

**People of the Promise:
Asa: Divine Reliance versus
Self-Sufficiency
2 Chronicles 14-16**

Introduction

NJFK—Toy cars kids can steer; real cars need an adult to drive. Tasks too hard for us call us to trust someone wise enough and strong enough to handle them.

1. A Good Beginning (2 Chronicles 14:1-6)

¹ Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David. And Asa his son reigned in his place. In his days the land had rest for ten years. ² And 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 ⁴ and commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandment. ⁵ He also took out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the incense altars. And 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.

Asa's father Abijah was a wicked king and ruled only three years. Asa's grandfather Rehoboam was evil as well, reigning for 17

years. In his days the kingdom of Israel was divided because of the idolatry of Solomon his father. So it had been more than 20 years since Judah or Israel had had a king who was doing right before God.

Sometimes we think that a child whose family is not God-fearing has no chance. Not so. Men like Asa show that God can raise up godly men and women despite their upbringing. He did was was good (beneficial) and right (upright, straight) in the eyes of Yahweh. He wasn't just pretending. He lived right before the eyes of God. Those who live wickedly do not take into account that they do what they do before the face of God Himself. He sees it all.

Asa removed the idols and destroyed their places of worship.
He commanded Judah to seek Yahweh and to keep His law and commandments.
He built fortified cities.
He enjoyed peace from war—given by God.

July 21, 2002: *"Wholehearted devotion to God is not the enemy of my other responsibilities. It is rather the sphere in which they are best fulfilled."*

2. An Impossible Victory (2 Chronicles 14:9-12)

Ten years into Asa's reign, he faced an overwhelmingly army of invaders.

⁹ Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men 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. ¹¹ And Asa cried to the LORD his God, "O LORD, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O LORD our God, 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." ¹² So the LORD defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled.

Asa knows he and his army are too weak to win this battle. Asa relies on Yahweh and goes to battle in His name and for His glory, as David did against Goliath many years before. Outcome: "Yahweh defeated the Ethiopians."

July 21, 2002: *"Our impossible situations make us turn to the God with whom all things are possible. The possible situations tend to build our self-confidence, not our faith."*

3. Courageous Devotion (2 Chronicles 15)

2 Chronicles 15:1-2

¹ 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."

2 Chronicles 15:7-9

⁷ "But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded." ⁸ 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 and from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim, and he repaired the altar of the LORD 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.

Asa rooted out idolatry not just in the southern kingdom of Judah, but in regions of the northern kingdom as well. When people in these regions saw that Yahweh was with Asa, they joined with him. Remember it was Solomon's divided heart that led to a divided

kingdom. Unity comes when people seek the Lord and abandon their idols.

2 Chronicles 15:16

Even Maacah, his mother, King Asa removed from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it at the brook Kidron.

One's own family members can be enemies of your serving the Lord. You have to make your choice. Jesus said that if you love your mother or father or wife or children more than Him, you are not worthy of Him. He's not calling for neglect of your family, but calling us to be prepared to withstand our family members' being opposed to our devotion to Christ.

4. Foolish Self-Reliance (2 Chronicles 16)

Asa faithfully served the Lord, and the Lord rewarded him for it. But somewhere along the way, Asa let faith in God take a back seat to human strategy.

2 Chronicles 16:1-3

¹ In the thirty-sixth 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.

² Then Asa 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."

Asa's strategy was common enough, and it worked. But it lacked the reliance on God he had displayed when he was younger. *We sometimes think that the older we are and the more experienced, the less likely we are to make bad decisions and turn from reliance on the Lord. History would show otherwise.* Flee youthful lusts, yes. But watch drifting away from the Lord in your mature years, too.

Okay, so Asa made a mistake, but his plans worked. Is his self-reliance all that bad a thing? The test will be how he responds when he is confronted for his lack of faith. That will reveal his heart.

2 Chronicles 16:7-10

⁷ 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.” ¹⁰ Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in the stocks in prison, for he was in a rage with him because of this. And Asa inflicted cruelties upon some of the people at the same time.

When the prophet confronted Asa, he got angry and retaliated, throwing him in prison. And he showed cruelty to others at the same time. *When you're not right with God, the people around you suffer.* How do you respond when a brother or sister confronts you for doing wrong? How do you treat others? *A brother or sister who confronts you for a sin is a courageous friend. Treat that person as such.*

2 Chronicles 16:12-14

¹² In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe. Yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but sought help from physicians. ¹³ And 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 had been filled with various kinds of spices prepared by the perfumer's art, and they made a very great fire in his honor.

Asa's foolish pattern of self-reliance lasted five years. It ended up costing him his life. He had been victorious over a million-man army because he sought the Lord. But he died from foot disease because he pursued what only man could do. What a humiliating end for a man who had become proud of the success God gave him!

Conclusion

Asa had a long and illustrious reign of 41 years. A year longer than Solomon, and a year longer than David. But it could have been longer, and it did not have to end the way it did. Self-reliance was Asa's downfall, when trust in God had marked his rise to success.

1. A Good Beginning
2. An Impossible Victory
3. Courageous Devotion
4. Foolish Self-Reliance