The Continuing Record of King Asa of Judah

2 Chronicles 15-16

2 Chronicles 15 - *"Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. 2 And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. 3 For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law; 4 but when in their trouble they turned to the LORD God of Israel, and sought Him, He was found by them. 5 And in those times there was no peace to the one who went out, nor to the one who came in, but great turmoil was on all the inhabitants of the lands. 6 So nation was destroyed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every adversity. 7 But you, be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded!"*

8 And when Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and removed the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had taken in the mountains of Ephraim; and he restored the altar of the LORD that was before the vestibule of the LORD. 9 Then he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those who dwelt with them from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, for they came over to him in great numbers from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.

10 So they gathered together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. 11 And they offered to the LORD at that time seven hundred bulls and seven thousand sheep from the spoil they had brought. 12 Then they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; 13 and whoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel was to be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. 14 Then they took an oath before the LORD with a loud voice, with shouting and trumpets and rams' horns.15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and sought Him with all their soul; and He was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around.

16 Also he removed Maachah, the mother of Asa the king, from being queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah; and Asa cut down her obscene image, then crushed and burned it by the Brook Kidron. 17 But the high places were not removed from Israel. Nevertheless the heart of Asa was loyal all his days. 18 He also brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated and that he himself had dedicated: silver and gold and utensils.

19 And there was no war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa.

Background Notes for 2 Chronicles 15

2 Chronicles 14 records King Asa's early reforms and of his great victory over the Ethiopians, who had attacked the kingdom of Judah. Why? Asa was a good king, and he was walking with the Lord in obedience to God's Word.

In chapter 15 the Lord sent the prophet Azariah to Asa. He confirmed that as long as King Asa continued to follow the Lord, he and the nation of Judah would be blessed, but if he and his kingdom were to forsake the Lord, then the Lord would have to forsake them. Azariah used the period of the judges as the example of these biblical principles (v3-8). If you follow the Lord, you will be victorious and blessed, but if you forsake the Lord, you will be defeated and unblessed.

Doctrinal Point for 2 Chronicles 15

There is reward for your work.

"But you, be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded!" As a result of Azariah's challenging message from the Lord, Asa renewed his reform, and he even removed the idolatry from the city of Ephraim in the northern kingdom of Israel (v8).

Many godly Jews from the northern tribes had defected and migrated south to live in the kingdom of Judah, where the Temple of the Lord was located (v9). Their covenant before the Lord included the commitment to execute anyone who persisted in the worship of false gods (v12-13). This was based on God's Law in Deuteronomy 13.

Asa removed his mother (or grandmother) from the prestigious position of Queen Mother because of her idolatry (v16). When there is a conflict, God must come first - even before family. There is no contradiction between verse 17, that says the high places were not removed, and 2 Chronicles 14:5, that says the high places were removed. Chapter 14 refers to the high places of Judah, while chapter 15 refers to the high places of all Israel.

What was the reward for King Asa's reform work? Verse 15: *"The Lord gave them rest all around."* And verse 19: *"There was no war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa."* There was reward for Asa's work for the Lord, and there is reward for every believer today who does work for the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, *"Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."* There is reward for your work.

Practical Application for 2 Chronicles 15

Remember God's "mirror image" rule.

How many of you have ever heard of God's image rule? It's found here in verse 2, *"The Lord is with you if you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you."* Is this rule in operation today?

Of course it is! Look at our nation, for example. There was a time when we wanted God in our classrooms, courts and cities, and the Lord was with us. But God has been asked to leave, and He does not stay where He is not wanted. Would He return to bless our nation once again if we turn back to Him? Of course He would.

Remember God's "mirror image" rule.

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2 Chronicles 16 - *"In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, 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. 2 Then Asa brought silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-Hadad king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, saying, 3 "Let there be a treaty between you and me, as there was between my father and your father. See, I have sent you silver and gold; come, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me." 4 So Ben-Hadad heeded King Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel. They attacked Ijon, Dan, Abel Maim, and all the storage cities of Naphtali. 5 Now it happened, when Baasha heard it, that he stopped building Ramah and ceased his work. 6 Then King Asa took all Judah, and they carried away the stones and timber of Ramah, which Baasha had used for building; and with them he built Geba and Mizpah.*
7 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. 8 Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He delivered them into your hand. 9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars." 10 Then Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed some of the people at that time.
11 Note that the acts of Asa, first and last, are indeed written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 12 And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but the physicians.
13 So Asa rested with his fathers; he died in the forty-first year of his reign. 14 They buried him in his own tomb, which he had made for himself in the City of David; and they laid him in the bed which was filled with spices and various ingredients prepared in a mixture of ointments. They made a very great burning for him.

Background Notes for 2 Chronicles 16

At this time Baasha, king of the northern kingdom of Israel, fortified the city of Ramah, a border town that was actually in Benjamin's tribal territory. King Asa turned for help to Israel's enemy, King Ben-Hadad of Syria. Asa even took money from the Lord's treasury to pay this pagan king! The plan worked. Baasha went back home, and Asa took the building materials and used them to fortify his own border cities. It certainly looked like Asa'a strategy was successful - but from God's perspective this strategy was **sinful.**

Doctrinal Point for 2 Chronicles 16

The Lord looks for those He can support.

In verse 9 the prophet Hanani said to King Asa: *"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him."* Hanani reminded Asa how God had delivered the Ethiopians into his hands, even though Asa had been greatly outnumbered by men in chariots. Didn't Asa believe that could God do it again? Of course He could! But Asa relied on a pagan king for help instead of relying on the Lord (v7-8). There was no way that God could support King Asa's when he turned for help to a pagan king, Ben-Hadad of Syria. As a result, Asa would reap the consequences: *"Therefore from now on, you shall have wars" (v9).*

The eyes of the Lord still run throughout the whole earth looking for those He can support. Can He support us? Are we trusting Him for our protection and security - or are we turning to someone else or something else as our hope? Are we looking to the world and secular sources for our wellbeing and security? I know of specific cases where Christians are doing exactly that. Sadly, they will be disappointed in the end. The Lord cannot support us when we don't depend on Him. The Lord looks for those He can support!

Practical Application for 2 Chronicles 16

Let's finish strong!

At the end of chapter 16 we see that Asa did not finish strong. He didn't turn to idolatry, as other kings did, but he was bitter towards the Lord, as evidenced by his anger towards the Lord's prophet Hanani. In fact he threw this servant of the Lord in prison, and in his anger and bitterness toward the Lord, he oppressed the people. How sad! As a result, the Lord struck him with a disease. But even then Asa would not look to the Lord, but only to physicians.

By the way the Bible is not teaching here that consulting doctors is wrong, nor is it teaching that all disease is discipline for sin. No. Asa's sin was that he did not look to the Lord, even when the Lord gave him a second chance. Asa died and was buried in Jerusalem. The "great burning" in (v14) does not indicate cremation. Apparently the people made a huge bonfire in King Asa's honor.

As far as the record goes, Asa died embittered towards God. And many Christians today die with bitterness in their hearts. They're bitter towards God because of the loss of a loved one, or major disappointment or defeat in their lives, or a debilitating disease. They hold God responsible, and they never "forgive" God! As a result, they don't finish strong. It's so much better to finish strong in the Lord. Let's finish strong!