

2 Chronicles 15-16 – Thursday, January 5th, 2017

2 Chronicles 15 -- 1 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.

- The chapter begins with a very important Biblical truth that often times, is dismissed under the banner of another Biblical truth.
- Namely, that of God never leaving us nor forsaking us, which is a promise from the Lord that is replete throughout scripture.
- However, if instead of seeking the Lord, we forsake the Lord, the Lord will forsake us, such that He doesn't force Himself on us.

G. Campbell Morgan of this wrote, "He revealed an inclusive philosophy of life under the control of God.... The principle is of perpetual application. It represents God as unchanging. All apparent changes on His part are really changes in the attitude of men toward Him. Man with God, finds God with him. Man forsaking God, finds that he is forsaken of God."

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!"

- Here we have two more Biblical truths' both of which dovetail into the first truth, in that God is always faithful when we seek him.
- More specifically, when we turn to him and draw near to him, He in will not only draw near to us, but He will reward us as well.
- There are two New Testament scriptures in which God promises us that which He is promising Israel through this man Azariah.

James 4:8 (NKJV) — 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NKJV) — 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

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.

- I find this interesting for a number of reasons chief of which is the northern tribes of Israel came to Asa when they heard this.
- In other words, upon hearing that Asa had exercised his God given leadership and that God was with him, they came to him.
- This speaks to an important leadership principal, which is people wanting to serve under a godly leader who God is clearly with.

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.

- At first read, one can come away from this with the belief they entered into this covenant to seek the Lord so they wouldn't die.
- However, upon a closer examination of the text, the understanding is the wages for breaking the covenant was that of death.
- It carries with it the idea that breaking God's law was punishable by death, and as such this speaks to the New Covenant.

F. B. Meyer of this covenant wrote, "Do not think too much of entering into and keeping a covenant with God; but remember that the Lord Jesus, on our behalf, has entered into covenant relation with the Father, and the Father with us in Him. This is the new covenant."

- Before we move on and finish the chapter there's something else here I would like to point out as it relates to their commitment.
- Notice the progression with which they willingly enter into this covenant by faith first they assembled then they gave an offering.
- Then they entered the covenant and seek the Lord with all their heart and soul then God rewarded their diligent seeking of Him.

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV) — 6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

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.

- The chapter ends with Asa taking a stand against his grandmother, which was unthinkable in that culture as it is modern day.
- As hard as this would have been back then, it's still hard for us even today in the sense that we have to stand against family.
- There does come a time in the Christian life when we have to make a choice between following family and following the Lord.

Luke 14:26-27 (NKJV) — 26 "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. 27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

- What Jesus says here has been the source of confusion for many who think that we are to hate our family to follow the Lord.
- What Jesus is saying here is we cannot be His disciples if our family affections take the prominent place of priority over God.
- I'm of the belief that when we die to our self, pick up our cross and follow Jesus, our love for our family follows proportionately.

2 Chronicles 16 --1 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.

- What Asa does here could be seen as utterly brilliant were it not for the fact that he turns to a pagan king instead of to the Lord.
- It's not so much that he does this as much as it is why he does this. The reason he does this is because he now has options.
- When he was up against the million-man army of the Ethiopians, he had no other alternative but to turn to and trust in the Lord.

- It's interesting to note that his treaty with the Syrian king came by way of his own strategy to control Jerusalem's main route.
- The reason I mention this is because he shrewd strategic plan actually succeeds, but in the end it will bring about Asa's end.
- This because he relied on the king of Syria instead of relying on the Lord after God had given him the victory over Ethiopia.

Charles Spurgeon said it this way, "The power of Ethiopia was broken before him, and Judah's armies returned laden with the spoil. You would not have thought that a man who could perform that grand action would become, a little after, full of unbelief; but the greatest faith of yesterday will not give us confidence for to-day, unless the fresh springs which are in God shall overflow again."

G. Campbell Morgan of Asa's success writes, "Things which appear successful may be in the life of faith most disastrous."

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.

- I find it rather interesting God would tell Asa through the seer that the king of Syria, who he allied with, had escaped from him.
- The reason I find this interesting is because he failed to see how that Syria was a greater enemy than was Baasha and Israel.
- This was just one of many sins on his part. In addition to this, he sinned by what he forgot, what he thought and what he fought.

- He forgot what the Lord had done under the banner of thinking that the victory in some way and some how had to do with him.
- He thought that he could do it himself by virtue of how Baasha and Israel was a much smaller and weaker enemy than Ethiopia.
- He fought in and relied on his own strength, his own savvy and his own strategy now that he had self-confidence in older age.

- The common denominator in what Asa forgot, thought and fought was his haughty spirit and that of his being filled with pride.
- It's important to understand there's delineation of sorts in Proverbs, between having a haughty spirit and being filled with pride.
- Namely, that of a haughty spirit leading to a fall, and pride leading to destruction, in the sense that one will lead to the other.

Proverbs 16:18 (NKJV) — 18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.

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."

- Perhaps it goes without saying but this is amongst the most popular and well-known promises in all the pages of Holy Scripture.
- Couple of thoughts on this the first of which has to do with the profound and powerful nature of this promise in the Word of God.
- All that stands in the way of God Himself, showing Himself strong on our behalf is that of our heart being fully committed to Him.

- The second thought on this has to do with God's part and heart in all this, and it's that of His knowing, seeing and caring for us.
- I never imagine that anything in my life whether good or bad, big or small, ever escapes the notice of my loving heavenly father.
- When our hearts are fully devoted to the Lord, we can take great comfort in knowing that He will be our strength in everything.

F.B. Meyer said it best and with such eloquence this way, "What an exquisite thought is suggested by the allusion to the eyes of the Lord running to and fro throughout the whole earth! At a glance He takes in our position; not a sorrow, trial, or temptation visits us without exciting his notice and loving sympathy. In all the whole wide earth there is not one spot so lonely, one heart so darkened, as to escape those eyes."

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.

- So if you're anything like me and I suspect that you are, you're having just as difficult of a time with Asa's anger here as I am.
- One would think that he would humble himself in brokenness but instead put's the messenger in prison for giving this message.
- Lest we come down too hard on him, we would do well to consider our ways when we hear a message we don't want to hear.

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.

- I doubt very much that it's possible to overstate just how stiff-necked and hard-hearted Asa has become at the end of his life.
- It's important to remember that he's one of only nine good kings, and yet he doesn't seek the Lord when overcome by disease.
- The thought here is that were he to but seek the Lord in his sickness, he would have been healed and lived but instead he dies.

Proverbs 29:1 (NKJV) — 1 He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, Will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

- Be that as it may, the chapter ends with a verse that's been problematic concerning Asa seeking the physicians instead of God.
- Sadly, there are those who have interpreted this to mean that we're never to seek out medical care from physicians when sick.
- That is absolutely not what this verse is saying. What it is saying is we're not to rely on physicians instead of relying on God.

Of Asa not relying on God, one commentator aptly noted, "He refused to rely on God in the face of the threat against him from Israel and Syria; he refused to rely on God in His loving correction from Hanani the seer. It is no wonder that he also refused to rely on God regarding his diseased feet at the end of his life. This was a powerful warning to both the first readers of the Chronicler and to us."

I'll close with a quote from Charles Spurgeon who addresses this matter of seeking medical treatment, "It is not wrong to send for physicians, it is quite right; but it is very wrong to send for physicians in place of crying to God, thus putting the human agency before the divine; besides, it is very probable that these physicians were only heathenish conjurers, necromancers, and pretenders to magical arts, and could not be consulted without implicating the patient in their evil practices."