasted opportunity. Yet missing out on a medal or ribbon is nothing compared to eternal loss that followers of God face when they get to the end of their lives and make one or a handful of foolish decisions that derails much of the good they have done. Some Christians live almost their whole lives faithfully serving God, following His Word, and living for others only to get to the end and make major mistakes. God isn't looking for faithful starters, or even faithful runners, He's looking for faithful finishers.

This is a sobering and uncomfortable truth, but it's a reality that must not be ignored, because it's a danger facing everyone who seeks to follow God. This king we will study in this lesson is a sad case study of those who start well but trip at the finish line.

What does it look like to fail God near the end of one's life?

Why do people fail God near the end of their life?

I. The Rise of Joash (2 Chronicles 23:1-21; 2 Kings 11:1-21)

The country stood on the precipice. God had promised an unending dynasty to David, a dynasty that certainly looked like it had ended. But what people living at the time didn't know was that God had a man for the hour: the godly priest Jehoiada who was courageously hiding the true last son of David.

A. Jehoiada designed a plan to overthrow Athaliah (2 Chronicles 23:1-11).

The story slows way down at this point. Jehoiada's plan and actions are related to us in painstaking detail. Jehoiada brought in the Levites and the local officials into his plot to overthrow the illegitimate queen. When the Levites rotated shifts, those rotating off were to be the muscle behind this coup, and the leaders were supposed to assemble a large crowd for the coronation. The people Jehoiada brought were completely on board with this program.

What does the response of the people tell us about how people viewed Athaliah? Why do you think no one else had stood up to her at this point?

How do you think people responded seeing the hidden heir after seven years of Athaliah?

B. Athaliah's reign comes to an end (2 Chronicles 23:12-15).

Finally, we find the last vestige of the reign of Ahab and Jezebel removed. The wicked influence of Baalism that

has spread like a cancer is cut out from the land. Athaliah finds out what is going on and makes a desperate attempt to keep her grasp on power, to no avail.

In what ways do the responses of Jezebel and Athaliah to their deaths parallel each other? What can we learn from this?

Why do you think that Jehoida instructed she be executed in the way in which she was?

C. Jehoiada leads the nation in revival (2 Chronicles 23:16-21).

We find one of the high points in the story of the kings at this point. Jehoiada, now that he had essentially all the power in Judah as mentor and father figure to the boy king, used this influence to charge the people to go back to following the Lord.

How is Jehoida's revolution different from the coup of Jehu? Why do you think this is the case?

II. The Revival under Joash (2 Chronicles 24:1-14; 2 Kings 12:1-16)

Now that Joash is firmly entrenched as king, the story turns to his actual reign. As he begins Joash follows the course marked out for him by Jehoiada and follows the Lord by revitalizing temple worship.

A. Summary of Joash's life (2 Chronicles 24:1-3)

We notice a couple of things in this summary. First, Scripture gives Joash a qualified thumbs up. We find that he did right... all the days of Jehoiada. As we continue with the story, we will watch as Joash turns from doing right after Jehoiada is taken from the scene. We also read the brief yet sad statement that Jehoiada got wives for him, but that thankfully these wives continued the endangered line of David.

B. Joash initiates the work (2 Chronicles 24:4-7).

We read in this section that Joash went about seeking to restore the temple to a place of usefulness to God. We read that it was at the initiation of Joash that this process was undertaken, and that he held even Jehoiada accountable when the process slowed because of inaction.

Why do you think the work wasn't carried out efficiently at first? What kind of an impact might this incident have played in the eventual abandonment of the Lord by Joash?

C. Joash finishes the work (2 Chronicles 24:8-14).

Joash instructs that rather than trusting the Levites in general to take up the collection, money was to be brought directly to the temple. When this happens, the people get on board and come and bring in the money necessary to do the repairs. The temple is reestablished and the daily sacrifices resume.

What ominous note do we see at the end of this section that we have already seen hinted at in the chapter before?

III. The Ruin of Joash (2 Chronicles 24:15-27; 2 Kings 12:17-21)

A. Joash turns from the Lord.

When Jehoiada finally does die, at the very old age of 130, Joash followed the sinful suggestions of the princes of Judah who encouraged him to return to the pagan practices of previous generations. Judah defaulted once again to the worship of idols that had previously been eradicated and went back to worshipping false gods and idols throughout the land.

Why weren't such leaders purged during the time of Jehoiada?

How do you think it was that Joash was persuaded to abandon the worship of God so quickly after the death of his mentor?

How is it that someone who had been so zealous to see the temple rebuilt would be so quick to abandon the Lord?

B. Joash ignores the Lord's warning.

God warns Joash by sending prophets and by bringing nations against Judah. Hazael, the king of Syria, threatens Judah and Joash escapes the wrath of the king by giving all of the treasure of the temple to the pagan king. God also apparently sent several prophets to Joash,

all of whom he ignored. Finally, Zechariah, son of Jehoida, the man who had saved Joash's life and made him king came and called out against the king for his wrong behavior. Joash responded by angrily having Zechariah killed. Scripture spares no punches when it calls Joash out for failing to repay the kindness that Jehoida had done for him. Zechariah's dying wish "The Lord look up on it and require (or avenge) it" was answered in the next few verses.

Notice where Zechariah was executed. Why does this matter in light of Jehoiada's command to execute Athaliah?

How did the interaction between Joash and Zechariah and Joash and the princes differ? Why did Joash listen to the princes and not Zechariah?

C. Joash pays the price.

Joash left God (24:18), so God left Joash (24:20). Joash conspired against the Lord's prophet and killed him (24:21), so Joash's servants conspired against him and killed him (24:25). Today we would describe this as "What goes around comes around." In Scripture it is called "You reap what you sow." God's justice is seen in that Joash received exactly what he gave. His wickedness and betrayal led to his death at the hand of wicked men who betrayed him.

Why do people continue to sin against God even when he warns them and they see the awful consequences of their sin?

The story of Joash teaches us some important lessons. First, your loyalty to God must be a personal matter. You can only borrow from someone else's spirituality for so long. Joash followed God faithfully, as long as Jehoida was leading him to do so. Once Jehoida was out of the way, Joash listened to different counselors who led him down a horrible path.

Secondly, You choose who influences you, but never how much they influence you. When Joash chose the wrong advisors, they inevitably led him down a crooked path that led to his destruction and the destruction of a godly prophet. You too must be careful lest the ones you follow lead you astray. If you continually surround yourself with counselors who don't follow God's Word, you will be influenced by them, and you will start to follow them.

Finally, this story reminds us that those who start well are not guaranteed that they will end well. Many servants of God have had a strong start but have wavered and eventually fallen. No matter where you are in life, you must continue to pursue God and trust in his faithfulness, recognizing we are never beyond the pull of our flesh (1 Corinthians 9:27; 10:12) but also that we are never beyond the power of God's grace (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

How can you know if your faith is in God or in one of his followers?

How do we determine who will be our counselors in life?

How do we keep from tripping at the finish line?