

Asa, King of Judah

1 Kings 15:9-15

1 Kings 15:9-15 – *“In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king over Judah. And he reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem. His grandmother’s name was Maachah the granddaughter of Abishalom.*

Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did his father David. And he banished the perverted persons from the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. Also he removed Maachah his grandmother from being queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. And Asa cut down her obscene image and burned it by the Brook Kidron. But the high places were not removed. Nevertheless Asa’s heart was loyal to the LORD all his days. He also brought into the house of the LORD the things which his father had dedicated, and the things which he himself had dedicated, silver and gold and utensils.”

Background Notes

“Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did his father David” (v11).

Asa was one of the good kings of Judah. After the death of King Solomon, the United Kingdom split apart, and the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah were established. There were **no** good kings in the northern kingdom, and most of the kings of the southern kingdom were bad. But eight of the twenty kings of Judah were good kings. They did what was right in the sight of the Lord.

Asa was one of the good kings of Judah. In fact, he was the first of the good kings of the southern kingdom. King Asa didn’t have a godly heritage. He was the son of Abijam, who was an evil king, and he was the grandson of Maachah, the evil dowager queen mother. But in spite of his ungodly heritage, Asa was a good king. He followed in the footsteps of his ancestor, King David.

A godly heritage is not necessary to lead a godly life. Some Christians think that they don’t have a chance to lead a godly life because they haven’t grown up in a Christian setting and no godly heritage. Well, people who think that way need to read the account of King Asa! Asa did not have a godly heritage - and yet verse 14 says that *“Asa’s heart was loyal to the Lord all his days.”*

Verse 12 says that Asa banished the perverted persons from the land. What’s that all about? The ancient pagan religions included sexual prostitution in their religious fertility rites and rituals. Homosexual acts and shrine prostitution were included. These pagan abominations had, over the years, crept into both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. In fact, these pagan practices started even back in the days of the United Kingdom, when King Solomon married foreign wives.

Solomon permitted this foreign wives to bring their pagan gods and the pagan worship of these gods into the land. After Solomon's death, idolatry and immorality continued in Judah, but Asa did what was right and he stopped the pagan practices. He instituted reforms, put a stop to the perverted pagan worship and practices, and banished the persons involved from the land.

"Asherah" (v13) was an idol that was dedicated to, and included in, the worship of the pagan god Baal. Asherah was considered to be the female counterpart of Baal. Asa's grandmother, Maachah, had set up this obscene idol, but Asa cut it down and burned it by the Kidron Brook.

Doctrinal Points

1. God comes before family.

That sounds biblical, doesn't it? But the Bible says we must honor our fathers and mothers, and care for our families properly. That's biblical! So putting our families first would be obeying God - and it is one way of putting God first. Right? Normally that honoring our families would be right.

But what if you're a Christian who comes from an ungodly family, and that ungodly family is determined to undermine the work of the Lord? It can happen. In fact it may be true of some of you who are listening to this Talk. Maybe you come a non-Christian family – and even worse, you come from an *ungodly* family. In these cases, there is no question as to priorities. God must come before family.

This principle is taught in 1 Kings 15 concerning good King Asa. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. One of the "right" things he did was removing Maachah, his grandmother, from her position as Queen Mother. Apparently Maachah still had quite a bit of power and influence, and this wicked woman was leading the people of Judah astray.

For good King Asa, honoring God came before family. He removed his grandmother from her place of influence and power, and he cut down her Asherah idol and publicly burned it by the brook in the Kidron Valley.

Normally, honoring your parents and your grandparents brings honor to God. But in some cases, where open antagonism, idolatry and blasphemous sin is involved, God must come before family. God must come before family.

2. God is a gracious grader.

As a teacher, God does not lower His high standards - but He's a **gracious grader!** Verse 14 says that "*the high places were not removed. Nevertheless Asa's heart was loyal to the Lord all his days.*"

King Asa was not perfect, and he didn't do all that needed to be done for total reform and complete removal of pagan worship. But God is a gracious grader. Asa didn't remove all the high places, but nevertheless God graded Asa with this positive comment: *"Asa's heart was loyal to the Lord all his days."*

When we read the parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 14, it sounds like there's a contradiction in the historical record. 2 Chronicles 14:2-3 says, *"Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God, for he removed the altars of the foreign gods and the high places, and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images."* 2 Chronicles says that Asa removed the high places, but 1 Kings 15 says that he did **not** remove the high places. Contradiction? No, not a contradiction. It's simple to harmonize these passages: Asa removed most of the high places, but he didn't remove all of them.

What were those "high places"? Most high places were hilltops where foreign gods were worshiped. However, in some high places the one true God of Israel was worshiped. Was this a good thing? No! God had ordained that all sacrifices to the Lord were to take place only at the Temple in Jerusalem. All the high places should have been removed.

So King Asa brought reform to Judah, but it was not total and complete reform. He removed some of the high places, but not all of them. And yet verse 14 says, Asa's heart was loyal to the Lord all his days. His heart was right - and God is a gracious grader!

Later in this chapter, we read that Asa did not fully trust the Lord in his wars with Baasha, the king of Israel. In fact, 2 Chronicles 16 says that a prophet of God had to rebuke Asa for not depending on the Lord in his wars with the northern kingdom. But *"nevertheless Asa's heart was loyal to the Lord all his days."* God is a gracious grader!

Aren't you glad that God is a gracious grader.? As I look back over my Christian life, I am so glad that God is a gracious grader. Wouldn't all of you who agree? How thankful we can be that God is a gracious grader!

Practical Applications

1. Let's use our time wisely for God.

Where is that lesson taught in this passage? Once again let's look at the parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 14 - *"So Abijam rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the City of David. Then Asa his son reigned in his place. In his days the land was quiet for ten years."* For ten years, God provided Asa with peace and rest in the land.

What did Asa do with these ten years, before the wars began - and continued for the rest of his reign? Did he sit around enjoying the good life of being king? No, he used the time wisely. He brought godly reform to Israel.

What do we do with our free time? Do we sit around, just wasting time in general? Or do we use our time wisely? Do we budget our time so that God is #1 in our schedules?

What about the big blocks of our time? Many of you who are listening to this Talk are young single people. You don't yet have the time-consuming responsibilities of a home, children, and family life. Are you using this big block of time wisely? Are you doing more than just getting a college education, or just spending your time on starting a career path? Are you preparing yourself for effective Christian service? I hope that's true of many of you - but this point applies to all of us! Let's all use our time wisely.

As Ephesians 5:16 says, we should be "*redeeming the time because the days are evil.*" Other translations render that verse, "*making the most of every opportunity.*" Let's all make the most of the time God has given us - and use our time wisely for God!

2. Let's use our things wisely for God!

Verse 15 says that Asa brought silver and gold utensils into the house of the Lord – valuable treasures that he and his father had dedicated. Most likely the silver and gold that's mentioned here was booty taken in war by King Abijam and by King Asa. So King Asa brought this booty, these valuable items, into the Temple. As king, he could have chosen to use these things for himself. He could have used them to build a bigger and more luxurious palace! But he wisely used these costly things for God.

What about us? Do we use our things of value wisely? Do we use them for God? You can wisely use your home for God. You can wisely use your car for God. You can wisely use your computer - and even your TV - for God. You can use practically anything you own for serving God in a wise way!

To put it in another way: if you own something, and you can't think of some way you can possibly use that item for the Lord, it's probably best to get rid of it! Maybe you have certain videos, DVDs, pictures, or books that should be burned. Is it possible that you possess some other things that should be burned, such as tarot cards? Do you own possibly cultic objects, symbols, or jewelry that was brought home as a souvenir from a visit in a foreign culture? Just as Asa chopped down and burned the Asherah pole = get rid of it!

Let's make sure that all the things that we own would meet with God's approval. And then let's use our valued things wisely - for God!