

FAITH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

May 16, 2010

The Rise and Fall of Asa

Focal Passage:

2 Chronicles 14-16

Cross References: 1 Kings 15:9-24; Matthew 11:28-30; Psalm 27; 1 Corinthians 15:58

Central Idea: King Asa experienced victories, because he led Judah to follow the LORD. In the final years of his reign he failed to rely on the LORD and suffered for it.

Lesson Idea: When we trust the LORD, He brings victory. When we rely on ourselves, we suffer the consequences.

Historical Context: Asa reigned over the Kingdom of Judah from 911-870 BC. He led the southern tribes to a great victory over the Cushites and a 35 year period of reform and revival. But when Baasha king of Israel threatened, Asa made an ill-advised treaty with the king of Aram and displeased God.

2 Chronicles 14:1-7

A Good Start

1 And Abijah rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David. Asa his son succeeded him as king, and in his days the country was at peace for ten years.

2 Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. 3 He removed the foreign altars and the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. 4 He commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to obey his laws and commands. 5 He removed the high places and incense altars in every town in Judah, and the kingdom was at peace under him. 6 He built up the fortified cities of Judah, since the land was at peace. No one was at war with him during those years, for the LORD gave him rest.

7 "Let us build up these towns," he said to Judah, "and put walls around them, with towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the LORD our God; we sought him and he has given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered.

DISCUSSION:

What was the description of Asa as he began his reign?

Vs 3 speaks of places and objects that were used in the worship of false gods and idols. What are some objects and places that promote idolatry or wickedness today?

How can we help remove these?

Asa commanded the nation to seek the LORD and obey His commands. What would seeking the LORD look like in your life?

How obedient have you been to His commands?

The first ten years of Asa's reign were a time of peace. Who did Asa give credit for that time of rest and why did that rest come?

Read Matthew 11:28-30. Where and how do we find rest?

During the time of rest Asa led the nation to build up and fortify their towns. During peaceful times in your life, what should you do to "fortify" yourself spiritually?

2 Chronicles 14:8-13

Prayer: The Ultimate Weapon

8 Asa had an army of three hundred thousand men from Judah, equipped with large shields and with spears, and two hundred and eighty thousand from Benjamin, armed with small shields and with bows. All these were brave fighting men.

9 Zerah the Cushite marched out against them with a vast army and three hundred chariots, and came as far as Mareshah. 10 Asa went out to meet him, and they took up battle positions in the Valley of Zephathah near Mareshah.

11 Then Asa called to the LORD his God and said, "LORD, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. O LORD, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you."

12 The LORD struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah. The Cushites fled, 13 and Asa and his army pursued them as far as Gerar. Such a great number of Cushites fell that they could not recover; they were crushed before the LORD and his forces. The men of Judah carried off a large amount of plunder.

DISCUSSION:

The “vast army” of Cushites is listed in some translations as containing one million soldiers. Asa’s army of three hundred thousand was vastly outnumbered. Asa turned to God in prayer. What truths about God are found in His prayer?

Why do you think God responded so powerfully to Asa’s prayer?

NOTE: The victory was so complete that the Cushites didn’t bother Judah again for over 160 years.

Read Psalm 27 and praise God for His protection over us.

2 Chronicles 15:1-19 **Encouragement to Continue**

1 The Spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded. 2 He went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. 3 For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach and without the law. 4 But in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, and he was found by them. 5 In those days it was not safe to travel about, for all the inhabitants of the lands were in great turmoil. 6 One nation was being crushed by another and one city by another, because God was troubling them with every kind of distress. 7 But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded."

8 When Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Azariah son of Oded the prophet, he took courage. He removed the detestable idols from the whole land of Judah and Benjamin and from the towns he had captured in the hills of Ephraim. He repaired the altar of the LORD that was in front of the portico of the LORD's temple.

9 Then he assembled all Judah and Benjamin and the people from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon who had settled among them, for large numbers had come over to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.

10 They assembled at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa's reign. 11 At that time they sacrificed to the LORD seven hundred head of cattle and seven thousand sheep and goats from the plunder they had brought back. 12 They entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and soul. 13 All who would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, were to be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman. 14 They took an oath to the LORD with loud acclamation, with shouting and with trumpets and horns. 15 All Judah rejoiced about the oath because they had sworn it wholeheartedly. They sought God eagerly, and he was found by them. So the LORD gave them rest on every side.

16 King Asa also deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive Asherah pole. Asa cut the pole down, broke it up and burned it in the Kidron Valley. 17 Although he did not remove the high places from Israel, Asa's heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life. 18 He brought into the temple of God the silver and gold and the articles that he and his father had dedicated.

19 There was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign.

DISCUSSION

What great truths about God did Azariah teach Asa in vs 2?

What are some ways that these truths have been evident in your life?

What was life like in Judah when people weren’t seeking the LORD (see vs 3-6)?

What parallels from those verses do you see in today’s society?

NOTE: Vs 7 is a great encouragement for all of us to heed. Compare that verse with 1 Corinthians 15:58: *Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

How did Asa respond to the encouragement?

What does vs 9 say happened as a result?

When we walk daily with the LORD and allow Him to work in us, people will be drawn to Him. Pray that God's presence will be evident in your life.

Vs 12-15 describe a national revival that followed. Though the New Testament would not support putting non-compliant people to death, what steps in these verses would help bring revival to our churches and our land?

2 Chronicles 16:7-14

Failing to End Well

NOTE: Verses 1-6 tell how Asa responded to the threat of Israel attacking Judah by making a treaty with Ben-Hadad of Aram instead of trusting the LORD. Verse 7 begins with the prophet Hanani coming to him to express God's displeasure.

7 At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him: "Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. 8 Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen? Yet when you relied on the LORD, he delivered them into your hand. 9 For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war."

10 Asa was angry with the seer because of this; he was so enraged that he put him in prison. At the same time Asa brutally oppressed some of the people.

11 The events of Asa's reign, from beginning to end, are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 12 In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the physicians. 13 Then in the forty-first year of his reign Asa died and rested with his fathers. 14 They buried him in the tomb that he had cut out for himself in the City of David. They laid him on a bier covered with spices and various blended perfumes, and they made a huge fire in his honor.

APPLICATION:

What happened? Asa had served the LORD wholeheartedly for 35 years and had seen victory and peace, but now instead of trusting the LORD, he made a treaty with a foreign nation. God was displeased, but Asa refused to repent and even threw the LORD's prophet in prison and oppressed his own people. He spent the last two years of his life with a horrible foot disease because he "did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the physicians" (vs 12). That verse should remind us that The LORD is our Great Physician and we should pray for His help in times of sickness and not just depend on modern medicine. God is always the source of healing. The king who had such a great beginning died miserably, because he rejected the LORD.

Read vs 9 again. Don't you love that promise? What do the eyes of the LORD see when He looks upon your heart?

What do you want Him to see?

Bible in a Year Daily Readings

May 2-9, 2010

May 9 2nd Chronicles 5 - 7
May 10 2nd Chronicles 8 - 11
May 11 2nd Chronicles 12 - 16
May 12 2nd Chronicles 17 - 20
May 13 2nd Chronicles 21 - 24
May 14 2nd Chronicles 25 - 28
May 15 2nd Chronicles 29 - 31
May 16 2nd Chronicles 32 - 34

Highlights of the Week:

2 Chron 6: Solomon's Prayer
2 Chron 7: God's Answer
2 Chron 10: Rehoboam's foolishness

2 Chron 11: Divided kingdoms
2 Chron 14-16: Asa's Rise and Fall
2 Chron 17: "Jumpin' Jehoshaphat"
2 Chron 20: Prayer and rescue
2 Chron 24: Joash repairs the Temple
2 Chron 26: Uzziah: Good to bad
2 Chron 29: Hezekiah's reforms
2 Chron 32: Angelic rescue of Judah
2 Chron 33: Manasseh: bad to good
2 Chron 34: Boy king Josiah