

A perfect heart - Jehoshaphat

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:31] Jehoshua went out of the land and has prepared thine heart to seek God. Jehoshua had dwelt in Jerusalem and he went out again through the people from Beersheba to Mount Ephraim and brought them back unto the Lord God of their fathers. He sent judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah city by city and said to the judges take heed what ye do for ye judge not for man but for the Lord who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you. [00:01:02] Take heed and do it for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God nor respect of persons nor taking of gifts.

Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat sent of the Levites and of the priests and of the chief of the fathers of Israel for the judgment of the Lord and for controversies when they returned to Jerusalem. He judged them saying thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord faithfully and with a perfect heart. What causesoever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the Lord and so will wrath come upon you and upon your brethren. This do and you shall not trespass. And behold Ammariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the Lord and Zebediah the son of Ishmael the ruler of the house of Judah for all the king's matters. Also the Levites shall be officers before you. [00:02:03] Deal courageously and the Lord shall be with the good. Now in the next chapter, chapter 20 verse 20 this is when Jehoshaphat had to learn one of his lessons they rose up early in the morning and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa as they went forth Jehoshaphat stood and said hear me O Judah in the inhabitants of Jerusalem believe in the Lord your God so shall he be established believe his prophets so shall you prosper and when he consulted with the people he appointed singers unto the Lord and they should praise the beauty of holiness as they went out before the army and to say praise the Lord for his mercy endureth forever when they began to sing and to praise the Lord said ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir [00:03:02] which had come against Judah and they were smitten for the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir utterly to slay and destroy them and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir everyone helped to destroy another and when Judah came towards the watchtower in the wilderness they looked unto the multitude and behold there were dead bodies fallen to the earth and none escaped and when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them they found among them an abundance of riches with the dead bodies and precious jewels which they stripped off for themselves more than they could carry away and they were three days in gathering of the spoil it was so much it's sometimes good to have one text before us because we hear many words and I forget what the subject was so I'd like to take the ninth verse of chapter 19 that we read together [00:04:01] 2 Chronicles 19 verse 9 when the king Jehoshaphat

charged the Levites saying thus shall you do in the fear of the Lord faithfully and with a perfect heart sounds nice doesn't it for every one of us whatever you do do it in the fear of the Lord do it faithfully do it with a perfect heart the expression had come to Jehoshaphat the hard way it's interesting to see the genealogy as we know of this race of David David a man after God's own heart was set upon the throne at Jerusalem his son Rehoboam his grandson Rehoboam lost the throne for him [00:05:02] divided the kingdom and thereafter we know this throne of Judah was the place of the descendants of David and the various kings among queens reigned over the kingdom of Judah were noted in two different classes as being those who walked in the ways of their father David those who walked not in the ways of their father David simple as that you could have said of David a man of like passion as we a man that sinned grievously against the Lord a man too that confessed his sin although he had to bear the punishment the consequences of his sinful acts yet he was one who was so near to God [00:06:02] he could confess his sin it would have forgiven him but this was a man who received the throne from God and sought to deal as we were reading just now to do what he had to do in the fear of the Lord and faithfully with a perfect heart I like to think of the words he used to his son Solomon I've written them down because I lose my way in the Bible sometimes I've copied them out before I got here we read there that David said it's in the end of the first book of Chronicles and thou Solomon thy son know thou the God of thy father and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind sound advice for a father to his son wasn't it [00:07:03] he'd given a good example his sins were confessed as soon as he was aware of them he acknowledged, we read in Psalm 51 his guilt before God he had the assurance that he was still beloved of God communion was temporarily broken but he restored that by his confession and putting away his sin and so we find he's able to pass on to his son words of wisdom and he says thou Solomon my son know thou the God of thy father good advice for all of us to give to our children good for them to pass on to their grandchildren too isn't it know the Lord God of thy father very important isn't it we see this terrible thing for David himself we read the last words of David speaks of the wonder [00:08:01] of the one who is privileged to sit upon the throne that God has set up although my house be not so he says many of us I'm afraid have to say with heads hung in shame heads hung in shame even so my house is not so but how important it is isn't it to pass on this legacy of faithfulness it's good to see some families generation after generation many places where I visit I'm seeing again the fourth generation sometimes the fifth generation of those whom I knew when I was a young brother still going on with the Lord still being faithful fifth generation, five generations one after the other serving the Lord with faithfulness and with a perfect heart perfect? there's nothing perfect here no, what does perfect mean? [00:09:04] in a way we can see something of this in the example of David himself he was a man that saw things through God's eyes he was able to get this vision of things as they were before God and to follow that example and he gave this example to his son poor Solomon I think when he dedicated the temple he prayed a wonderful prayer it's very precious to read that prayer one of the things he said to the people when he told them how he was prepared for this great work and how his father had gathered together all the materials for the temple now he said, my people let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God to walk in his statutes and to keep his commandments as it is this day [00:10:01] perfect means an undivided attention so often we listen with half an ear to what people are saying we don't take it in it's important when God speaks to us that we listen with undivided attention a perfect heart is one that loves the things of God a heart that is engaged with the things of God ears that are open to listen to what he has to say with undivided attention we've sung about this in our hymns I take it we all desire this undivided attention to the word of God to what God has to say to us that's what was missing in some of these kings we read of the great grandson of David, Abijah his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God things started going wrong he and his grandson Rehoboam we know [00:11:01] went the ways of Israel after the flesh he gave a bad example followed by the kingdom of Israel we know absolutely one after the other 19 godless kings one after another we read they did that which was evil

in the sight of the Lord the remarkable thing is that Abijah had a godly son Asa it often happens this way in Asa we read it's very interesting to see of Asa that his heart was perfect all the days of his life his heart was perfect as to say he gave attention all attention to what God had to say to him you read his history you find there were things that went on there he had to learn the lessons but he gave attention to what God wanted him to do [00:12:02] and he did it and in this chapter we've been reading here we find that the next one in the line Jehoshaphat the son of a godly father listened to his godly father again it's not a perfect life the chapter before this is a sad chapter it's repeated in the scriptures in the second chapter of the first book of Kings and here repeated in the 18th chapter of the second book of Chronicles a sad chapter in the history of a godly man it says there he made an alliance with Ahab of all people Ahab a man who sold himself to evil more than any other king of Israel sold himself to evil he made an alliance with him what a dangerous thing it is what a dangerous thing it is to marry an unbeliever what a dangerous thing it is to go into business with an unbeliever [00:13:01] what a dangerous thing it is to ally ourselves with unbelievers we take over their practices their manner of speaking we take over their way of looking at things in the end you can't see any difference between us and the world but God was merciful to this man he sent a wise messenger we know it in the beginning of our chapter Joshua the king of Judah returned to his house in peace we should never have gone to war with Ahab allied himself he said your army is like my army my people your people nothing of the sort nothing in common ungodly horde of people who are idolaters how could this godly king ally himself with them and yet God allowed him to come back in peace so he nearly killed him you remember in the battle we know the story very well how they surrounded him [00:14:01] the Syrian king said fight with neither small nor great only with the king of Israel and Ahab had disguised himself he put on a private jacket and nobody would know the difference but he said you put your robes on you be an answer for the enemy and there was Joshua surrounded by the enemy and when he cried out the king of Israel he is not the king of Israel and they let him go God saved his life but he had no business to be there like Lot God had to drag him out of Sodom he made his home there and how many people today believers are making their home in this world digging themselves in here where they have no business to be taking over the colour of the world and about them God God was merciful to this man he sent a prophet to him Jehu the son of Hanani the seer [00:15:01] went out to meet him he said to King Jehoshaphat shouldst thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord that's plain speaking isn't it you can do with plain speaking sometimes what business have you to go and help the ungodly to love those that hate the Lord how can you do it therefore it is wrath upon them from before the Lord very solemn isn't it he didn't mince matters he spoke the truth to this man we need people to speak the truth even before those in high places sometimes they go on in their folly who's going to warn them here's a man ready to warn him a message from God nevertheless there are good things found in thee in that thou hast taken away the grace there are good things found in thee in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land that prepared thy heart to seek God God saw that little spark of faithfulness wonderful grace isn't it [00:16:01] wonderful grace as in the New Testament we read we never have thought it Lot was a righteous man you wouldn't have thought it would you from his behaviour that righteous man he says righteous Lot he vexed his righteous soul from day to day he had no business to be there to vex his soul now many of us are in places of compromise how can we serve the Lord if we're compromised this man had compromised himself as though it says here Jehoshaphat he came to a place where he belonged a place where the temple was a place where God had chosen to put his name to dwell there he came back to Jerusalem Jehoshaphat he came back to Jerusalem in peace and it says here he went out again through the people from Beersheba to Mount Ephraim [00:17:01] and brought them back unto the Lord God of their fathers he learnt the message he heard the message he learnt the lesson he brought them back to the God of their fathers he had to bring himself back first to worship his sin God said alright carry on bring your people back to worship me very important to bring people

back it's easy enough to go astray easiest thing in the world to go astray the way back is hard how often we find this we've been reading morning readings at home the book of Jeremiah the reader there how those people went down to Egypt God said don't go down to Egypt you don't belong there you've been redeemed out of Egypt don't go back to Egypt not only went back they took Jeremiah with them but God said no this you won't get back to your land [00:18:01] those that go down to Egypt will not get back to their land you'll die in Egypt haven't we seen this again and again those that turn their back on the Lord find a very very hard way back it's an exception to the rule anybody that forsakes the place where the Lord is in the midst comes back when they do come back it's after a life of sorrow and bitterness like Naomi don't call me Naomi anymore call me Myra the Lord has dealt hard with her yes he dealt hard with herself her husband had dealt hard with her very often people take this first step away not realising how bitter it's going to be and how hard it is to get back just think of the hundreds whom we knew when we were young you don't see any of them you don't see any of their family either they've gone back into the world [00:19:01] lost sight of those that go down into Egypt stay there and die there spiritual death for the sake of the children I will forgive them I'll tell a funny story it happened back in the village of Chewstoke in Somerset where we had relatives a little lady there had her husband not well and she sent a messenger to fetch the doctor he said he he drove out to this cottage out of Chewstoke he said what do you mean by bringing me here you look like a dead man the old man sat up in bed he said I've been dead doctor so I said hush George do be quiet doctor will do no best [00:20:03] he struck us as a funny story when we first heard it it was a very serious story there are dozens of us are dead we don't even know it and the doctor has pronounced us dead Sardis had a name to live and it thought it was alive it thought it was a prosperous church there are meetings today that are going on happily and cheerfully and you can hear their singing miles down the road and they're dead there's no life in it and the great physician said you're dead you don't know you're dead but you are dead oh if God would only awaken us to a sense of this we've been talking very much these last couple of days about the reason for the decline of the meetings in this country I suppose there's no one particular factor [00:21:01] but there are many factors and each of us needs to examine his or her own heart see how we've contributed to this decline how easy it is to take over the things of the world because our heart is not perfect before the Lord our God perfect undivided attention to what God has to say and that's why this man had to take the medicine the to bring him back to life again he brought them back he says to the God the Lord God of their fathers and the first thing he did was to set up judges there should have been judges they'd been told in law to set up judges but they'd forgotten all about the law every king we know according to the end of the 17th of Deuteronomy had to write out in that chapter [00:22:02] he had to write it out when he became king he had to read it every day of his life do you think Solomon read that? do you want me to read about Solomon? he says Solomon he came to pass when he was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods and his heart was not perfect as was the heart of David his father yet he'd been saying to the people hadn't he when he was a young man when he built the temple let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord your God he had the advice of a godly father my son be perfect of a perfect heart serve the Lord with diligence faithfully with a perfect heart but he didn't otherwise he would never have gone down to Egypt it was forbidden [00:23:02] he would never have multiplied gold and silver that was forbidden he would never have multiplied wives that was forbidden horses, wives, gold and silver going down to Egypt he did all those things he had no business to do but isn't it sad to think of this man who began so well he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God as was the heart of David his father it reminds us that the Lord God appeared to him twice having a vision like that how could he ever forget it he did forget it he worshipped the gods all the wives he gathered himself oh we don't realise that Satan has so many tools he can use so many devices somebody said he served a long apprenticeship [00:24:04] thousands of years he's been deceiving the sons of men and his particular target are the godly ones

he's after those who are seeking to serve the Lord if you're a hum-dumb Christian just settle on your knees he won't worry you at all you're doing his work there's only one who wants to serve the Lord faithfully you're a target straight away the devil he used all means to spoil the testimony oh haven't we seen it again and again it's happening today just the same as it ever has been in the church's history it is because of his because of a divided heart instead of being undivided attention to the word of God and so at last Jehoshaphat gets hold of the book of the law he said we ought to set up judges yes that was in the law too [00:25:01] so he did it and his advice here is take heed what ye do verse 6 take heed what ye do for you judge not for men but for the Lord who is with you in the judgment perhaps this is addressed more to older brothers and to younger ones but it is good advice for every one of us take heed what ye do we are called upon again and again to judge various matters he said take heed what ye do take heed he says here for you judge not for men but for the Lord who is with you in the judgment we like to postpone judgment we like to ask someone else to make the decision [00:26:01] we like to pass the buck we like to postpone it indefinitely and that is one of the reasons why there is so much weakness among us there is nobody who has the spiritual insight and power and undivided attention to the voice of the Lord to be able to judge things in a righteous manner take heed what ye do he says take heed what ye do and then he says thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord faithfully with a perfect heart he has learnt his lesson he is passing it on now to the others the judges and the Levites who are to instruct the people the spiritual teachers anyone that is passing on the word you are not doing it for men you are doing it for God he says how important [00:27:01] that our work should be in the fear of the Lord with a perfect heart faithfully done whatever cause it is he says ye shall warn them that they trespass not against the Lord so wrath come upon them upon you and them it is so easy to try to be neutral so easy to condone things that we know are wrong he says you can't do that you must be faithful warn them that they trespass not against the Lord this do and ye shall not trespass if we fail to warn others we are in a slippery path we are ourselves on a slippery path how we do need to be before the Lord [00:28:02] in these things we find so many meetings I have visited about a hundred gatherings in this in the United Kingdom I think over forty of those are completely closed another six or so are just about there does this say anything to us our own meeting has dwindled down although I must say we are about the only meeting in that area that has any young people at all precious few how good it is to see so many young faces here this evening I'm grateful that there is at least a company of those that are [00:29:01] seeking to serve the Lord to be obedient to his word in the younger generation it's good to see this but again the warning is this do do what I tell you do it faithfully in the fear of the Lord then he says at the end deal courageously and the Lord shall be with the good the good in the sense not people that haven't sinned people that are faithful the Lord will be with them deal courageously it needs some courage to deal with things we are constantly being confronted with problems confronted with decisions we have to make and it's good to say this is nice deal courageously and the Lord will be with the good those are on the right side of the word the good in the sense of having a desire to his will now we see this carried out in the next chapter in a practical way [00:30:01] he was invaded by all these various tribes the Mulgites the Ammonites the other multitude came from the other side of Syria they were threatening his country and says that Jehoshaphat feared now what is he going to do about it well he ought to have learned a lesson by now and apparently he has he says Jehoshaphat feared and set himself to seek the Lord and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah he didn't say I'll get a bigger army together he didn't say I'll join up again with the king of Israel although it's another king now no he didn't say that [00:31:02] he gathered them together to fast to ask help of the Lord and they came together out of all the cities of Judah to seek the Lord it was a good response these people said this man means it he's in earnest and they came from all the cities of Judah to support him in seeking the Lord's face it's good it's his kind of unity of purpose isn't it very good when we see this when brethren come together it was a unity of purpose to seek the Lord's face we've had meetings of humiliation and prayer we need to

have more and more I'm sure but there have been times of great blessing in the history of brethren even in their own experience there have been times of humbling ourselves before God and confession of our failure and weakness and unfaithfulness and God has been pleased to bless [00:32:01] and to raise up a testimony for himself as a result of this that's what he did here and they gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord and the Lord stood there and prayed and it's wonderful to see his prayer Lord God of our fathers art thou not God in heaven and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen in thine hand is there not power and might so that none is able to withstand thee art thou not our God who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel and gavest them the seed of Abraham my friend Daniel's prayer in the ninth chapter of his book where he reminded God of his holy temple of his people of his city of his interests sure that's all we should worry us at all are we concerned about our good name are we concerned about the brethren's good name [00:33:01] we haven't got them the Lord's interests should be one thing we sang it in our hymn that one desire was to serve him to be obedient to him to whom we had to give account and he did this he prayed in this wonderful way we find there as he pleaded in verse 14 the spirit of the Lord came upon this man Jehaziel he said Harken O Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem thou king Jehoshaphat thus saith the Lord unto you be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude for the battle is not yours but God's it wasn't his battle anymore he'd been fighting other people's battles he'd been fighting Ahab's battles it didn't work we can't be bothered about the world's battles the battle is God's [00:34:02] and God will give his own advice as to how this warfare verse 16 tomorrow go you down against them behold they come up by the cliff of Ziz ye shall find them at the end of the brook before the wilderness of Jeruel ye shall not need to fight in this battle set yourselves stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord with you O Judah and Jerusalem fear not nor be dismayed tomorrow go out against them for the Lord will be with you this is God's battle you don't need to fight just be obedient go forward and face them face up these evils don't try and forget them so many of us think if we forget these things they'll disappear they don't they don't disappear they get worse and worse he said go and face them go and face them but the Lord is with you don't be afraid don't be dismayed the Lord is with you and the Levites [00:35:01] were there they rose early in the morning and Jehoshua the king speaks to his people verse 20 hear me O Judah and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem believe in the Lord your God so shall ye be established believe his prophets so shall ye prosper it's just a question of obedience obedience and if there's obedience there'll be victory when he consulted with the people he appointed the singers unto the Lord most strange battlefield isn't it singers priests and Levites they went out before the army they went to meet the foe the singers what were they singing praise the Lord for his mercy endureth forever like the shout of Jericho when the walls fell down flat again the enemy was defeated when they began to sing and to praise [00:36:01] the Lord there were ambushments against them and they fought each other all they had to do was to go in and take the spoil they were enriched by this battle just look at it they found abundance both riches precious jewels more than they could carry away they were three days taking away the spoil that's the blessing of obedience and one thing God requires of us to listen listen to what he has to say and to be obedient it seems so simple doesn't it sometimes it seems so hard to us we always have our own methods it always worked before it doesn't work this time our methods don't work it's God's battle praise the Lord thinking of the boys that went the eldest son went out to across Europe [00:37:01] meeting some of the people one of his friends he met they had just come back their policy as they came into the border post was to praise the Lord praise the Lord and they took as their text almost the end of the book of Psalms I'd better look at it because I misquoted let the saints be joyful in glory let them sing aloud upon their beds let the high praises of God be in their mouth and the two-edged sword in their hand to execute vengeance upon the heathen and punishments upon the people to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron to execute upon them the judgment written this honour have all his saints all the saints of God can praise him the youngest

and the oldest we can all praise him and these boys said God open up the barriers just like that while they were praising [00:38:01] first place they came to in fact the man said Bibles? you can't have Bibles here and suddenly he was called right to the telephone and they prayed and they praised and another man came out he said everything in order good journey on they went with all their Bibles they weren't hidden they were just on top of the car they went through praising the Lord it was a sword that the enemy couldn't stand against if only we would praise him more if only we would obey him more God is waiting to bless us he's waiting to give us such a blessing there would be room enough to receive it all we've got to do is to gather up the spoil we should be enriched he enriches the blessings of obedience so may we know more of this can we sing together 364 again it's a prayer 364 have I an object Lord below to divide my heart from thee and to divert it even from the answers I constantly O teach me [00:39:01] quickly to discern cause my heart afresh to learn 364 Amen .