

# 1 Kings 15:9-12; 2 Chronicles 14-16 Sunday 2/24/2008

## I. Introduction to Asa and Historical Context

His name is Asa. By way of introduction, we all know that the Bible has three applications: there is a historical, a doctrinal, and an inspirational application for everything that is in the Bible. When we look at some of these stories in the Old Testament, it is very important to understand historically what exactly is going on if we are going to pull out the inspirational applications and how they apply to our lives.

I am going to back up a little bit. We are going to talk about Asa, but I want to set the scene so you understand, if you are not familiar with the book of First Kings and the timeline of where we are in history. Let us back up to the end of Solomon's reign. As we know, Solomon was, of course, aside from David, one of the greatest kings in the history of Israel. But Solomon is an interesting study because in the Bible, we know that there are types. There are types of Christ and there are types of the Antichrist that God uses to illustrate different parts of both people, different parts of their character. Solomon is interesting because he is actually a type of both: he is a type of Christ and he is a type of the Antichrist.

What happens with Solomon is that by the end of his reign, we all know that he had over a thousand wives. At the end of his reign, his wives started pulling him away from God. The Bible says that they turned his heart away from God, and he built high places and idols for them, bringing in all of their false gods to Israel. Imagine how hard it is after all these years when you have a thousand wives pulling you in different directions. Unfortunately, Solomon's heart was turned away from God, and they brought all these false idols into Israel.

As a result of that, God told Solomon that He was going to rend the kingdom from him and give it to his servant. But He said because of David, He was not going to completely take it from him; He would split it. So what happens is after Solomon, the kingdom gets split. Ten tribes go with and end up putting Jeroboam as their king, who was Solomon's servant. Then Rehoboam, Solomon's son, takes the other two tribes and becomes the king of Judah, and Jeroboam is the king of Israel. These two tribes, throughout the entire reign of Rehoboam and Jeroboam, continued to fight with each other. They were fighting over the land; they were fighting over the kingdom.

Rehoboam had a son named Abijam that reigned for three years. Also, understand that Rehoboam and Jeroboam both continued in what Solomon had already started with his wives, with all of the false gods and all of the false religions and the idol worship and everything that they had going. In fact, one of the things that Jeroboam did is that he was afraid that he was going to lose some of the people who would want to go back to Judah and make Rehoboam their king. So he made two golden calves for his people to worship so they would not go back to Judah to worship, because he was afraid they would just make Rehoboam their king. But Rehoboam was not any better. He destroyed everything that God wanted to do within the

kingdom of Judah. Abijam, Rehoboam's son, the Bible says that he walked in all the sins of his father and he reigned for about three years.

Historically, what is going on here is that Israel is in a mess. The kingdom has been split in two. God is essentially out of the picture. All of these people think God is in everything that they are doing, and of course, He is nowhere to be found. This brings us to our text this morning in 1 Kings chapter 15. We will start reading in verse 9.

*1 Kings 15:9-12*

*In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah.*

*And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom.*

*And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father.*

*And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.*

Let us go to the Lord in prayer. Heavenly Father, Lord, I thank You for today and thank You for all the people that are here this morning. I thank You for the visitors that have come, Lord. I pray that You would just give them a blessing out of our service today, Lord. I pray that as we open up Your Word, that Your Holy Spirit would speak through me. Give me all of the words that You want me to say, Lord. I believe that You have given me a message, Lord, that You want me to preach, but it is not going to do anybody any good unless Your Holy Spirit speaks through me and gives me Your power. Let my flesh get out of the way, Lord. Allow me to have clear thought that I might speak the exact words that You want me to speak today, Lord. We love You. We will give You all the honor and glory. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

## II. Asa's Righteous Beginning: Casting Out Idols

Asa is one of the great character studies in the Bible. Asa, for you and me, from an inspirational standpoint, pictures a Christian, somebody who gets saved and really gets on fire for God, really starts doing things for the Lord, really starts serving Him and is able to get a lot of things accomplished. As I said, we are going to be reading a lot of verses today because you have to understand historically what is going on if you are going to be able to pull out the inspirational application.

The first thing that Asa does here, you see in 1 Kings 15:11, it says:

*1 Kings 15:11*

*And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father.*

*And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.*

As we jump in here, we see the first thing that he did is he cast out the sodomites and he got rid of all of the idols that his fathers had made. For you and for me, this represents when we get saved, this represents us getting rid of the old sin and all the garbage that was in our lives. The first thing that we have to do if we are going to accomplish anything for God is that we have to get rid of all of that stuff that was in our lives in the past. It is not enough just to say, "Okay, I am saved. Everything is great now. I can go back to do whatever I want to do before," because God is never going to be able to use you that way.

Some of you standing in here today may be in that position. Maybe you did get saved two, three, four years ago, but you have not grown a single ounce spiritually since then. The reason that that is most likely is because you did not get rid of the old things. You did not get rid of the things that were in your life. You did not cast out these idols that you had set up in your life before you got saved.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says that we are a new creature in Christ and we know that old things are passed away. So we know that the day that we get saved, we become a new creature. All of our desires are different than they were before. All of our thoughts should be different than they were before. But we also understand that we are essentially schizophrenic now. You do not get rid of your old nature when you get your new nature. So for the rest of your lives, it is a constant struggle. It is a constant battle between your old sin nature, what that dirty rotten old flesh of yours wants to do, and what your new nature wants to do. But God makes it very clear all the way through His Bible exactly what we need to do.

If you look at 2 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 14, it says:

*2 Corinthians 6:14*

*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

The biggest problem that most of God's people make is that once they get saved, they make no separation between themselves and their former lives. They make no separation between the things that they used to do, the drinking that they used to do, the drugs that they used to do, the smoking or whatever, the friends that they used to hang out with, the places they used to go. They make no separation. The Bible clearly says, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

Ephesians 5:7-12 says:

*Ephesians 5:7-12*

*Be not ye therefore partakers with them.*

*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:*

*(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)*

*Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.*

*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*

*For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.*

This is something that, not that you would necessarily remember this because it was a few months ago, but the last time I got the opportunity to preach, one of the things that I talked about, one of the things that I hit on, was one of my biggest pet peeves in Christianity: listening to Christians brag about the sinful lives that they used to live before they got saved. Listening to Christians brag about the things that their unsaved friends do, as if they are living vicariously through their friends and through the things that they used to do because they are still harboring these desires that they used to have. They are not crucifying their flesh like the Bible says that they are supposed to do. So we talk about the things that we used to do and we laugh about it, and literally I hear people bragging about what they used to do. The Bible says here, "It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret." The verse before that says, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

When I talk about the fact that we need to get separation from the world and separation from the things and the influences that we used to have in our old lives, I am not talking about that you completely walk away from them, because we know that we have a requirement to minister to those lost people that God puts into our lives. But He says very clearly, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." You can have friends that are lost. You are going to have friends that are lost if you are going to do anything for God. But it says, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works." And it says, "but rather reprove them." We need to make sure that the people that God puts in our lives, that we reprove the things that they are doing. There has to be a distinct separation between what they do and the way we live our lives.

I will read one more passage for you in 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 13 through 16. He says:

*1 Peter 1:13-16*

*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

*As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:*

*But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;*

*Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

So first and foremost, after we get saved, we have to get rid of the idols. Whatever it is, whether it is some old girlfriend that we had, whether it is the music we used to listen to, whether it is the sports that we used to be involved in, whatever it is that at this point in our lives can pull us away from what God wants for us to do, that is job number one. The first step is we have to get rid of those things.

### III. Dealing with Family Influence

I want you to see back in 1 Kings 15, I want to look at the second thing he did. Please, please, please do not miss this one. 1 Kings chapter 15, pick it up in verse 12 again, says:

*1 Kings 15:12-13*

*And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.*

*And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burned it by the brook Kidron.*

Another thing to understand about the Bible and the way that God words things sometimes, it says here "Maachah his mother," she was actually his grandmother. But you will find a lot of times that the Bible will talk about in the Old Testament somebody's grandmother or grandfather as being their mother or father because they want that direct correlation being made to the line that they are in. So Asa's grandmother is still around and she is queen. But it says that she had made an idol in a grove and Asa removed her from being queen.

What we see from here is after you start to pull things out of your lives, after you get saved, and you are ready to start learning the Bible and you are ready to start making a walk and serving the Lord, you are going to face challenges from your family. Make absolutely no mistake about it. If you look back in Judges chapter 6, when Gideon began his work for the Lord, what is the first thing that he had to do? The very first thing Gideon had to do was throw down the altar of Baal that his father built.

Now you think about that. We read those things in the Bible and they are just things we read. We do not really put ourselves into those situations and think about what that would be like. Think about your mother, your father, your grandmother, who is living in sin like this, and you have to make that decision and that separation. What do you think that did between the relationship of Gideon and his father? Well, go back and read Judges chapter 6 and you will see that he wanted him dead. It kind of hurt their relationship a little bit. It was not so hot afterwards.

We are going to be faced with challenges with our family, and it does not just mean, I mean, I understand with Maachah here, this is his grandmother, she is the queen. She is in a position of power and in a position of influence, and she is a part of the kingdom. So the other thing we see here is that it is not necessarily just going to be the lost people in your family that are going to give you challenges. There may be saved people in your family. There may be people in your family that go to your church that are not going to do what they are supposed to do, and you have to make a decision whether you are going to reprove them and whether you are going to separate yourselves from them and do what Asa did here, or whether you are just going to go along with it because they are your family.

One of the very first principles that you see in the Bible out of the book of Genesis is that God divides. When God was creating the universe, He divided light from darkness, He divided day from night, good from evil. God divides everything. We have this idea, and Christ spoke about it when He came. I will read you a couple verses here out of Luke chapter 12. We have this sort of humanistic idea where we like to just take our own feelings and our own thoughts ahead of what

the Bible actually does. So everybody has these grandiose ideas about God is love and Jesus came to give the world a big hug and all of these wonderful things. God is love, but God also represents judgment.

In Luke 12:51-53, Christ says:

*Luke 12:51-53*

*Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:*

*For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.*

*The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.*

Asa did not remove her from being his grandmother, and that is not what I am saying. I am not saying that you take your family members and completely cut them off, but he did remove her from being in a position of power and a position of influence within the kingdom, which for you and I represents that you are going to have to make a stand sometimes against family members and say, "You are not going to influence me. You are not going to ruin my walk with the Lord. I am not going to stand with you while you continue to walk in sin and you continue to live in sin."

We like to throw around the phrase "blood is thicker than water," and that is true, and you should have a certain amount of loyalty to your family, but Christ's blood is a lot thicker than your blood. Christ's blood is a lot thicker than our blood, and praise God for that, because Christ's blood is what has the power to save us from our sins. So Asa made a stand. He made a stand within his family and said, "It does not matter. I do not care that you are grandma, you cannot go worshiping your idols and building your groves, so you are not going to be queen anymore," and he got rid of her.

## IV. Seeking God in Battle and Receiving Peace

Things are going well for Asa at this point. Things are going well for you as a Christian in your life. You have gotten rid of some of these old things that were holding you down as a lost person and that would separate you from God. You have taken the stand that you need to with your family, and you are on your way now.

Now flip over to 2 Chronicles chapter 14, and we will continue on with the story. The third thing we see here is that when the battles come in, when the devil starts to attack, you seek the Lord and He will give you victory over it. This is what happens with Asa. 2 Chronicles chapter 14, start reading in verse 9 here.

*2 Chronicles 14:9-15*

*And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah.*

*Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.*

*And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.*

*So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled.*

*And Asa and the people that were with him pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before the LORD, and before his host; and they carried away very much spoil.*

*And they smote all the cities round about Gerar; for the fear of the LORD came upon them: and they spoiled all the cities; for there was exceeding much spoil in them.*

*They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem.*

So Asa gets a great victory here from God. He has done all the right things. He has made all the steps that he needs to make, and now the devil comes and attacks him, and he does exactly what every Christian is supposed to do when the devil comes into your life and he brings challenges. You go to God, you give them to Him, and He will bring you victory. It is a promise that He gives us that He will give us victory.

Let us go on to 2 Chronicles 15 and let us see what happens here now. It says:

*2 Chronicles 15:1-9*

*And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded:*

*And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.*

*Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.*

*But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.*

*And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries.*

*And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity.*

*Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.*

*And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the LORD.*

*And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.*

This is a great verse, and it is a key warning for Asa. He does not realize that it is a warning, but do not miss where he says, "The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." The same warning goes out to you and I in our lives as Christians that if we seek Him, He will be found of us, but if we forsake Him, He will forsake us. Now that does not mean in terms of our salvation. We know that once we get saved, we are sealed until the day of redemption. But if we walk away from God, if we walk away from the principles of the Bible and the things that we are supposed to do, God is not going to be there for us to pick us up when we fall. He is not going to be there for us when the attacks come.

Even in 2 Chronicles 15:9, we see that people are flocking to him out of Israel. They are leaving what they have going over there because they see what God is doing in Judah and they want to be a part of it. Inspirationally, you apply that to the verse where Christ said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." We know that if we lift Christ up in our lives, in our daily walk, in our attitudes, and He permeates everything that we do, men are going to be drawn to us. You cannot avoid it. As a lost person, you are seeking one thing and one thing alone. You may not know it, you may not have thought about it enough where you have boiled it down to this one thing, but every lost person is looking to be fulfilled. They are looking to get the relationship with God that they need. That is what we are missing. That is what we lost in the garden when we sinned, and that is what we get when we ask Christ to come into our heart and save us, and the Holy Spirit comes down and indwells us and gives us the ability to have a relationship with Him, and that is the only place that they can find true fulfillment. So if we lift up Christ, they will come, and that is what is happening here.

Asa is on top of the world now. It is robust.

*1 Corinthians 15:57*

*But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*1 John 5:4*

*For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

We sing the song, "Faith is the victory," and that was the key for Asa. Asa had faith in God, so when the attacks came, he went to the Lord God and he asked for His help, and God delivered him and God gave him the victory. It comes down to your faith.

Then we see in 2 Chronicles 15:19, we see that Asa would have no war for the next 20 years. There is peace in the land. So we see this wonderful progression of a Christian who gets saved. He gets his life right. He gets rid of the idols. He separates himself from his family where he needs to. He gets them out of a position of influence in his life. He faces challenges and battles. He gives them over to the Lord, and God gives them victory, and then after the victory, you get the peace. You get the peace of God, and after God gives us victories in our lives, He gives us that peace, and He gave Asa peace for 20 years.

## V. Asa's Decline: Relying on the World, Not God

Now we jump ahead in the story. We jump ahead to chapter 16, so we know we are 20 years later, but something has happened now. Something has happened to Asa's faith in the last 20 years. We are going to read 2 Chronicles 16:1-10. There are a lot of things in here that we need to see, some critical warnings and things that we need to pay attention to for our lives so that we do not repeat the same mistakes that Asa made.

Let us read here in 2 Chronicles 16:1-10:

*2 Chronicles 16:1-10*

*In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.*

*Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Benhadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.*

*And Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelmaim, and all the store cities of Naphtali.*

*And it came to pass, when Baasha heard it, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease.*

*Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha was building; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.*

*And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand.*

*Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand.*

*For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.*

*Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time.*

There is a lot of stuff in here. What we have going on here is Baasha, who is the king of Israel now. Jeroboam is not in place anymore, and as I said, we have skipped 20 years here where it said Asa had peace in the land and had no wars. So now Baasha is starting to fight up again between Israel and Judah. But what does Asa do here? We see the contrast, and the seer Hanani brought up the contrast to him. Just the last story that we read, the last great battle that he had with the Ethiopians, when he was faced with the battle, he went to God and he asked God to give him victory, and He did. Now instead of going to God, he is going to the world, and not only that, he steals from God literally to make a deal with the devil to get him out of his jam.

What happened to Asa? What happened to Asa during that period of time? He seemingly had it all together. He had everything going for him. Do not turn, I am going to jump back to 1 Kings 15, you do not have to turn there, I will read it to you again. But there is one thing you can point back to at the very beginning. I will read back again, it says:

*1 Kings 15:12-13*

*And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.*

*And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burned it by the brook Kidron.*

*But the high places were not removed.*

He did not get the whole job done back at the beginning. He burned down the grove, he got rid of the idols, he got rid of the sodomites, and it says, "but the high places were not removed."

Now I am going to read you a passage back out of Exodus chapter 34, all the way back to when God was giving Moses the law. He warned Moses in Exodus 34:13-15:

*Exodus 34:13-15*

*But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:*

*For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:*

*Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice;*

So all the way back to when God was giving Moses the law, He warned him about it and He said, "Destroy all of it. Destroy the idols, get rid of the high places, get rid of the groves, get rid of everything." And He says, "Lest thou make a covenant with them." That is exactly what Asa did.

He left those high places, and after great victories, after living the perfect Christian life seemingly, he comes to the point now that he is making covenants with the devil's nations.

Inspirationally, these high places for us represent our imaginations. They represent our thought process. So essentially what Asa did here is similar to a Christian who is willing to take the things out of their lives. You can get saved. You can walk away from the alcohol. You can walk away from the drugs, and it may be a little bit of a challenge, but God can help you get through that, and you can beat that. But if you do not get rid of the high places, if you do not change your mind about the way that you look at things, or you allow your mind to be perverted at some point through the course of your life, it is going to get you in the end. You can only fake it for so long. You can only play games for so long.

2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 5 says:

*2 Corinthians 10:5*

*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*

That is the verse. If there were several you would want to do, if you were going to take verses and plaster them on your forehead to remind you of it on a daily basis, this would be one of the ones that you want to look at every time you look in the mirror, because the Bible says the heart is exceedingly wicked, and our imaginations, we are capable of some pretty terrible things and some pretty terrible thoughts. Our flesh is as wicked and corrupt as it can possibly be, and just because we get saved, as I said at the very beginning, does not mean that you get rid of it. It is going to be with you for the rest of your lives, and you have to constantly do what this verse says: "cast down imaginations and every high thing." Notice the connection. Asa did not get rid of the high places, and God tells us in the New Testament we need to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God. So it is every single thing in the world, every single thought that we have, everything where we puff ourselves up, and we are good at that, we like to do that.

After 20 years, I think Asa just became prideful. I think after 20 years of peace, just think about it. I promise you, he is only a few generations removed from David. Asa is thinking, he is like, "I am David. We got it back to where it was when we were at our greatest point. We have had peace in the land for 20 years. I got rid of all the idols. I got rid of all the false gods. I even kicked grandma out on her rear end, and we got it going."

So what happens to us? We go through the same process. We get saved. We get rid of the old things in our lives. We start thinking we are pretty good. We start learning the Bible, especially at this church. We learn the Bible at this church. We start feeling really good about ourselves. Maybe we even become a deacon. Then things start to fall apart, and what happens? We start to get attacked, and what happens? We go to the world instead of going to God to solve our problems, and this is exactly what Asa did.

We make some poor financial decision that gets us into trouble. So instead of just going to God and giving it to Him the way that we did five years ago, instead of remembering back to the

situation where God got us out of the same thing, instead of just giving it to Him and saying, "All right, I screwed up. Sorry, Lord," and asking Him to fix it for us, which we know that He will, we decide on our own. We are just going to go get a new job. "I can fix it. I am embarrassed. I should not have done this in the first place. I will go get a new job." Except the funny thing is, you go get that job. The devil has his hand in it, and now you have a job that is pulling you away from church. You have a job that miraculously you have to work on Thursday nights. Now, I am not trying to make anybody feel bad if you have a job that you have to work on Thursday nights. Sometimes God even puts you in a place where that happens. But we know that there are times where we take things into our own hands and we make our own decisions about things. Those decisions pull us away from where we know we are supposed to be. They pull us away from ministry. They pull us away from God and from our church where we are supposed to be.

Or maybe it is not a job. Maybe it is not a financial situation. Maybe it is a relationship. Maybe you get into a relationship with an unsaved person. Or you get into a relationship with a Christian that is an absolute spiritual zero that brings nothing to the table. They do nothing for you from a spiritual standpoint. They do nothing for you as far as challenging you and encouraging you to serve the Lord and learn the Bible. Now that starts pulling you away from God. All of a sudden, your boyfriend or your girlfriend become more important than the Lord in your life. We do the exact same thing that Asa did. We can talk about Asa and say, "What in the world? How do you do what he did?" But we do the exact same thing in our lives. We do it all the time.

2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 4 says:

*2 Timothy 2:4*

*No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

God has called us to be a soldier, and we get ourselves all tangled up in the affairs of this life, everything that is going on in our world, and we render ourselves completely useless for Him.

Do not miss this part either. You have heard Bob preach this several times over the last few months. Who is the one that always gets it first when we get into trouble? God is the one that always gets the short stick in the eye, to steal a phrase from Bob, when we get into trouble. So what did Asa do? Look back in 2 Chronicles chapter 16, verse 2. This is literally the textbook definition of adding insult to injury. It says:

*2 Chronicles 16:2*

*Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Benhadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.*

He stole. He literally stole from the house of the Lord to go and make a deal with one of the devil's nations to get him out of trouble. As if it was not enough that he did not seek God, that he

did not ask for God's help, he took money out of God's pocket to go pay off the devil to help him out. How do you think the Lord feels about that? We know that the Bible says that the devil is the accuser of our brethren. He had a field day with this one, I promise you. The devil is up there in heaven saying, "Hey, God, your boy down there, Asa, he is not having such a good day today. Did you see what he did? He went to one of my boys, asked him to get him out of trouble because Israel was attacking him. Aren't they your people, by the way, too? Asa goes down to one of my boys and asked him to get him out of trouble. Not only that, he paid him off with money that he took out of your house."

How often do you think the devil gets to do that with us? How often do you think the devil gets to go up to the Lord and point to us and say the exact same thing? "Look at the trouble that Danny got himself into down there. Remember a few years ago when that happened, he just went to you. You solved that problem for him, no problem. Now all of a sudden, he is worrying about everything. He is trying to take things into his own hands. And he let me help him out of it instead of letting you help him." We do it. We do it to God. We know that the devil takes that and throws it in God's face, just like Asa did.

Now look at 2 Chronicles 16:7. Here is the real kicker. This is the real kicker. Look at verse 7. It says:

*2 Chronicles 16:7*

*And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand.*

Do you know what that is saying? If you are paying attention, what that is saying is not only did God want to give Asa the victory over his problem that he had, not only did God want to give him victory over Baasha and Israel who were coming into attack, He also intended to use Asa to wipe out Syria. He said, "Because thou hast done this, the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand." You see, Syria became a nation, I think it was back under Solomon, and became Solomon's enemy. God wanted to use Asa to wipe them out, to just completely take care of them. And He would have done it. But instead, you have got Asa taking money out of the house of the Lord, treasures out of the house of the Lord, going down to the king of Syria and paying him off, making a covenant with him to get him out of his problem. So not only did he rob God of the ability to give him victory over Israel and the initial problem he had, God wanted to give him even more victory on top of that. He wanted to give him another victory on top of the one that he was already aware of. He was going to have him wipe out Syria at the same time.

When you take matters into your own hands, you rob God of the opportunity to give you victory. It gives another little dimension on the term "grieving the Holy Spirit." We know we grieve the Holy Spirit with our daily sin and the things that we do wrong. That is obvious. That is simple. That is a no-brainer. When we do the things we are not supposed to think and we think thoughts we are not supposed to think, we understand that when we have the very perfect and holy God and the Holy Spirit living inside of us, that is going to grieve Him. He is not too keen on sin. He is not all that thrilled about getting to participate in it with us because we take Him along with us

everywhere we go. But it gives you another little slant on that concept of grieving the Holy Spirit. When we take things into our own hands and we try to solve them on our own, and when we essentially let the world take care of it, let the devil take care of it instead of God, we rob Him of the opportunity to give us victory because God wants to give us victory in our lives. God wants to give us victory over the things that we have in our lives, the struggles that we face, and the reality of this verse shows that there are things that God wants to give us victory over that we do not even know are out there.

You know it. You have seen it in your own lives before. You have seen situations in your own lives where you have been facing a problem and you gave it to the Lord, and not only did He answer your prayer, but He went above and beyond what you even imagined that He would do. It is amazing the way that we will muddle through our lives being driven and guided by our flesh, and we wonder why we are so unhappy when we know that the Bible says that God wants to be there for us. He wants to give us victory. He wants us to be successful. He wants us to have everything, and we take away the opportunity for Him to do that. The Bible says it grieves Him.

## VI. Consequences of Backsliding

The last part about this passage that we see out of this portion of Asa's story is we see the classic reaction of a backslidden Christian: shoot the messenger. In 2 Chronicles 16:10, look at it. Back up to verse 7 again because this goes with my last point before I move on to the next one. We will start in verse 8.

*2 Chronicles 16:8-10*

*Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand.*

*For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.*

*Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time.*

As I said here, we see the classic reaction of a backslidden Christian. You get yourself into trouble. You are doing something you are not supposed to do. Your pastor sits you down, whose responsibility it is to know the state of his flock and to make sure that he is providing for the people that God has entrusted to him. Part of that is rebuking us when we need to be rebuked. But instead of just accepting it as the honest rebuke from the man of God that God has placed into our lives to serve that purpose, to pastor us, to shepherd us, to teach us the word of God and to keep us in line, we get mad at him. We get an attitude. Maybe we even decide to leave the church. Classic.

Asa, instead of accepting what he had done, admitting what he had done wrong, going to the Lord and apologizing for it and making it right, he decides to shoot the messenger. He decides to take the prophet that God sent to rebuke him and throw him in jail because he did not like what

he heard. "I am Asa. What are you talking about? Look at what I did. I cleaned up the mess. Solomon started and then Rehoboam continued. I cleaned it all up. I fixed everything. I had great victories." I promise you by the time he got to the end, they were not God's victories anymore. They were his victories. I promise you after 20 years of peace, 20 years of being puffed up with pride about where he had been and what he had done, God was not getting credit for that victory over the Ethiopians anymore. Not after 20 years. Not when you see where he came to. Asa was getting credit for it. Asa was not going to have it. He is not going to have somebody come into his throne room and question who he is and tell him that he did wrong. "No, no, no, so you are going to jail." We do the exact same thing when God places people in our lives who are there to keep us in line, to hold us accountable. Instead of accepting it and taking what they have to say and fixing what we need to fix with God, we get mad at them. We get mad at them and do not learn a single thing from it. We just keep going on with what we were doing.

Let us look at the last thing here. Let us go on to 2 Chronicles 16:11. We see on top of everything, we now see Asa's final mistake. I hope you are following the progression because some of you may be on this path. If you are not on it, you certainly are at risk to be on it someday. That is why I bring this message. That is why this story is in the Bible so we can learn from it.

Start reading in 2 Chronicles 16:11-13:

*2 Chronicles 16:11-13*

*And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.*

*And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.*

*And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign.*

So after everything, Asa ends up with a disease in his feet. It is a disease that is so severe that he ends up dying from it. When you go down this path and you have 10 years of a life serving God the way you are supposed to and with Him giving you victories, but then you get lifted up with pride and you come down to the end of this path, you end up with a disease in your feet. All of a sudden, you no longer have a walk for God. You cannot do anything for God. You get a disease in your feet. You cannot do anything. You ask a diabetic about one of their biggest fears, aside from the immediacy of the disease of dying from high blood sugar. One of the worst complications that comes along with diabetes is the risk to your feet. Because what ends up happening is you lose circulation to your extremities and you also lose sensation. So diabetics will hurt their foot and not even realize that they did. Then they also cannot heal itself because they lost the circulation. When you lose your feet, you lose everything. Spiritually, from an inspirational standpoint, you lose your feet, you lose your walk for God, and you are done. You are useless. You are absolutely useless. You cannot do anything for God anymore. Not only are you not really even willing to at this point because of where you are at, you are not even capable of it.

But even at the end, Asa makes a critical mistake. What does it say at the end of 2 Chronicles 16:12? It says, "yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians." So you have to hand it to him. At least he is consistent right down to the very end. Asa decided somewhere along the way that he did not need God anymore. Somewhere along the way in Asa's life, he decided he did not need God anymore. So even down to the bitter end, he has got a disease in his feet that is eventually going to kill him within just two years. But he still just goes to the physicians to try to get healed. You would have thought that he would have learned his lesson after what happened when he went to the King of Syria and made a covenant with him to try to get him out of a problem instead of going to God. But we get stubborn, do not we? We get real stubborn once we get to this point. We get thinking we are pretty great. We are pretty good. "I know the Bible a lot. I really do not. I got it down."

But see Jeremiah chapter 3, verse 22. God says:

*Jeremiah 3:22*

*Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.*

God wants, even at the very end when you are so far away from God that you can barely even see Him anymore, He wants to heal your backslidings. He wants to bring you back. God, I promise you, could have and probably would have healed Asa from his foot disease. Maybe he would have had a longer reign at that point. He certainly would have lived longer. But Asa did not go to Him. He did not seek Him. He went to the physicians, and he died from his ailment, just as we will die spiritually when we follow the same path.

## VII. It Is How You Finish

The final lesson that we learn here from Asa, and it is so critical, if you have not gotten anything that I have said to you up to this point, please, please get this one down. It is not how you start. It is how you finish.

1 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 24 says:

*1 Corinthians 9:24*

*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.*

You take what Paul wrote there and then you compare it to 2 Timothy chapter 4 where he told Timothy:

*2 Timothy 4:7*

*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*

Paul got to the end of his life and he had finished the course that God set before him because it would not have mattered everything that he did his entire life if he got to the end and he walked

away from God and he failed the Lord in the end and did not do what God wanted him to do. All the rest of it would have been for naught. It is not how you start. It is how you finish.

I will close with this thought. I made reference earlier to what Ray talked about at the end of Bible study on Thursday. Ray taught a great Bible study, but the last five or ten minutes or so he preached to us a little bit, which Ray is prone to do and we all love it. One of the things that he pointed out, and I think it is something we constantly need to be reminding ourselves, Bob has been saying this is the year of the Bible. We have established that as a church. We are going to take it up a notch. We are going to take it to the next level and put the Bible together and studying it and learning it. But knowledge can puff us up. Ray said it the other night, and he is a million percent right. Knowledge puffeth up. That was Asa's biggest problem. Asa's biggest problem was he got feeling way too good about himself.

What did Ray say? He said head knowledge does not mean anything until it transfers to heart knowledge and then transfers to your feet and to your walk. The head knowledge is absolutely useless. You can put the Bible together to the point that you would have Pete Ruckman and Bob himself calling you up on the phone asking you questions about the Bible. But if you do not live it, if you do not walk it on a daily basis, if it does not permeate and pervade every single thought that you have so that literally the way that you view every situation that comes into your life, that comes into your world, that you do not view it the way God views it, you do not view it through the prism of the Bible, then it is worthless. It is absolutely worthless.

Do not waste my time or anybody else's time bragging about what you know about the Bible. Do not waste my time bragging about all the great things you have done in your life, like I am sure Asa did quite a bit during those 20 years of peace that he had. It does not mean anything. I would rather see you live it. That is the only thing that is going to have an impact on this world in these last days. That is the only thing that is going to have an impact on the people that God brings into our lives.

Just look around today. We have what, six, seven visitors? It is like that almost every week. God is already doing a great work in this church. But if the leadership within this church does not continue to strive to grow, and not just in the knowledge of the Bible, but in the application of the Bible, the application of the principles that we learn, we are going to end up like Asa. If you do not learn anything else, and you do not hear anything else that I said today, understand this: it is not about how you start. It is about how you finish. If you do not stick with it, if you are gone two years from now, then I could not care less about how much you know about the Bible right now. Because it was worthless and it was useless, and you did nothing with it. We need to be found faithful to the very last day, that literally that day, that minute, that very second that the trumpet is blown, and He calls us up to go home to be with Him, that we are faithful. We are doing the work. We are applying the principles of the Word of God that we have been learning, and we are being an effective witness and minister for Him. Let us pray.