

Grace and peace to you from him who is, who was and who is to come. Amen.

When Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she went into action and destroyed all the royal heirs. ²But Jehosheba, King Joram's daughter and Ahaziah's sister, took Joash, the son of Ahaziah. She stole him away from among the king's sons, who were to be killed. She put him and his nurse in a bedroom. He was kept hidden from Athaliah so that he was not killed. ³He was kept hidden with her in the House of the LORD for six years while Athaliah was ruling over the land.

¹²Then Jehoiada brought out the king's son and set the crown on him and gave him the Testimony, and they made him king. They anointed him and clapped their hands and said, "Long live the king!"

¹³When Athaliah heard the noise of the guards and the people, she went to them in the House of the LORD. ¹⁴She looked, and there was the king standing beside the pillar according to the custom, and the officers and the trumpeters were in front of the king, and all the people of the land were celebrating and blowing trumpets. Then Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, "Treason! Treason!"

¹⁵Then Jehoiada the priest commanded the officers in charge of the units of the army, "Bring her out between the ranks! Anyone who follows her is to be put to death with the sword!" Because the priest had said, "She is not to be killed in the House of the LORD," ¹⁶they laid hands on her as she was going through the passageway where the horses enter the king's palace, and they killed her there.

¹⁷Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and people that they would be the LORD's people. He also made a covenant between the king and the people. ¹⁸Then all the people of the land went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed its altar and its idols till they were dust. They also killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars. Then the priest posted a watch over the House of the LORD. **This is God's Word for our meditation.**

Dear Friends,

Throughout history Satan has attacked God, God's plan of salvation and God's people. Sometimes the assault is very obvious, like when Satan took away Job's wealth and children and caused him intense physical suffering all in the attempt to try and get Job to turn his back on God. Or when Satan came and tempted Jesus after he had been fasting 40 days in the desert.

But sometimes Satan's attacks are more subtle like when he moved Saul to try and kill David so that Jonathan could become king, even though David was God's choice for the next king. Or when Satan used Peter to try and keep Jesus from going up to Jerusalem to fulfill God's plan of salvation. Or when Satan moved the Jews and others to persecute Paul and even get him thrown in prison in an attempt to stop the gospel from being preached. Satan is a powerful foe but God is more powerful and Satan has no chance when God's people turn to God for help.

As we consider the portion of scripture before us today, we see, **"What happens when the forces of Satan go up against the forces of God."** As we consider this portion of scripture before us today, may we realize that Satan is still launching his attacks against God's people – you and me – in many ways. The battles are still being fought but may the outcome of this story encourage us and remind us to look to God to bring us victory as we face the evils of this world.

I. Athaliah followed in the footsteps of her mother, Queen Jezebel. She worshiped Baal and lived only for herself. When her son, King Ahaziah, the king of Judah, died you would have expected her to grieve because she had lost a child. But Athaliah was a woman of opportunity. She saw the death of her son as an opportunity to become queen of Judah, but in order to do that, she had to kill all her grandsons so there would be no heir to the throne to challenge her takeover and that's exactly what she set out to do.

But she didn't get them all. One remained safe, hidden away in the temple of God. This was a pretty safe place because Athaliah didn't want to have anything to do with God. Baal was her god, along with power and greed. Athaliah assumed the throne in Judah and ruled for six years. We don't know much about her time in power but considering how she got there, it was probably a difficult time for the people she ruled over. She thought she had it made – she was determined that nothing could stop her.

Even when Joash, her grandson, was brought out and proclaimed to be king she thought she could stop it by accusing him and his supporters of treason. How ironic, because she had acted in such a treasonous way to become queen in the first place. Athaliah was a wicked and treacherous woman. Satan was using her to try and destroy the line of the Savior that was supposed to continue through the descendants of her dead son. And if Athaliah had been successful in killing all her grandsons then Satan would have won. But God is not fooled by any of Satan's actions or tricks. He is in control and knew exactly what was happening. He always keeps his promises and thus God preserved the line of the Savior by using his faithful people.

II. Jehosheba was one of the people God used to preserve his promise. She was the sister of Ahaziah (although Athaliah was not her mother) and she was married to a priest by the name of Jehoiada. When she saw the killing begin, she took Joash, the youngest son, and hid him. Why was she there at that time and why did she pick Joash? I think it is safe to say that God had a hand in this and it was his will that Joash would be the next king even though he was only one year old at the time.

Joash was raised by his aunt and uncle while remaining hidden in the temple. He came to know God's Word at a very young age and was also being prepared to be the next king. When Joash was seven years old, it was time for him to take his position as king. We don't know what prompted Jehoiada to pick this time but once again, we might say that God had a hand in prompting the actions of Jehoiada. While seven seems a pretty young age to become king, don't forget that Jehoiada would be there to advise the king and to continue his training in God's Word.

So Joash was brought out into public, a crown was placed on his head and according to God's law, he was given a copy of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. It was important for the king to know God's Word, to meditate on it, and to refer to it as he would rule. The announcement was made that here was the king and the people clapped and shouted giving their support for Joash as their new king.

God used his servant to do what was needed to preserve his promise. We have seen that throughout history as God used the Apostle Paul to reach out to the Gentiles and as he used Martin Luther to keep the gospel from being lost during the Middle Ages. Even today, God uses his people to preserve his Word, to proclaim it even when its message is not welcome and even in hostile times God brings his blessings to his people as he fulfills his promises and controls the outcome.

III. Sometimes we find it discouraging as the wicked seem to prosper and they sometimes do for a short period of time but eventually everyone faces God's judgment. Athaliah seemed to prosper for six years but faced God's judgment as she was put to death when she came out to try and stop God's plan to make Joash king.

It was time for the people to repent and turn to God. A new covenant was made between the king and the people and the Lord. The people pledged to be faithful to God. They not only spoke the words but also took action. They destroyed the temple of Baal and anything connected to the worship of this false God, including the priest of Baal.

We see the evils of the world every day in many ways. Never forget that Satan is behind the evil in this world and that he actively attacks Christianity and us in many different ways. We all have given in to Satan's temptations this past week – none of us is innocent and that is why it is so important to gather together and to remind each other that God has called us to be his own. He has redeemed us and our sins are forgiven. As a redeemed child of Christ Paul reminded us in his letter to the Ephesians, we are part of God's army. We have the full armor of God to protect us from Satan's attacks and to help us proclaim his God's Word faithfully.

We find comfort and strength in knowing that Jesus defeated Satan on the cross by paying for our sins and thus he holds the power over our greatest foe. So, look to Jesus to help you when Satan attacks. Look to Jesus to remind you that he is in control and even though the wicked may seem to prosper for a time – the victory will be his.

I can't promise you an easy week and your faith may be challenged but keep Jesus at your side, relying on him to help you resist the temptations that come your way. And when you fall short, may you always look to him to pick you up and to forgive you and help you move forward again.

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