

HOW TO KEEP AMERICA STRONG AND FREE

By Jim Jess

The Bible, God's Word, teaches that God gave man freedom of will, or individual liberty, which is the basis for political freedom. God made man with the ability to reason and exercise free will to make choices and decisions. Our Founding Fathers understood the importance of this individual liberty and established a framework to secure liberty for future generations, the U.S. Constitution. But each generation must be vigilant to guard the freedoms won by previous generations and, in some cases, regain liberty that has been lost.

One of the responsibilities of government is to secure or protect the freedom of individuals within the society, be it a city, state or nation. Another duty of government is to ensure that its people are protected from harm or violence from external enemies who would harm or enslave them. In order to provide this protection, governments establish law enforcement structures, court systems, and national defense programs – all to accomplish three of the purposes of government described in the Preamble to the United States Constitution: “establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence.” These three purposes sum up much of what is required of our government to keep our nation strong and free.

An examination of the record of Jehoshaphat, one of the kings of Judah in Old Testament times, will give us some great understanding about how to keep our nation strong and free by applying principles from the Scriptures. In contrast to the ever-shifting approaches of our day, a biblical approach to maintaining our nation's freedom involves not only principles for preserving individual freedom, but also principles for maintaining national freedom or independence. Our nation's early statesmen referred to this as national sovereignty, which is the right of a nation to manage its affairs free of the influence or control of other nations. In the book of II Chronicles, we will investigate the reign of Jehoshaphat and how he applied several basic principles in order to keep the Kingdom of Judah strong and free. Additional scriptures relating to some of these principles will be reviewed as well.

The key principles for this study are five in number:

- Keeping God First
- Teaching God's Word in the Nation
- Ensuring Strong Military Defenses
- Avoiding Entangling Alliances
- Maintaining Civil Stability through the Rule of Law

We will examine how King Jehoshaphat applied these first three principles and the results he achieved. Next we will look at the fourth principle through the experiences of Jehoshaphat when he failed to avoid an entangling alliance. Finally, we will see what Jehoshaphat did to ensure civil stability in Judah. When Judah honestly and diligently applied these principles, no nation was a threat to its sovereignty or independence. In every instance when the people abandoned these principles by turning away from the one true God, the nation was enslaved. For freedom to continue in our nation, we must pursue a program that adheres to these principles and follows the conditions of God's Word for the times in which we live.

Keeping God First

This is not the first principle mentioned in chapter 17 of II Chronicles, but following the one true God was the first commandment and the first responsibility of the children of Israel, which included the Kingdom of Judah.

II Chronicles 17:3, 4:

And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim;

But sought to the *Lord* God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel.

Jehoshaphat followed what Jesus Christ later called the "first and great commandment" in Matthew 22:37 and 38. Jehoshaphat loved God with all his heart, soul and mind. He kept God first in his heart and thinking. He avoided the idol worship and idolatrous lifestyles associated with false gods such as Baalim and popularized by the kings of Israel after Judah and Israel had split into two kingdoms. At this very time, Ahab, the king of Israel, and his wicked wife Jezebel, were supporting hundreds of prophets of the false god Baal and encouraging devil-worship and rebellion against the true God in Israel. Jehoshaphat, in marked contrast to the winds of doctrine of his time, chose to serve the one true God and set a godly, righteous example for the people of Judah. The results were positively remarkable.

II Chronicles 17:5:

Therefore the Lord stablished the kingdom in his [Jehoshaphat's] hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance.

God caused Jehoshaphat to prosper because he carried out His Word. But Jehoshaphat decided to do even more.

Verse 6:

And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord: moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah.

Here we see the impact of Jehoshaphat's stand through actions that all of his people could see. King Jehoshaphat decided to carry out the Mosaic Law concerning idolatry and destroyed the "high places" and "groves" associated with idol worship. Since God's people were to have no other gods, Jehoshaphat would not tolerate the presence of idols designed to draw them away from the one true God. To allow the presence of these idols was contrary to God's laws, which he was determined to carry out.

In our day, however, it is not our place to remove idols, unless of course it is on a piece of property we own. If we hold legal title to a property, then it would be within our responsibility, and the correct biblical action would be to get rid of such idols. We have the right to control what comes into our homes, and the right to eliminate things from our homes or property that do not contribute to a godly atmosphere. If we own a business, we have the same authority and responsibility. If we work for someone else, we may have some responsibility, but the owner or manager above us would have the ultimate authority to support or overrule our decisions.

We have the biblical right and responsibility to steward those things with which we are entrusted. If someone else's property were involved, only a danger to our life and liberty or an eminent threat to the welfare of the community would justify our involvement in our neighbor's use of his own property. While we have the moral right to speak out against something that is evil, we may not have the legal authority to change something. Whether we can change something or not, it is always our right as sons of God to speak the Word that can bring deliverance in a situation.

Jehoshaphat did have the power, though, to change things in Judah. He was responsible, as the king, to lead his people according to God's laws. He set a great example for the kingdom by his commitment to God, as exemplified by his orders to take away the idols. But he did not stop there.

The Teaching of God's Word

II Chronicles 17:7-9:

Also in the third year of his reign he [Jehoshaphat] sent to his princes, *even* to Benhail, and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nethaneel, and to Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. And with them *he sent* Levites, *even* Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tobadonijah, Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, priests.

And they taught in Judah, and *had* the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.

Jehoshaphat instituted an educational program to instruct his people in the Word of God. The five princes mentioned in verse 7 implemented this program, and it was carried out by the nine Levites (members of the tribe responsible for the care of the Temple and other spiritual matters) and the two priests (who also were Levites) named in verse 8. These teachers of the "law of the Lord" fanned out across the kingdom to teach the people. If anyone was ignorant of God's Word in Judah, they did not have to stay that way. Spiritual truths and God's standards for life were set before the people. The truth of the first and great commandment, to love God with all the heart, soul and mind was heralded throughout the land. This teaching of the Word was an element of great spiritual significance that contributed in a singular way to Judah remaining a free and sovereign nation.

Strong Military Defenses

II Chronicles 17:1:
And Jehoshaphat his son...

Jehoshaphat was the son of Asa, the previous king, who had also loved and served God.

II Chronicles 17:1:
...reigned in his [Asa's] stead, and strengthened himself against Israel.

Jehoshaphat "strengthened himself against Israel" because the kingdom of Israel was ruled by the wicked king Ahab and his devilish wife Jezebel. Later, as we shall see, Jehoshaphat formed an alliance with Ahab and nearly lost his life. But early in his reign, he behaved himself wisely and established his kingdom by applying principles of truth.

Verse 2:
And he [Jehoshaphat] placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken.

Military strength was a key element in keeping Judah strong and free. Judah's physical defenses – its national defense arsenal and its troops – were adequate to defend Judah and intimidate any potential enemy who was considering an attack. While this is not the most important spiritual principle, it is the first one mentioned in this passage. Jehoshaphat strategically deployed his forces and weaponry so that his nation would be able to resist and defend itself against would-be attackers, especially the armies of Israel who might try to win back hard-won territories such as the cities of Ephraim which King Asa, Jehoshaphat's father, had captured.

The continued development of military technology is an important aspect of military strength. In the dangerous world in which we live, we cannot skimp on the research and development of defense technology. In order to supply the most up-to-date tools with which to equip our national defense arsenals, research and development must constantly move forward. Our arsenals should exist to defend our nation, not to start new wars. As President John Quincy Adams said, America "goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy," because such an interventionist philosophy is inconsistent with the principles of liberty and free societies. We must, however, have the finest military weaponry with which to beat back the "monsters" if they should threaten our territory.

Uzziah, another of the kings of Judah who loved God, highly developed Judah's military capabilities in his day.

II Chronicles 26:14 and 15:
And Uzziah prepared for them throughout all the host shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings *to cast* stones.

And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped till he was strong.

For the men of his army, Uzziah had defensive weaponry prepared, which included shields to protect his men from flying arrows and stones and the blows of swords; helmets to protect the head; and habergeons, which were coats of mail. A coat of mail, which covered the neck and breast, consisted of a base garment with flat pieces of metal sewn on it. The metal pieces would overlap one another like shingles or the scales of a fish and thus protect the body from injury.

Uzziah also had offensive weaponry prepared. These included spears, which were used as javelins to cover short distances, and lances for closer contact with opposing troops; bows and slings, which could be used to shoot arrows and sling stones with great accuracy from a distance; and "engines," which were perhaps the latest in weapons technology for that day.

Biblical customs scholar James Freeman believes that Uzziah's development of these "engines" was the origin of what became known as *ballista* and *catapulta*. These weapons later became legendary through their successful use by the armies of Rome. *Ballista* were used to launch stones weighing from fifty to as much as three hundred pounds. *Catapulta* were used to shoot darts or arrows. Both were powered by elastic string composed of twisted hairs, thongs, or plant fibers.¹

These large weapons were placed along the tops and corners of the wall of the city or in hollows along the outside of the wall. These strategic positions were called bulwarks, or battlements, and were ideal locations for catapults and ballistae. From the battlements, these launching weapons could threaten invading armies over a wide area.

It is significant indeed if Uzziah was the first to develop such weaponry. But then, why should it be surprising? Proverbs 8:12 says, "I wisdom [referring to the wisdom of God] dwell with prudence, And find out knowledge of witty inventions." God's people should be the first to come up with the best new inventions, including those that might be necessary to provide for the defense of a nation. This is another reason for continuing research and development in weapons technology today, regardless of the threat – or absence thereof – that we perceive at this moment. We do not know what is "lurking in the weeds," so to speak, and we had better be ready with the best we can muster to defend ourselves.

In the 1990s, drastic cuts in U.S. military expenditures appeared expedient to many. Military planners viewed a world in which the threat of nuclear annihilation had diminished. While the level of tension between the governments of the U.S. and the former U.S.S.R. had subsided, a rapid turn of events could have quickly swept "democratic reforms" under the rug and authoritarians could have returned to power. Some argue that they already have, given the repression of some freedoms under the present regime in Russia.

The Stalinist version of Soviet Communism is no longer in vogue, but many communists still hold positions of authority within Russia and other nations of the former Soviet multi-national state. The communist masters of the former Soviet "republic" of Kazakhstan took control of that country upon the break-up of the U.S.S.R. Nearby Turkmenistan, which borders Iran, continues to be ruled as a one-party state by an authoritarian system. Many of the other former Soviet "colonies" are living under some form of "democratic socialism." Former communists have even regained influence in Poland, which was the first Soviet satellite nation to break from Moscow and hold free elections after the fall of Soviet Communism. Given the number of nuclear weapons controlled by the former Soviet Union, the danger of a government unfriendly to the U.S. acquiring one of these weapons is a continuing threat. Add to this the threats posed by international terrorism of the Islamic fundamentalist variety, and it becomes clear why our nation cannot fall behind in developing new technology that will enhance our defenses.

We must continue to fund military research and development of defense technology as a basic element of a strong national defense. This is more important than how much nuclear firepower we have versus how much our enemies have. The development of new military technologies could allow the U.S. to make

significant breakthroughs that would provide an additional layer of national defense capabilities.

Another important strategy for a strong military is to recruit and deploy personnel who maintain high physical, ethical and moral standards. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. It must be a priority of national policy to fill the ranks of our armed forces with the best available men and women to defend our nation when necessary. Successfully implementing this strategy can make the difference in victory or defeat on the battlefield. The American people and their government must demonstrate a commitment to military personnel and take the necessary actions to support our military men and women. Furthermore, the standards by which our armed forces operate must be based on the principles of liberty and wisdom upon which our nation was founded.

In the days of King David, great value was placed on the valor of the men who served in the army of Israel. The qualities of these men provide an excellent standard for the fighting men of our day.

I Chronicles 11:11-23:

And this *is* the number of the mighty men whom David had; Jashobeam, an Hachmonite, the chief of the captains: he lifted up his spear against three hundred slain *by him* at one time.

And after him *was* Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, who *was one* of the three mighties.

He was with David at Paddisparaim, and there the Philistines were gathered together to battle, where was a parcel of ground full of barley; and the people fled from before the Philistines.

And they set themselves in the midst of *that* parcel, and delivered it, and slew the Philistines; and the Lord saved *them* by a great deliverance.

Now three of the thirty captains went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam; and the host of the Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim.

And David *was* then in the hold, and the Philistines' garrison was then at Bethlehem.

And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that *is* at the gate!

And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that *was* by the gate, and took *it*, and brought *it* to David: but David would not drink *of* it, but poured it out to the Lord.

And said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with *the jeopardy* of their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it.

These things did these three mightiest.

And Abishai the brother of Joab, he was chief of the three: for lifting up his spear against three hundred, he slew *them*, and had a name among the three.

Of the three, he was more honourable than the two; for he was their captain: howbeit he attained not to the *first* three.

Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done many acts; he slew two lionlike men of Moab: also he went down and slew a lion in a pit on a snowy day.

And he slew an Egyptian, a man of *great* stature, five cubits high; and in the Egyptian's hand *was* a spear like a weaver's beam; and he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear.

Qualities such as these are needed in the armed forces of our nation today. Qualities such as fearless believing and courage are impossible if someone lives in fear, so we must have well-trained men and women who think like champions and fight like they intend to win. Another important quality of these "mighty men" was their devotion to their leader, in this case, King David. And because they were capable of carrying out orders and going beyond the call of duty, they were entrusted with leadership responsibilities themselves. The qualities of the men of valor who served David and their ability to lead those under their command contributed to the impregnability of the army of Israel when the king and the people followed God.

In order to maintain its fighting spirit and *esprit de corps*, the presence of homosexuals and lesbians in the armed forces of the United States should not be permitted. Their presence only detracts from the strength of our forces. In time of war, the homosexual component in our forces can lead to the undermining of the morale – and therefore the believing – of the troops.

The Bible teaches in Romans chapter 1 and in numerous Old Testament scriptures that homosexuality is wrong and evil.

Romans 1:26-28:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.

Verse 28 says that a homosexual has a reprobate mind. This is a mind void of judgment. Homosexuals do not think or reason in a sound manner. They do not make good decisions, most obviously demonstrated by their unnatural and unhealthy sexual practices. They expose themselves to a number of health problems that result from their high-risk behavior. The way they behave is contrary to any definition of a healthy lifestyle.

Homosexuality is not a civil rights issue, but a behavioral one. Whereas the racial integration of the U.S. armed forces made perfect sense because African-Americans had been discriminated against solely on the basis of their race, this is not the case for homosexuals. The only thing that distinguishes homosexuals from anyone else is their unnatural and depraved sexual practices.

In battlefield situations, the cohesion of military units is a key component to victory. Such cohesion is threatened by the presence of homosexuals. In addition, the AIDS epidemic would only be unleashed further if homosexual activity is encouraged, and certainly it would be if more homosexuals were encouraged to enter the armed forces. The full ban on homosexuals and lesbians serving in our military should be restored.

Judah's Successful "Freedom Policy"

The result of the actions just described – namely loving God first and eliminating idolatry, having God's Word taught in the nation and maintaining a military strong enough to discourage potential enemies – brought unparalleled strength, prosperity, and civil calm to Judah. Judah's sovereignty was secure.

II Chronicles 17:10-13:

And the fear [respect] of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that *were* round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.

Also *some* of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute silver; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he goats.

And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles, and cities of store.

And he had much business in the cities of Judah: and the men of war, mighty men of valour, *were* in Jerusalem.

Jehoshaphat and the kingdom of Judah prospered and earned the respect of all the countries around them. No one dared lift a finger against Judah militarily because they would have been obliterated. Even the unbelievers in the surrounding countries brought gifts to Jehoshaphat. Judah remained sovereign and free as a nation.

These first three principles in operation could be thought of as a "freedom policy" or "national sovereignty policy" for Judah. These first three principles are the foundational elements for the sovereignty of a nation. The last two are important as well and we will examine them next.

Avoiding Entangling Alliances

Some time after Jehoshaphat had established his three-point "freedom policy," a situation placed Judah and King Jehoshaphat in grave danger. This situation was the result of an ungodly alliance that Jehoshaphat

established with Ahab, the wicked king of Israel. For a nation to remain strong and free, and maintain its sovereignty, it should steer clear of entangling alliances. In this matter, the great king, Jehoshaphat, who had walked so well for God previously, made a serious error in judgment. And it almost cost him his life.

II Chronicles 18:1:

Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab.

Jehoshaphat made an alliance with Ahab, the wicked king of Israel. The Scriptures speak plainly about the wickedness of Ahab.

I Kings 16:30-33:

And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that *were* before him.

And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jereboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal [an idol, a false god], and worshipped him.

And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.

And Ahab made a grove [another false god]; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

According to II Chronicles 21:6, a major element in "joining affinity with Ahab" was the marriage of Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son, to the daughter of Ahab. Thus, the evil associated with the house of Ahab could spread to Jehoshaphat and his family through his daughter-in-law.

II Chronicles 18:2 and 3:

And after *certain* years he [Jehoshaphat] went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that *he had* with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramoth-gilead.

And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead? And he [Jehoshaphat] answered him, I *am* as thou *art*, and my people as thy people; and *we will be* with thee in the war.

Jehoshaphat had said to Ahab, "I *am* as thou *art*." He was probably referring to the two men's common ancestry in the house of Israel, and perhaps their family ties. This and the fact that they were both kings were about the only things these two had in common. Ahab was an idolater, married to a wicked woman from a nation of idolatrous pagans. Jehoshaphat was a wonderful man, who – up to this point – had really walked for the one true God. But he failed to recognize the spiritual wickedness with which he was associating.

When Jehoshaphat went to Samaria to visit Ahab, Ahab undoubtedly "wined and dined" him in the grandest style of the day. Ahab was diplomatic, patriotic, and said all of the right lines. And at just the right moment, he popped the big question. "You'll help me fight these heathens, won't you?"

Jehoshaphat was taken in, and wanting to be a fine and patriotic statesman himself, agreed to do Ahab's bidding. II Chronicles 18:4-27 shows how Jehoshaphat believed they should consult with a prophet, a man of God, before they went into battle. Ahab obliged him by producing not just one but four hundred prophets—false prophets – who prophesied that victory would be theirs and that they should seize the moment. Jehoshaphat was not altogether pleased with this answer and asked further for a "prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him."

Ahab produced a true prophet of God who prophesied disaster if the two kings went to fight at Ramoth-gilead. Ahab then vilified the true prophet and had him imprisoned. One wonders what was going on in Jehoshaphat's mind at this time. Evidently, it was not enough to change his mind, because II Chronicles 18:28 indicates that the two kings headed out for the battle.

At this point, Ahab came up with a devilishly-inspired plan which put Jehoshaphat's life in real danger.

II Chronicles 18:29:

And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and will go to the battle; but put thou on thy robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself; and they went to the battle.

Ahab would appear to be a regular soldier to the enemy, but Jehoshaphat would be noticeable in his royal garb.

Verse 30:

Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots that *were* with him, saying, Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel.

What the Syrian army did not know was that Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, would be the only man dressed in royal garments among the armies of Israel and Judah that day.

Verses 31 and 32:

And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It *is* the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him; and God moved them *to depart* from him.

For it came to pass, that, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back again from pursuing him.

God saved Jehoshaphat when Jehoshaphat turned to God and requested His help, even though he was behaving contrary to God's will. Jehoshaphat had entered into an alliance with an ungodly man whom the god of this world, Satan, used to nearly bring about Jehoshaphat's death. God brought about a miracle. The Syrians recognized that Jehoshaphat was not the king of Israel and spared Jehoshaphat's life. Ahab, according to verses 33 and 34, was shot at random by an archer and died in the battle. Israel was not victorious that day, as the false prophets had prophesied, but was defeated, as the true prophet of God had indicated they would be.

When Jehoshaphat arrived home, he was reproved by another prophet of the true God.

II Chronicles 19:1-3:

And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.

And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer [prophet] went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore *is* wrath upon thee from before the Lord. Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.

Regardless of how wonderfully Jehoshaphat had conducted his life and the rule of his kingdom previously, he made a major mistake in forming an alliance with Ahab and providing assistance in the war against the Syrians. If Ahab was an ungodly man, was it likely that his objectives in this battle were godly ones? Jehoshaphat had allied himself with someone who had very different values and objectives from himself. But more importantly, Ahab was spiritually depraved because of his rebellion against the true God.

Whenever nations form military alliances, the potential for armed conflict is spread to more parties. Of course, the idea behind such alliances is that allies present a stronger challenge to a potential aggressor than one nation alone; and the aggressor would be discouraged from taking military action against such a united front. In the case of Ahab and Jehoshaphat, Ahab merely wanted Judah's military strength to fight the Syrians. It is not apparent that there was any benefit at all to the Kingdom of Judah for helping Israel against the Syrians. Ahab simply used his family ties to take advantage of Jehoshaphat's good will.

Are all alliances "ungodly"? Perhaps not, but an alliance may unwittingly be formulated in order to achieve some noble objective that later infringes upon the liberties of freedom-loving peoples. This may occur if ungodly or misguided men develop an alliance, or if one or more of the parties to the alliance are dishonest or have a secret agenda that would give them an advantage at the expense of the other parties.

An important point should be mentioned at this juncture. It is difficult, today, to label a nation an "ungodly nation," in the way that nations were in the Old Testament. In Old Testament times, Israel was the nation of God's chosen people. Other nations that opposed Israel were filled with people who were idolaters and sought to destroy Israel. These were "ungodly nations."

The United States today is not the modern Israel, contrary to what some have taught. Some religious leaders propound that God instituted a covenant relationship when the Pilgrims and Puritans came to what is now the United States, but there is no biblical evidence to indicate that anything like this is available in our day. God established his covenant with Israel in the Old Testament and sealed it with the Mosaic Law.

Today, we live in what the Bible teaches is the Age of Grace, or Grace Administration. In our day, people in many nations are born again of God's spirit. These believers are sons of God by birth and have no need for a covenant relationship. A "new covenant" will indeed be instituted in the future, but only after the return of Christ and several other events have occurred.

In light of these truths, it is difficult to designate nations of the world today as "ungodly" in the way that term was used in the Old Testament. Today, some countries might well deserve the title of "ungodly nation," due to the consistent and nearly unanimous idolatry of their people. With respect to foreign policy, we must realize that ungodly and even wicked leaders rule or have great influence in most nations – including the United States. Our government was formed to secure the liberty of its people and to rule by "consent of the governed." For our elected public servants to contract alliances with ungodly leaders who do not rule by "consent of the governed" may not be the wisest course of action. The United States should conduct foreign relations with nations that govern themselves based on the consent of their people.

Nations must have an interest in accomplishing something mutually beneficial if they are to agree to a treaty, and no nation should ignore its own national interests or sacrifice its sovereignty in order to adopt a treaty that will benefit a privileged group within the society, be it one with a self-serving financial interest or a narrow ideological one. The wrong treaty can dramatically impact the people within a nation in a negative manner if wisdom is not used in framing such agreements. The Treaty of Versailles, which concluded World War I, is considered by many to be a factor that contributed to the rise of Hitler in Germany, which led to the outbreak of World War II. The treaty punished the German people so harshly due to the amount of the reparations that Germany had to pay that the German economy faltered for years. The economic hardships in Germany provided the opportunity for someone like Adolf Hitler to come along and capitalize on the public's discontent. He built on their discontent and anger by pointing to the harshness of the treatment of Germany by the Allies. In time, he became very popular, eventually rising to the position of Chancellor in Germany. Once this occurred and Hitler had consolidated his power, his drive for power was unchecked and he pursued the path to war with his neighbors. While the treaty appeared initially to be beneficial to the Allies, it was a disaster for Germany, and ultimately, the rest of the world.

An important consideration for U.S. foreign policy should be to avoid contracting alliances with nations dominated by ungodly men and women, particularly those who oppress their people and pursue objectives that only serve the interests of the governmental leaders. Alliances with these nations will only bear bitter fruit. Such arrangements could endanger our sovereignty, prosperity, and the lives of our citizens by drawing us into wars and other costly military adventures. Even if such warfare is avoided, these alliances tend to set up relationships in which the U.S. taxpayers become the "bank" for a host of nations seeking financial assistance. Such financial "aid" deprives our citizens of their hard-earned dollars, enriches corrupt foreign leaders and launches foolhardy schemes to improve the lot of the impoverished. This would be an easier pill to swallow if, at the least, some of these "anti-poverty" and "development" programs actually worked.

The numerous interlocking alliances that the U.S. has concluded with other nations only serve to magnify the power of those in positions of authority. Such agreements offer our leaders more opportunities to make decisions that might compromise our freedom, and more chances to construct a U.S.-United Nations-led global empire. History has shown that empires are generally incompatible with individual liberty. As the empire grows and the political leaders seek more and more power, the individual and his rights become less and less

important. The history of the now-defunct Soviet Union is testimony to this reality. As Josef Stalin's power grew, for instance, he conducted widespread purges by murdering his opponents. After World War II, when he subjugated the nations of eastern Europe, he maintained a repressive police state within the Soviet Union, ready to murder any dissenters as "counter-revolutionaries." He encouraged his handpicked tyrants in the "captive nations" of Europe to follow his example of leadership.

God's Word does not record to what extent Jehoshaphat accepted the reproof from God's prophet concerning his ungodly alliance with Ahab. Based on the information in II Chronicles 20:35-37, however, Jehoshaphat had not fully learned this lesson of avoiding ungodly alliances. These verses tell how, sometime later, he formed a commercial agreement with Ahaziah, king of Israel, the son of Ahab. The two kings pooled their resources to make ships that would sail to Tarshish. But God spoke by the prophet Eliezer and told Jehoshaphat that because of this arrangement with the wicked son of Ahab "the Lord hath broken thy works." The result was that "the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish."

This speaks loudly to believers in our day, particularly in light of the Scriptures in epistles to the Church.

II Corinthians 6:14 and 15:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?
And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

Each individual is free to determine what agreements they will make in their personal and business relationships. Believers are to avoid "unequal yokes," however. An "unequal yoke" for an individual is the same basic idea as an "entangling alliance" for a nation. Political leaders are not likely to be aware of the biblical principle regarding being unequally yoked with the wicked in entangling alliances. Perhaps the best recommendation for leaders in our nation would be to follow the advice of Thomas Jefferson concerning relations with foreign powers: "Peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations— entangling alliances with none."

Maintaining Civil Stability through the Rule of Law

After the prophet Hanani reproved Jehoshaphat for his military adventure with Ahab, Jehoshaphat strengthened the Kingdom of Judah by taking actions to ensure greater domestic stability. No nation can remain strong if civil authority breaks down at home. Jehoshaphat appropriately began his reform in Israel by reinvigorating the biblical education program he had begun some time before.

II Chronicles 19:4:

And Jehoshaphat dwelt at 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.

It does not say exactly what Jehoshaphat did to "bring the people back to God," but it must have involved reading and teaching from the Mosaic Law. The fact that he had to "bring them back" indicates there may have been a lapse in this godly education program. The re-initiation of this biblical education would have resulted in greater freedom, peace and stability among the people of Judah and other tribes of Israel that lived in these areas.

In order to maintain and correctly apply the standards of God's law that were being taught in Judah's society, Jehoshaphat set up a judicial system with judges in a number of locations. They would hear matters of dispute between parties and correctly apply the Law of Moses.

Verses 5-7:

And he set 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; take heed and do *it*: for *there is* no iniquity with the Lord

our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

Where the law was silent, or did not indicate a particular course of action, judges were to believe God to show them the best solutions. Jehoshaphat put judicial deliberations in the proper perspective when he told them, "Ye judge not for man, but for the Lord." One wonders what sort of decisions would come out of our contemporary judicial systems if jurists made their rulings in light of what God and His Word indicate are important. In the end, God, the righteous judge, will hold the final judgment and will hold all accountable for their actions.

Psalm 50:3-6:

Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

He shall call the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.

Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God *is* judge himself. Selah.

Romans 14:10b-12:

For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

These Scriptures bring a sobering perspective to a discussion about temporal, political authorities. While the politicians, the power-brokers, and the special interests may have their say today, on the day that God renders His judgment, the men of renown will be measured by God's standards. The judges of our day would do well to make their judgments with one eye on eternity, as opposed to an eye on their current position politically or in the legal community.

Of special importance in II Chronicles 19:7 is the ban on the "taking of gifts." This is in reference to bribes. The judges were not to receive bribes, for if they did, their judgment would be obscured and they could not judge with a clear mind. The Mosaic Law had something to say of bribes and the effect they have on the receiver of them.

Deuteronomy 16:19:

Thou shalt not wrest [pervert] judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

Jehoshaphat also set up what appears to have been an appeals court, or "court of last resort" in Jerusalem. One might reasonably compare this court to our U.S. Supreme Court, which is our nation's highest court.

II Chronicles 19:8:

Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites [members of the priestly tribe or class], and of the priests [Levites who served as priests], and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the Lord, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem.

If controversies were so great that a party did not find satisfaction at the lower court in one of the fenced cities, the case could be appealed to this high court in Jerusalem. So If a situation could be resolved nowhere else, this court would have the final say.

Verse 9:

And he [Jehoshaphat] charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear [respect] of the Lord, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.

Even though Jehoshaphat was the king, the highest civil authority in the land, he charged those with the highest spiritual authority (since this group included priests) to faithfully judge for God.

Verse 10 and 11:

And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in the cities [this is referring to the lower courts in the fenced cities and the cases they would send to the higher court], 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 wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass. And, behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the Lord; and Zebadiah 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. Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with the good.

Jehoshaphat told them how the appeals system should work and how they should be diligent to carry out God's laws and properly administer them. In addition, he pointed out that they had qualified spiritual and civil leaders to handle the affairs of the kingdom and that God would take care of "the good," those who walked properly before God.

These policies that Jehoshaphat pursued after his mistake in forming the alliance with Ahab set a great foundation for civil stability in Judah. He brought his people back to God and then instituted a judicial system to further perpetuate God's laws in his land.

The rule of law and the maintenance of civil order and stability is a key element in maintaining freedom in a nation. The policies of the government must insure that the rule of law is respected and adhered to in a society. Without the rule of law, society's stability will be threatened by civil unrest and violations of the rights of the people by rebellious individuals and groups. The "social fabric" would quickly unravel without the rule of law and the enforcement of the laws of the land.

In the early years of our republic, the Congress, President Washington and his advisors took pains to establish justice and insure domestic tranquility in the new nation. The Judiciary Act of 1789 established the federal court system and defined the structure and procedures of the federal judiciary. It set the number of U.S. Supreme Court justices at six: one chief justice and five associate justices. (The number of justices was increased later. Today, the Supreme Court has nine justices: one chief justice and eight associate justices.) The act also established thirteen district courts and three circuit courts. The circuit courts had jurisdiction over appeals that would arise from the district courts. The act further provided that cases could be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court from the federal circuit courts and the highest court within each state, usually referred to as a state supreme court. Finally, the Judiciary Act established the office of attorney general of the United States, whose duty it would be "to prosecute and conduct all suits in the Supreme Court in which the United States shall be concerned." (Today, the solicitor general of the U.S., who serves in the office of the attorney general, carries out this function.) The attorney general was also to provide legal advice to the President and heads of federal departments when it was requested of him. Washington himself observed that "the first arrangement of the judicial department...[was] essential to the happiness of our country and the stability of its political system."²

There are similarities between the way Jehoshaphat organized the court system in Judah and how it was later organized in the young United States. The U.S. probably had a larger population than Judah, and a more complex legal system that had developed from the English common law. It also had a system of state governments. But what *is* similar is that Jehoshaphat set up a system that allowed decisions to be appealed from the lower courts to a high court in Jerusalem, much like our Supreme Court. There were also judges that were designated as such in both systems. And both systems relied on written standards to ensure civil stability: Judah's system relied on the Mosaic Law, and the United States relied on the Constitution and the laws that were enacted by Congress. Both systems also required a wise application of principles of the law by its jurists.

Only a few years after the Judiciary Act of 1789 was approved, the new government under President Washington was tested in its resolve to uphold the rule of law in order to secure the civil peace during an uprising known today as the Whiskey Rebellion. In areas such as western Pennsylvania, citizens living on the frontier developed the practice of distilling spirits made from grain to make whiskey. They lived in rugged,

mountainous areas and transporting grain to market was not practical or economically feasible. It made much more sense to turn their crops into whiskey. They objected, however, to the excise taxes that the federal government levied on alcohol, and a popular uprising began to develop in opposition to the excise tax. In 1794, a mob attacked the home of a tax collector in western Pennsylvania. When a military force responded to the violence, a man was killed. Violent acts were carried out against government representatives and local government itself was paralyzed. It appeared that more violence was to occur.

At this point, Washington called for militia volunteers from the states and a force of more than twelve thousand assembled. In Washington's mind, the object of this entire exercise was "the support of the laws." The troops pursued the rebels and encountered no opposition. In fact, no more lives were lost and no property was damaged. The two insurrectionists who were captured by the militias were later pardoned by President Washington.³ The rule of law was upheld and civil stability was restored. In addition, the new federal government had clearly demonstrated its authority. This did a great deal to help "ensure domestic tranquility" in the new nation.

The African nation of Somalia offers a grisly example of what can happen when all governmental authority collapses. That nation has been in chaos for years, subject to the whims of warlords commanding warring factions in the chaos of anarchy. The only stability is the temporary respite offered when a warlord desires a lull in the violence. Untold thousands have starved and died in the civil strife that continues to grip that nation. This is an example of the absence of the rule of law and civil stability. The only wise course for anyone in the middle of such a situation would be to leave as quickly as possible. There is no certainty of personal security or civil peace in such an environment.

A British scholar once made the following observation:

We have learnt that barbarism is not a picturesque myth or a half-forgotten memory of a long-passed stage of history, but an ugly underlying reality that may erupt with shattering force whenever a moral authority of a civilization loses its control.⁴

If a society does not have a government strong enough to insure domestic tranquility, and a group of citizens committed to it, it can easily become the scene of chaos and misery. Once this occurs, it is only a matter of time until the rise of a tyrant or the maneuvers of another nation enslave the people. In the first case, the people lose their liberty. In the second, they lose their liberty and their identity. A nation cannot long endure without respect for the rule of law and public policies that ensure civil stability. Of course, to uphold the law and teach respect for it, there must be strong leadership in the society. Godly men and women who love God and endeavor to live according to His Word would offer the best leadership and the greatest opportunity for civil peace. Our nation has been blessed by men and women of this caliber at various times in our history, as was the Kingdom of Judah in the days of Jehoshaphat.

Trusting God for Victory

The greatest strength of any nation is the reliance of its people on God Almighty and His power, strength and wisdom. This principle is really an extension of the first principle we discussed, the principle of keeping God first, which would include relying on Him first to supply the need. The psalmist knew this great truth of giving God His proper place and documented it.

Psalm 33:12:

Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the Lord; *and* the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

This was originally written concerning biblical Israel, but the truth can apply to any group of people within a nation who follow and serve the one true God. Our nation today is blessed because of the many men and women who love God and endeavor to walk according to His Word. Israel was blessed by God in Jehoshaphat's day, and this is quite apparent in the next challenge that faced King Jehoshaphat.

News came to Jehoshaphat that an army of Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites (also referred to as

“inhabitants of Mt. Seir”) were approaching Judah for a battle. Jehoshaphat’s initial reaction was not to prepare the armed forces, but to ask God for assistance. Whatever, the force strength of the enemy, it appears that the king felt the force to be superior to his own army.

II Chronicles 20:3, 4:

And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask *help* of the Lord: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord.

During an assembly in the temple, a prophet of God told the king and the people exactly what they needed to do to be victorious in this battle.

Verses 15-17:

And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and 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.

To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and 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; to morrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you.

The only thing that was required of the army of Judah was that they “go out against” the enemy and trust God to protect them and give them victory, even though they would not be required to fight.

Verse 20:

And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, 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.

Jehoshaphat encouraged the people to believe God as they embarked on a military exercise in which they could potentially lose their lives. Their believing was required if they were to be successful. Then, Jehoshaphat provided further encouragement to the army as they marched out to this most unusual battle.

Verses 21, 22:

And when he [King Jehoshaphat] had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

The result of what the king had his singers do encouraged the people to believe for their deliverance and victory in this situation. They did so and the result was the defeat of the enemy.

Verses 23, 24:

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, every one helped to destroy another.

And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they *were* dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.

The victory was beyond what anyone could have imagined from a five-senses evaluation of the battlefield situation. Not a single sword was drawn nor an arrow shot; yet the victory was stunning. Verse 25 says that the army of Judah spent three days gathering the spoil, including riches and jewels, from the

dead bodies of the enemy.

Verses 29, 30:

And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of *those* countries, when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel.

So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.

This record shows quite convincingly that God can give the victory even though the enemy may have superior military strength or more numerous forces. In another military engagement, the young man Jonathan, the son of King Saul spoke a great truth.

I Samuel 14:6:

And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for *there is* no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.

God is still in business and has not changed. He can still give victory against grave odds when people believe Him and trust Him for deliverance. The God that gave victory in the Old Testament is the same God that gives victory to His people in our day. Even in the early history of our republic, God was there, working in those who trusted Him to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

During the Revolutionary War, the American war for independence, many God-fearing men served in the Continental Army. They were led by a man who had great respect and reverence for God, General George Washington. During his presidency, in his Thanksgiving Day Proclamation dated October 3, 1789, Washington mentioned Almighty God several times, including a passage referring to God's help in the formative years of the nation and during the war for independence:

...that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country previous to their becoming a nation; for the signal and manifold mercies and the favorable interpositions of His providence in the course and conclusion of the late war...

Perhaps one of the engagements in George Washington's mind was the retreat from Brooklyn, New York in August 1776 that preserved the Continental Army he commanded. About eight thousand American troops had been surrounded by British forces in Brooklyn, at the western end of Long Island. The British forces, commanded by General Howe, for some reason, chose not to attack once they had isolated the American troops at the end of Long Island. They were biding their time, perhaps giving the Americans a last chance to surrender before a final assault. As everyone waited, General Washington conceived an "impossible" plan to save his army. They would evacuate the troops from Brooklyn in small boats across the East River. It would take some time to move so many troops in small boats since the river was a mile wide and the number of boats was limited, but it might work. Earlier in the day, the wind and rain had prevented the British fleet from sailing up the East River to cut off any retreat by water, so the colonial army had free reign of the river at least until daylight. All night long expert oarsmen ferried the troops across the river and came back for another load. As dawn approached, the men began to consider what might happen when the British warships saw the American troops withdrawing by small boats. They could easily be blown out of the water. But then as it dawned, by several historical accounts, including diaries of men who were there, a thick fog settled over both the British and American encampments. The fog allowed the American troops and Washington to escape to the safety of the distant shore. When the fog lifted and the British prepared to attack, the American army was gone.⁵

This was one of many miraculous occurrences that Washington and others would remember from "the course and conclusion of the late war." God really was watching over the men who fought for our nation so that the United States, a nation founded and built on biblical principles, could be established and thrive. God can do the same today for our military forces when they believe for victory and claim His protection.

This principle of trusting God, believing God to assist us and give us success, is not to the exclusion of the other principles we have examined, but it is the most important. The teaching of the Scriptures is obviously needed in order to build a trust in God in the first place. But God also expects us to apply what we know and understand and to use common sense. This would include maintaining and developing extensive military capabilities, avoiding entangling alliances and establishing a justice system to keep the civil peace.

Conclusion

We, the people, must be informed and vigilant concerning our nation's sovereignty and those principles that – if applied – strengthen our nation and help to make our people freer and more prosperous. The first principle to recognize is the importance of following the one true God and teaching His Word in the nation. A well-funded and well-prepared military arsenal is also one of the necessary elements. A system of justice that ensures civil stability is another. In an era when the United Nations is seeking new vigor to extend its authority – primarily because of the support lent by some of our political leaders – we should seek to rescind or modify those alliances that are no longer in our national interest and avoid foreign entanglements that are not in our best interests. This does not mean we should become what some may refer to as “isolationist,” but wiser in our international relations. Only by conducting our national affairs according to principles of God's Word will our nation recover what has been lost of its freedom and sovereignty.

An obvious point to mention here is that good decisions are required from our governmental leaders. Sometimes, in spite of our nation's political leaders and their poor decisions, freedom has been maintained by a committed few, whether in government or in the society-at-large. In many more instances than could be easily documented, God has protected our nation from great danger and potential chaos. Some of these pitfalls have arisen because of terrible decisions by those in leadership positions. The most desirable situation would be for those in governmental and political leadership to have an understanding of God and His Word and establish policies consistent with biblical principles, but this is more likely to be an exception than a common occurrence.

Proverbs 29:2:

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

Political leaders can direct the people toward either freedom or slavery, toward greater security and stability or chaos and destruction. But in the final analysis, the citizens who organize their thinking according to biblical truths will be able to properly discern the true nature of the events and passions of their times. Men and women who understand the spiritual roots of our freedom and the means of maintaining it can help to hold our public officials accountable, and therefore help to maintain the political freedom and national security that is so important to each citizen.

The presence of men and women who stand for God - both in our nation generally and in our government and armed forces in particular – is of utmost importance. Without an understanding of God's Word, men and women wander aimlessly, “blown about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14). The times in which we live are spiritually dark. But the light of God and His Word is available to dispel this darkness and win the struggles of our day. Only in a spiritual renaissance will our nation experience a political renaissance, which can restore the American republic, so we may reassert the sovereignty that is rightfully ours as a nation. Only then can we begin to become one nation under one God. Then America will truly be strong and free.

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