

Judah's King Asa; Israel's kings Nadab and Baasha

1 Kings 15:16-34

1 Kings 15:16-24 - *“Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. And Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa took all the silver and gold that was left in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and the treasuries of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants. And King Asa sent them to Ben-Hadad the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, saying, “Let there be a treaty between you and me, as there was between my father and your father. See, I have sent you a present of silver and gold. Come and break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me.” So Ben-Hadad heeded King Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel. He attacked Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maachah, and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. Now it happened, when Baasha heard it, that he stopped building Ramah, and remained in Tirzah. Then King Asa made a proclamation throughout all Judah; none was exempted. And they took away the stones and timber of Ramah, which Baasha had used for building; and with them King Asa built Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah.*

The rest of all the acts of Asa, all his might, all that he did, and the cities which he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? But in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet. So Asa rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place.”

Continuing our Talks from 1 Kings 15, we'll look at the last section of chapter 15 in two sections: first, more about the reign of good king Asa of Judah (v16-24), and then the records of King Nadab and King Baasha of the northern kingdom of Israel (v23-34).

Background Notes for Section One

Remember - in 1 Kings 15 the United Kingdom under Saul, David, and Solomon was over. The nation was now divided into the southern kingdom of Judah, with its capital at Jerusalem, and the northern kingdom of Israel. At this time the capital of the northern kingdom was located in Tirzah (v21), but the capital city was later moved to Samaria.

King Baasha of the northern kingdom of Israel fortified Ramah, one of the border towns between the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah (v17). His purpose was apparently two fold. First, he wanted to control the trade routes between Syria and Egypt that ran through this area. Second, he wanted to keep the godly people in Israel from leaving the northern kingdom and migrating south to Jerusalem, where the Temple was located. So fortified Ramah became like a “Berlin Wall” for the people in the north, so they would not migrate south.

To counter Baasha's move, good king Asa requested help from Ben-Hadad, king of Syria (v18). In order to twist Ben-Hadad's arm, Asa reminded him of a former treaty between Judah and Syria. But more importantly, Asa cleaned out the Temple treasuries and gave all the Temple treasures to Ben-Hadad, the pagan king of Syria!

Doctrinal Point for Section One

God's gifts are not to be used to gain support of the enemy.

God's gifts should not be used to gain support from the enemy – but that's exactly what King Asa did here. In verse 15, Asa had brought the things that he and his father had dedicated into the house of the Lord: silver and gold, and utensils for Temple use.

Asa was a good king - but under his direction these Temple treasures were taken from the house of the Lord and given to an enemy of God's people, the pagan king of Syria. Even though his plan worked, this action was wrong. God's gifts must not be used to gain support from the enemy!

Ben-Hadad not only stopped Baasha from fortifying Ramah, but he also attacked a number of cities in the Galilee area (v20-22). (Chinneroth (v20) refers to the Galilee.) Then King Asa was able to build up Geba and Mizpah, his own cities near the border. So even though King Asa's gift worked, it was wrong. God's gifts should not be used to gain support from the enemy. 2 Chronicles 16:7 says, *"And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him: Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from your hand."* So Asa was definitely wrong. He should have depended upon the Lord. Instead he gave God's gifts to gain the support of a pagan king of Syria.

If we're not careful, we can do the same thing. God has given us spiritual gifts and natural talents to use for His glory. But if we use these gifts to gain favor from this world, we're doing what Asa did. How sad, to use our God-given gifts in an attempt to impress the world, and gain the world's support? As you know, a number of gifted Christian singers and musicians have chosen to use their talents to gain support and prestige from the world, rather than relying on the Lord alone by using their gifts and talents for Him.

Practical Application for Section One

Don't let success go to your head!

Why did good King Asa suddenly turn to the enemy for help, instead of relying on God alone? Could it be because of his former success? 2 Chronicles 14 tells us that Asa had enjoyed tremendous success prior to this time. He had defeated the Ethiopians when he was greatly outnumbered, because he depended on the Lord. He had succeeded in bringing

great reform to Judah. But it seems that he let these successes go to his head, and he no longer relied on the Lord. We see this in Scripture all too often. For example, after Israel defeated Jericho they let this success go to their heads. In overconfidence they attacked Ai, without asking for direction from the Lord - and they were defeated.

Don't let success go to your head! Christians often stumble and fall after a major victory over sin in their Christian lives. Some even stumble after a long and faithful Christian life. They take their eyes off the Lord, and in overconfidence or pride, they look to themselves. This has happened to many Christian leaders. Don't let success go to your head!

1 Kings 15:25-34 – “Now Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin. Then Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him. And Baasha killed him at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines, while Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbethon. Baasha killed him in the third year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his place. And when he became king, he killed all the house of Jeroboam. He did not leave to Jeroboam anyone that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according to the word of the Lord which He had spoken by His servant Ahijah the Shilonite, because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he had sinned and by which he had made Israel sin, because of his provocation with which he had provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger. Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel in Tirzah, and reigned twenty-four years. He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin.”

Background Notes for Section Two

Following King Jeroboam I, Nadab and Baasha were the second and third kings of the northern kingdom of Israel. Both of them were evil kings. It appears that Baasha was a general in Nadab's army, and when Nadab and the army of Israel were attacking the Philistines at Gibbethon, Baasha assassinated Nadab (v27).

After killing Nadab and usurping the throne, the first thing King Baasha did was to kill off everyone connected with Jeroboam's dynasty, thus ensuring that there would be no possible rival claims to the throne. The assassination of Nadab and murder all of Jeroboam's descendants was certainly evil, but it was according to the word of the Lord that the prophet Ahijah had spoken (v29)!

Doctrinal Point for Section Two

God can use evil to accomplish His purposes.

This truth, of course, is taught throughout the Bible. Psalm 76:10 says, *“God makes the wrath of man to praise Him.”* That truth is taught here. God can use man’s evil (*wrath*) to accomplish His purposes.

King Baasha’s acts of assassination and murder were evil acts, but God used these evil acts for His purposes. Through the prophet Abijah the Lord had declared, *“Behold I will bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam and will cut off from Jeroboam every male in Israel, bond and free, and I will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam as one takes away refuse until it is all gone” (1 Kings 14:10).* The purpose of God was actually accomplished through Baasha’s evil acts. God can use evil to accomplish His purposes.

Probably the greatest demonstration of that truth was the death of Jesus Christ. The eternal plan of God for our redemption was that the Lord Jesus would go to the cross. But this purpose involved the evil of those who crucified the Lord Jesus. The apostle Peter described this to his fellow Jews in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost: *“Jesus of Nazareth... was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross” (Acts 2:22-23).* At the cross, God used evil to accomplish His purposes.

God can use mankind’s evil to accomplish His purposes in your life. However, in no way does this condone the evil. And we are not to be involved in evil in any way. But God can *use* the evil of mankind to accomplish His eternal purposes.

Practical Application for Section Two

Don’t lead people into sin!

Verse 30: *“Because of the sins of Jeroboam... and by which he had made Israel sin, because of... which he had provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger.”* King Jeroboam not only sinned - he made others sin as well! He opened the doors for others to sin. The statement that Jeroboam “made Israel sin” is made several times in the biblical record.

In Mark 9:42 the Lord Jesus said, *“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me stumble, it will be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.”* It is a serious offense to lead other people into sin. It’s bad enough when we sin ourselves, but it is even more sinful to lead other people into sin.

Are you possibly leading other people into sin because of your sinful example of complaining - or gossiping - or slandering? Don’t lead people into sin!