

2 Chronicles 14-16 • Asa - The King Who Wouldn't Listen

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We're in 2 Chronicles, and we're picking it up in chapter 14. 2 Chronicles chapter 14. Surprised somebody didn't correct me. Usually somebody says something. 2 Chronicles chapter 14.

The last king of Judah that we covered last week was Abijah, who was the son of king Rehoboam, the great grandson of king David. And chapter 14 begins this way by saying, in verse 1,

"Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David. And Asa his son reigned in his place. (And) In his days the land had rest for ten years. (You're going to see why here. It says in verse two that) 2... Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. 3 He took away the foreign altars and the high places and broke down the pillars and cut down the Asherim," (ESV)

Your Bible, if you have an NIV, may say the "Asherah" poles. The Asherim were just that, poles that on which were symbols of the goddess Asherah, who was considered to be the goddess of motherhood and fertility. And she was just a pagan deity, fertility deity, and was very popular in Canaanite pagan rituals. And Israel had adopted that, and many other pagan worship practices.

And Asa, as one of the very first things he did, just cleared it out. And you got to wonder. I mean, you got to wonder what comes on the heart of a king who comes from a situation where his grandfather, well his, yeah, his grandfather his... Now, if we're talking about Asa, I guess it would be his father. His grandfather, his great grandfather, and so forth had allowed paganism into the land. And it was fairly rampant.

And along comes Asa, and we're going to see this with a few other of the kings of Judah. Along comes Asa and the first thing he does is, he says, get rid of all this stuff! And he just cleans house. And he says, take those down, knock those down, burn them. We're going to get rid of them. And you have to ask yourself the question, why the change?

Well, it's one of those mysteries of God how the Lord could raise up from within the cesspool of paganistic thinking, a godly man. And again, this is going to happen in other, with other kings. But it reminds us something with God. And that is you can't always point the finger at environment and say, well, they're just a product of their environment.

We've gotten used to that in our culture. In fact, we tend to even make it a justification, sort of an excuse. Well, he... If somebody does this or does that and we're horrified by that action, we say, well, he's a product of his culture or his upbringing or his environment. And I get that. I mean, I get where that comes from and I understand learned behavior. And I understand the dynamics that go into the conclusion that goes into that. And I think that there certainly can be something to it.

But it doesn't mean that it absolutely always has to be. Because whenever God is involved, whenever God is brought into the equation the supernatural is possible.

We don't know. We don't know. Was somebody praying for Asa? Was somebody praying for the son of Abijah for years and years and years? Were there some godly people who were grieved by the paganism that had taken hold in Israel, or in this case, Judah? And were they saying, well, here's the son of King Abijah. Asa's going to be king one day. He's only a boy now. We're going to pray for him. Boy, I just... Who knows, right? How many people?

And I wish I could give you guys an opportunity at all to share your own story. But I wonder how many of you are with the Lord today because somebody prayed when you were a child. Are you praying for your children? Are you praying for your kids?

Sue and I have 4 kids and they're all grown up. When we started this church, we had 2 kids. They were 6 and 4. Now those two are 34 and 32. And then we had 2 other kids while we were here and they've grown up too and left the home. But you know what? Sue and I still pray for them every day. We sit down on the couch, or on the bed, or on a chair somewhere, and we grab each other's hands and we still pray for our kids. Because God's not finished with them yet. And, we need to be praying. The supernatural is happening. God is doing wonderful works, and we can't give up on people.

Boy, I'm... If somebody was praying for Asa, and I would be willing to bet somebody was. I mean, why not? If you're a godly person living in Judah and you're grieved by what's going on, why not? You see that the king has a little

boy named Asa, you know he's going to be king one day if he survives. Why not start praying for him? Along comes Asa in the midst of all this paganism. And he says, enough! We're changing things. It's going to be different from here on out.

Look at verse 4. He went further than taking out the paganistic practices and accoutrements, all their tools of their worship. But it says, verse 4, *"and (Asa) commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandment."*

The next thing that Asa did was he went to the people as king, and he said, we are going to seek the Lord, our God. We, you listen, you've seen me take these things out of here, but it's got to go more than that. There's got to be more.

It says in verse 5 that, *"He also took out of all the cities of Judah the high places and those were just high places (Mounds where they would worship their pagan deities) and the incense altars. And (it says here again,) the kingdom had rest under him. 6 He built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest. He had no war in those years, for the LORD gave him peace."* Why? Because people were getting back to what was important.

God had used warfare in the past to chastise His people and to bring correction. And so there's a protracted period of peace under Asa because he brought the kingdom back to worshipping YAHWEH.

And we're told here in verse 8...Actually did I get that far? No I didn't. Let's do verse 7. Verse 7, *"And he said to Judah, "Let us build these cities and surround them with walls and towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the LORD our God. We have sought him, and he has given us peace on every side." (And) So they built and prospered."* I like that. He understood that the peace and prosperity that they were enjoying was a result of the Lord's hand.

"8 And Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah, armed with large shields and spears, and 280,000 men from Benjamin that carried shields and drew bows. (And) All (of them) were mighty men of valor."

But eventually this 10 year period, this protracted period of peace, comes to an end there in Judah. And it says in verse 9 that, *"Zehra the Ethiopian (your Bible may say Cushite) came out against them with an army of a million men (And again, your Bible may just say a vast army) and 300 chariots, and came as far*

as Mareshah. 10 And Asa went out to meet him, and they drew up their lines of battle in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah."

Now, I want you to notice the numbers here because we were told earlier that Asa put together an army of 580,000 men. Okay? That's not bad. That's not bad. But then you get this Ethiopian or Cushite army that comes together with an army of a million men and 300 chariots. That's in addition to the one million member army. Bottom line is Asa is ridiculously outnumbered.

Okay. This is a huge military force that's coming against Asa at this time. I mean, this is just, this is one of those situations where you do what you can to find peace. Because going into battle, humanly speaking, would be absolutely ridiculous. Don't even think about it. Right? Alright.

It says in verse 10 that, "*Asa went out to meet him.*" Of course he sees this vast army on the, probably, spread over on the countryside. And it says, they drew up their lines of battle in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. And again, ridiculously outnumbered. And it says verse 11, "*And Asa cried to the Lord his God,...*"

Now I want you to stop there for just a moment. Because what you have just read in that very simple partial verse of the Bible, is the smartest thing you'll ever read in the Word of God. Okay? It's the smartest thing you'll ever see. Because you see Asa, like I said, was outnumbered to the point where militarily speaking, no hope.

I mean, this army came with chariots. Asa didn't have any of those. That was tantamount to like a tank might be today. An armored, some kind of an armored vehicle that gives you the upper hand, militarily speaking. You either surrender to try to spare lives. You try to seek some kind of peace treaty with this coming army, which usually means you're going to have to give them everything you got in terms of wealth. And probably even promise to give them things for the foreseeable future. Or, you just or you go up in battle, I suppose and just, you let them wipe you out. That doesn't seem real wise.

No, Asa did the wisest thing of all. He cried out to the Lord. Because let me tell you this, Asa knew it, and this is something you and I need to learn, and that is numbers don't matter to God. We keep talking about humanly speaking, militarily speaking, and so forth. That doesn't mean anything to the Lord God. Because supernaturally He's able to do whatever He wants. And frankly, He's able to do way more than we could even ask or think.

So, Asa cries to the Lord. Look what he says! Look what he says. He says, "*O LORD, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us. O LORD our God, (look at this) for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let not man prevail against you.*" I love that statement where Asa says, "*we rely on you,...*"

Can I tell you something about the character of the God that we serve? He can't help but respond to that. He can't help it. When His people come and say, it's You...it's You we're relying on. The Lord God will be there when that is a genuine and sincere sentiment. What Asa is basically saying is, we can't do this. This is way more than we can handle. This is more than we can bear. Okay? To put it another way.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians in his second letter, he wrote to them and told them, brothers, I would not have you be ignorant about the trials and difficulties that we suffered in the province of Asia. He said, we were tested far beyond our ability to endure so that we despaired even of life. And then Paul went on to say, but this happened so that we might not rely upon ourselves, but on God who raises the dead. (2 Corinthians 1:8-9)

Why did God allow Paul and his companions to face a situation that was so far beyond them that it was laughable. Why did God allow Asa to come up against an enemy, against whom he was so ridiculously outnumbered that it was laughable? Same reason. So that they would not rely upon themselves. So they would rely upon God. And God will allow you and I to enter into those same sort of situations. Where we come up against ridiculous odds so that we might not rely upon ourselves, but rather we'll rely upon God.

Asa cries out to the Lord, beautiful prayer, "*God, ...we rely on you...¹² So the LORD defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. ¹³ Asa and the people who were with him pursued them as far as Gerar, (and that's a Philistine city) and the Ethiopians fell (look at this) until none remained alive, for they were broken before the LORD and his army. (And) The men of Judah carried away... much spoil.*"

Did you catch that? That whole one million man army was completely taken out by 580,000 soldiers from Judah. You look at a passage like this and one of the great lessons from this is, what do numbers mean to God? Well, they don't mean anything. And that means even if you've got a financial issue that you're laboring under. And you're wondering how in the world are we going to do this? And maybe the odds seem stacked against you in ridiculous sort of measure,

whatever the situation may be. Numbers don't mean anything to God. He is able to do so much more than we could even ask.

And it goes on here in verse 14. It says, *"And they attacked all the cities around Gerar. (After they got done with the Ethiopian army, they started to take over and attack the Philistines. Again, these are Philistine outposts.) for the fear of the Lord was upon them. They plundered all the cities, for there was much plunder in them. 15 And they struck down the tents of those who had livestock and carried away sheep in abundance and camels. (And) Then they returned to Jerusalem."*

Chapter 15. Here's Asa coming back from this amazing victory. Right? All kinds of spoil. There's animals, camels, sheep. Can you hear all this? Can you, in your mind's ear? Can you hear all this noise? And there's probably singing, and these guys are, they're like, ah! They're just, they're pumped! Because this smaller army defeated this massive army. And here they are, making their way back home. Probably singing songs of victory, praise to God, and all the sound of the animals, and all the stuff that they've brought with them.

And out comes a prophet. It says,

"15 The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, 2 and he went out to meet Asa (on his way back) and he 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."

Now this is a very interesting statement and in the sense it's a warning. And you need to understand that God never gives a warning unless there's a need for it. And the warning here is, stay close to God. Keep your heart open to the Lord. When you're with the Lord, when you're reaching out to the Lord, when you're seeking God, He will be found by you. But if you forsake the Lord, don't expect prosperity and all the blessings of peace and the victory that you just experienced to be happening if you are forsaking the Lord. That's the Word that's being given to king Asa at this time.

And the other message here for you and I is, if there's a distance between you and the Lord, don't think it's because God has withdrawn or moved himself out of reach. Remember this, God is saying here to Asa, I'll be with you. I'll be right there. But if you forsake Me, if you throw My Word behind your back and you say, hey, whatever, I'm going to do what I want, well, you put yourself in a position where you become liable to the consequences of your actions.

It's like somebody who hops in their car and drives 50 miles an hour over the speed limit, all the while saying, bless me, Lord, with safety. There's a sort of a weird twisting understanding to that sort of an idea that, God, He's in the blessing business, isn't He, sort of a thing.

People will come sometimes and talk about all the things that have happened in their lives. All the rotten things that have happened in their lives. Why should I believe in a God that allows stuff like that to happen? Well, I... Hey listen, bad stuff happens to godly people. But the question you have to ask those sorts of people when they're asking those sorts of questions is: Just exactly what does God owe you? And, "Well... And they'll usually say, well, nothing.

But you see there's this natural tendency that we have, to think that God's in the blessing business. And He's going to bless my life. God says here to Asa, hey, when you're with Me, I'm with you. You forsake Me, you're on your own, pal. And the last thing you and I want to be is on our own.

The prophet goes on here in verse 3, he's still talking to Asa. Read with me there in verse 3 and following. He says, *"For a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law, 4 but when in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them. 5 In those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for great disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the land. 6 They were broken in pieces. Nation was crushed by nation and city by city, for God troubled them with every sort of distress. 7 But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded."*

8 (And) As soon as Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah the son of Oded, he took courage and put away the detestable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin (He apparently just done Jerusalem and surrounding cities) and from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim, (he had won back some of the land that was part of the northern kingdom of Israel. He went there and got rid of the idols.) and he (also, it says,) repaired the altar of the LORD (We didn't know it was needing repair, but apparently it was.) that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the LORD. 9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who were residing with them, for great numbers had deserted to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God, was with him. 10 They were gathered at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. (And) 11 They sacrificed to the LORD on that day from the spoil that they had brought 700 hundred oxen and 7,000 sheep."

So, people were hearing up in the northern kingdom that God was blessing Asa in the southern kingdom. And they started moving down.

"¹² And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul, ¹³ but that whoever would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman." And you know that verse 13, that last sort of a command, that's not one the Lord gave. That was their idea. We're going to, we're going to legislate this thing. And it's a capital crime now, not to seek the Lord. But it was their zeal. They were zealous.

"¹⁴ (And) They swore an oath to the LORD with a loud voice and with shouting and with trumpets and with horns. ¹⁵ And all Israel (correction- And all Judah) rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and had sought him with their whole desire, (and this is important) and he was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around."

Check this out, verse 16,

"Even Maacah, his mother, King Asa removed from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. Asa cut down (the) image, crushed it, and burned it at the brook Kidron." Interesting statement, isn't it? Why did they mention this? Interesting that they would. Why did they mention it?

Because it's no small thing to defy family, is it? Jesus told us that even among our family, a prophet is without honor. (Matthew 13:57, Mark 6:4) The ability to reach family and convince them of the right way is very hard. And many times we cave to the pressure that family can bring. Because they can make life pretty miserable for us.

But, here Asa takes this pole that his mother has made and is worshipping, and he gets rid of it in front of everybody. I mean, so that everybody knows there is an attitude in his heart, even when it comes to family, we're going to do the right thing. Do you hear that? Even when it comes to family, we're going to do the right thing. It's hard to do the right thing around family. It can be very difficult, very challenging.

Now, it goes on in verse 17 to say, *"But the high places were not taken out of Israel.* (That means Asa didn't go up into the Northern Kingdom. That wasn't his area of rule. So, he didn't go there and do anything about those things.) *Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was wholly true all his days. ¹⁸ And he brought*

into the house of God the sacred gifts of his father and his own sacred gifts, silver, and gold, and vessels. 19 And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa."

And that's what we read about coming up here,

" 1 In the thirty-six year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might permit no one to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah."

You might remember Ramah was the city that Samuel was from and lived there. And this was a border city between Judah and Israel. And so it says, Baasha came from the north. Remember, he's the king of Israel. We, you might not realize that because we aren't talking about the kings of Israel here in Chronicles. But now you know.

Baasha king of Israel begins to come down and put pressure on the border of Judah, by basically, putting up a barricade. And his goal is to not let anybody come or go. What's his purpose? He's going to starve them out of the land. And what that's meant to do is to keep goods and services from crossing the border so that, they can't move those kinds of things.

This seems like a pretty small thing, doesn't it to you? I mean, this is King Asa. This is Asa! He had a million man army come against him, not counting the charioteers. And what did he do when he saw that huge army? Smartest thing you'll ever see in your life, cried out to the Lord. What did God do? Responded to that cry. How did He respond? He fought for them. He delivered their enemy into their hand. And they destroyed that entire enemy and even went on to destroy some of the areas of the Philistines. I mean, while they were in the territory.

So, this is no big deal. Baasha can't put together nearly that size of an army. I mean, Asa has really very little... He has nothing to worry about. All he has to do is cry out to God. That's all.

Let's see what he does. *"Then Asa (verse 2) took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the Lord and the king's house and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Syria, who lived in Damascus, saying, 3 "There is a covenant between me and you, as there was between my father and your father. Behold, I am sending to you silver and gold. Go, break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me."* Stop there for a moment.

Covenants were made back then, and they don't say it here, but they were covenants of peace. And so these neighboring countries would basically say, Let's have a covenant of peace. You're on my doorstep. I'm on your doorstep. Tell you what, we'll make an agreement. I won't harass you. I won't cross your border or into your land with any violent intentions. And you promise the same. No problem. Here's a contract. Here's a covenant. Alright.

Well, Ben-hadad had a covenant with Judah. And Asa knew that he also had a covenant with Israel, with Baasha, who was now pressing his border. He sends all this money to Ben-hadad and says, "Break your covenant with Baasha." That means, "I'm no longer going to hold to my word and I'm coming after you." That's what's going on.

Verse 4 says, "*...Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, and they conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali. 5 And when Baasha heard of it, he stopped building Ramah and let his work cease. (What's Asa do? Well,) 6 ...King Asa took all (of) Judah, and they carried away (everything that Baasha had been bringing and working with. All) the stones of Ramah...,its timber, (and) with which Baasha had been building, and with them he built Geba and Mizpah.*" He built up some other store cities.

Asa created an alliance, right, with the king of Syria. And you know what? The cool part is, it worked. It worked! You know what the bad part was? It worked! Yeah, it was the good part and the bad part.

What was it that kept Asa from doing what he did with the Ethiopians? Why didn't he just cry out to the Lord? Why didn't he just immediately go to prayer and trust God with all of his heart? Well, he's older, he's smarter. And he's had years of peace and he's had lots of time to amass money. And sometimes when we're giving, given blessings, we start to rely on those blessings, rather than the giver of those blessings, right? Sometimes we rely on the things we've been given more than on the one who gave them.

And that's what Asa is doing in this situation. Plus, he's a guy with some political smarts. He's a king. He knows that the northern kingdom of Israel also had a covenant with Syria, all I got to do is pay this guy off. Everybody's got a price. Politically speaking, this was a really smart move. And it worked! And his advisors and his cabinet and all his other people must have, thought and even said to Asa, that was brilliant! It worked so well. Man, you got smarts; you're the man!

But spiritually speaking, what Asa did in this situation was deadly. It was just flat out deadly. And the great temptation comes in life, the older we get, the more years we have of experience... The more years that I even have in the ministry, I think about this as it relates to my own life. I've been a pastor now for over 30 years. And you might think, well, gee, that's cool. You have all that amassed experience. It's also very dangerous. Because you see, I can begin to rely on my experience.

And I can say... A situation comes along, whether it's a people issue, or a financial issue, or a business related issue, or a ministry issue. And I can think to myself, I've come across that before. Thirty years. I've seen most of what you can see in the ministry. There is a great temptation to look at the challenges that we face and no longer feel the pull to go before the Lord; and to wait on him; and to seek his face. Because I've been down this road before.

Hey, we've had problems before, honey, I say to my wife. Or she says to me. Not that we would; I hope we've never say that. But in the sense of saying,

We know how to, we know how to handle this. We know how to resolve this. We've been down this road. We're veterans. Who needs prayer? Who needs to seek the face of God. Right? What do we do instead? We strike out on our own to create our own solutions. We'll talk more about that. Let's see how this turns out.

Verse 7, You know God's not going to ignore this.

"At that time, Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, "Because you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you. 8 Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the LORD, he gave them into your hand. 9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars."

Now, look what's happened up to this point. That peace that Asa has had and enjoyed the prosperity from it, it's gone. Because he chose to depend on himself rather than depending on the arm of the Lord and the wisdom of God.

And, I wouldn't have wanted to have been a prophet in Israel or Judah. And I certainly wouldn't want to have been a prophet to go and rebuke an old king. Because old kings are usually the worst. They are so stuck in their ways.

They've lived for so many years as the final authority. Do you understand that the kings were the final authority? They were the supreme court. No one, and I mean no one in the kingdom had veto power over the king. Nobody, well accept God. No human being.

Now you live with that kind of power for about 25, 30 years. And then you listen as this young prophetic upstart walks up and rains on your parade by telling you, "you've acted foolishly." Who in the world are you to tell me I've acted foolishly?

Do you know what happens when men get older and women get older? We can become fools because we stop being teachable. We know! And we start using age as our excuse. Well listen, son, when you've lived as many years as I've lived, you come back and talk to me then. I can see some of you had that said to you. Do you know how old I am, young man or young woman? Do you understand how many years of experience I have in these matters? And you presume to instruct me? Do you see how deadly that is?

I was reading just today, a little book that I had read years ago. And I picked it up again and I'm so glad I did. I'm going to use it as a devotional. But Jim Cymbala, put out some little small books years ago, *The Life that God Blesses*, *The Church that God Blesses*, and things like that.

I started going back through and reading, *The Life that God Blesses*. And he was telling about how, when he was in high school, he loved playing basketball. He was just, he was a basketball fanatic. He said, I lived for the game. And he said, I used to go out and play on the streets with whoever, would play. And he grew up in Brooklyn. And so he would just go out and find whoever he could play.

And he said, a lot of the guys out there who were my age, I would... He said, They were amazing! They were amazing players. But, he said, you know what, I looked at these guys and I thought you have such incredible talent." But none of them played on the high school team. And none of them went on to play on any college team.

You know why? They couldn't be coached. Nobody could tell them that they needed to have better defense, or they needed to improve their free throw shot, or that layup is a little ugly, or your ball handling could use a little work. Nobody, nobody could tell them anything. And you know what? They never went on. They never excelled. They never got to actually use that gifting and so forth. And they were unteachable. They were un-coachable.

We've all known people like that. Do you understand that with age, we can all take on that sort of a mentality. We can all begin to take on this idea that I'm, I've got enough experience. I've got enough personal knowledge of life especially when a child or some young person comes up and says something to me. I'm like, yeah, well someday you'll figure things out. That's pride. And you know what? In the presence of the Lord, it stinks because it is rotting, stinking flesh. And Lord save us from that kind of pride. And may we all remain teachable to our last days. Teachable, able to learn, able to be instructed.

There is a serious thing going on in us when we refuse to listen. Look what Asa... Look what happened here in verse 10, it says, *"Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in the stocks in prison, for he was in a rage (it says,) with him because of this. And Asa (even went on, it says, and) inflicted cruelties upon some of the people at the same time."*

What does Asa do? Well, again, he's got ultimate authority. Nobody's going to question him. If he wants to put somebody in stocks, or in prison, or kill them on the spot, it's his prerogative. He's the king. Do whatever he wants.

There's only one problem. You lock up a prophet, you can't lock up the truth. You can't ignore the truth forever. You can't wag your finger at the truth and say, "if you only had as much experience as I do." You can't do that because the truth stands on its own. And Asa became a man, at the end of his life, who refused to listen. And that's sad.

Well, it says in verse 11 that,

"The acts of Asa, from first to last, are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. (And) 12 In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became (quite) severe. (we're told, and) Yet (look at this) even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but sought help from physicians (only)."

Not that there's anything wrong with going to doctors and seeking help from doctors, but that wasn't the issue. The issue was that he only did that and he refused to come to the Lord.

What had happened in Asa's heart? Not only become prideful, he'd become bitter because the Lord rebuked him and he knew that he deserved it. And so he basically just shut off his life from the things of the Lord. Even to the point where when he developed a disease of the feet, he refused to come to God and

say, Lord, I humble myself before You. He refused to humble himself. He knew that coming to the Lord meant humbling himself and he didn't want to do that.

In verse 13 we're told, "*...Asa slept with his fathers, dying in the forty-first year of his reign. 14 They buried him in the tomb that he had cut for himself in the city of David. They laid him on a bier that (he had) had been filled with various kinds of spices prepared by the perfumer's art, and they made a great fire in his honor.*"

And that's how the life of Asa ends. I want to close here tonight by reminding you of something I've actually showed you before. But it's been a few years and I dare say, some of you probably never heard it the first time. And the others of you that did might've forgotten.

But I read a book a number of years ago, *The Autobiography of George Mueller*. And George Mueller gives in the course of that book 4 steps. And they're just his, 4 steps to increasing your faith. And the reason I'm bringing this up because one of them applies very much here to Asa and what we've, what our lesson is from the life of Asa.

I want to put these up on the screen for you. George Mueller's steps to a growing faith.

George Mueller's steps to a growing faith

- 1. Carefully read the Word and meditate on it daily**
2. Maintain an upright heart and a good conscience
3. Do not shrink back from opportunities where faith may be tested
4. WAIT FOR GOD—and do not attempt to devise a deliverance of your own making.

Number 1, he says, Carefully read the Word and meditate on it daily.

Why is that important? The reason we are to be in the Word regularly is it keeps our hearts soft. It's like the water of the Word that, that is poured into our hearts and keeps them supple and moldable.

George Mueller's steps to a growing faith

1. Carefully read the Word and meditate on it daily
- 2. Maintain an upright heart and a good conscience**
3. Do not shrink back from opportunities where faith may be tested
4. **WAIT FOR GOD**—and do not attempt to devise a deliverance of your own making.

Secondly, Maintain an upright heart and a good conscience.

That means, if the Lord is convicting you about something, listen. We talked about this on Sunday, being led by the Spirit, right? If the Spirit's leading you, listen and obey. Keep an upright heart. Keep a good conscience. If the Lord's convicting you, do something about it.

George Mueller's steps to a growing faith

1. Carefully read the Word and meditate on it daily
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- 3. Do not shrink back from opportunities where faith may be tested**
4. **WAIT FOR GOD**—and do not attempt to devise a deliverance of your own making.

Thirdly, Do not shrink back from opportunities where faith may be tested.

That's the first thing that Asa did when Baasha came against him. Rather than just to depend wholly on the Lord, he... And which would test his faith, he set out to fix the issue on his own. And that really leads into the very next point.

George Mueller's steps to a growing faith

1. Carefully read the Word and meditate on it daily
2. Maintain an upright heart and a good conscience
3. Do not shrink back from opportunities where faith may be tested
- 4. WAIT FOR GOD**—and do not attempt to devise a deliverance of your own making.

The last one is, **WAIT FOR GOD**—and do not attempt to devise a deliverance of your own making.

That, I think, is probably one of the most important lessons of Asa. Because the way he dealt with Baasha, king Baasha was very simply, a means of deliverance of his own making. Rather than waiting on the Lord to deliver, he said, I know what I'll do. And guys, there's no difference between what king Asa did and what Abraham and Sarah did when they got tired of waiting for the child of

promise to come along. We need to do this ourselves. Sarah says, I'm going to give you my slave girl, Hagar, and you can have a child through her. And that way God's promise will be seen. And it's all good. (Genesis 16:1-16)

You see, even when we do things for good reasons, we can reap incredible difficulty. You have the birth of Ishmael, right, from Abraham and Sarah, or Sarah and Hagar, actually. He is still a thorn in Israel's side to this day. And the product of untold misery over the years.

That's a lesson for you and I, that when we seek to create our own deliverance, and I am as guilty of this as everybody in this room and within the sound of my voice, I know how to manipulate with the best of them. And I have a track record in my life of stepping out in my own strength. Working things to my own advantage. And what we're doing when we do that, is we're taking great care not to have to trust the Lord. We will go out of our way to make sure that I don't have to trust God. Last thing I want to do in life is leave me in a place where all I got is God to depend on.

That's why I have insurance for heaven's sakes. Health insurance, home insurance, car insurance. I'm not saying we shouldn't have insurance. I'm not saying that. Don't run out and say, I'm canceling all my insurance because pastor Paul said so. I'm saying that if you're depending on that, and that is your means of deliverance only, well, then it's just like king Asa. Just like making a bargain with the devil. In this case, Ben-Hadad. Hey, here's some gold and silver. Bail me out, would you? Yeah, no problem, man. And here's, again, it worked. It worked. Do you know what? Sometimes when we do things in our own power, it works. God lets it work.

But it's an empty victory. Because the Lord wasn't in it. And what's worse? When we step out to affect our own deliverance, the next time we face an enemy, it's a little bit easier to step out in my own power. And then the next time, a little bit easier to devise my own strategy. And then the next time, a little bit easier to work my own deliverance. It becomes almost like a knee-jerk reaction.

What ought to be a knee-jerk reaction in our lives, Christians, is it's trusting the Lord. But don't let anybody tell you trusting God is easy because it's not. Because, and you know what? It goes against every... It goes against our entire nature. It really does. It runs contrary to our human sinful nature. Now, fortunately God has placed within us His nature as well. And it aligns with that one beautifully. And when we yield to that, we are met with a peace that guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.