

THE MAN WHO STARTED OUT WELL BUT FINISHED BADLY

TEXT: II CHRONICLES 14:1—12

Introduction:

1. King Asa was a king of Judah, the third king following the separation of Judah from Israel. His father was King Abijah. His grandfather was King Rehoboam. And his great-grandfather was King Solomon.
2. King Asa is referred to in II Chronicles 14:2 as a “good” king, and for most of his reign he did very well. However he did not finish up well, and that is what I would like to preach about this morning.
3. Over the years I have known many Christians who have started out well, but have finished up badly. I know pastors, evangelists, Sunday School teachers, and other Christian workers who are not serving God today. They started out well, but have not finished up well.
4. The apostle Paul said in I Cor. 9:27, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”
5. Paul knew Christians who had worked closely with him, who became backslidden, who became castaways, and some who were even killed by God (cf. I Cor. 11:28-30).
6. Remember Demas? He started out well. He worked along side of Paul, but later on Paul told Timothy, “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (II Tim. 4:10).
7. Somewhere along the way, Demas took his eyes off of Jesus, and started getting worldly. This is what happened to King Asa.

I. KING ASA STARTED OUT WELL

II. KING ASA STOPPED RELYING ON THE LORD

III. KING ASA FINISHED BADLY

I. KING ASA STARTED OUT WELL

1. The first ten years of Asa’s reign were peaceful and prosperous (II Chron. 14:1, 2, 6). This is because King Asa walked with God.
2. King Asa was a great reformer:
 - He stamped out idolatry (II Chron. 14:3, 5).
 - He commanded his countrymen to seek after God (II Chron. 14:4, 7).
 - King Asa put away the sodomites (I Kings 15:12).
 - He even removed his idolatrous grandmother (not his mother) from being queen (I Kings 15:13).

- King Asa called for a great assembly to gather in Jerusalem to worship God and renew their covenant with Him (II Chron. 15:10—12).
 - King Asa did not convene this assembly in order to introduce new methods of worship. King Asa was not advocating a blending together of heathen worship with the divinely ordered method of worship.
 - King Asa was encouraging his people to “seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul” (II Chron. 15:12).
3. In the early days of his reign, King Asa clearly had a heart for God.
 4. The Bible says, “nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days” (II Chronicles 15:17; I Kings 15:14).
 5. The word “perfect” means King Asa had a heart for God. The Scofield Study Bible says, “The word implies whole-heartedness for God, single-mindedness, sincerity – not sinless perfection” (p. 399).
 6. King Asa was trusting God. When he was threatened by the invading Ethiopians, King Asa cried out to God for help (II Chron. 14:9—12).
 7. To appreciate King Asa’s faith, we must consider what he was up against. There were “a thousand thousand” (one million) Ethiopians soldiers, plus 300 chariots (II Chron. 14:9) moving in against King Asa and his much smaller army (about half the size).
 8. First Peter 5:7 says, “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” This worked for King Asa and it will work for you and me. We have to trust God every day, every hour, every minute.
 9. King Asa prayed, “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 no man prevail against Thee” (14:11). That is a wonderful prayer of faith.
 10. Then we are told, “So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled” (14:12).
 11. The same God who answered King Asa’s prayer answers our prayers.
 12. Our Lord said, “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matt. 21:22).
 13. The same God who fought for King Asa will fight for you and me.
 14. The Lord says in Psalm 50:15, “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”
 15. The same God who encouraged King Asa wants to encourage you and me.
 16. The prophet Azariah went out to meet King Asa and encouraged him by saying, “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...” (II Chron. 15:1, 2).
17. However, Azariah also added this warning, “but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you” (15:2b). Unfortunately King Asa would forget this warning when he got older.
 18. But at this time King Asa was right with God. He was greatly encouraged by the prophet Azariah’s message, and he responded by putting away the idols and assembling the people in Jerusalem for a renewal of their covenant with the LORD God of their fathers (II Chron. 15:8—15).
 19. So we see that in his younger days, King Asa had a heart for God (cf. II Chron. 15:1, 2, 12). He started out well. He trusted God (II Chron. 14:11).

II. KING ASA STOPPED RELYING ON THE LORD

1. King Asa cried out to God and God delivered him from the Ethiopians. But years later, when faced with a challenge from Baasha, king of Israel, King Asa did not stop to pray.
2. King Asa did not cry out to God for help. He did not rely on God (II Chron. 16:1—9).
3. Let me stop here for a moment and emphasize that we must trust in God every moment of our lives. If we take our eyes off of Jesus for even one moment we can sink, just like Peter sank in the water.
4. Do you remember what Jesus said to Peter when he started to sink? “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Matt. 14:31).
5. King Asa started off well, but he started doubting.
6. Spurgeon said, “Now, a life may begin well, and yet may be clouded before its close. The verdure of earnestness may fade into the sere and yellow leaf of backsliding. We may have the grace of God in our earliest days, but unless we have, day by day, fresh help from on high, dead flies may pollute the ointment and spoil the sweet odor of our lives. We shall need to watch against temptation so long as we are in this wilderness of sin. Only in Heaven are we out of gunshot of the devil. Though we may have been kept in the ways of the Lord, as Asa was, for 50 or 60 years, yet if left by the Master for a single moment we shall bring discredit upon His holy name.”
7. Rather than look to God for help, King Asa turned to wicked, worldly King Ben-hadad of Syria (II Chron. 16:1-3).
8. It is surprising that a man who earlier had demonstrated such strong faith would now want to rely on a heathen.
9. Spurgeon said, “You would not have supposed that he would be the man who... would be running after an idolater and cringing before him and praying him to help him!”

10. It does seem strange indeed, that when faced with a million invaders, King Asa calmly relied on God, but now later on, when a small problem comes up, King Asa relies on a heathen king.
11. King Asa trusted God when the Ethiopians invaded his country. But now King Baasha was setting up some roadblocks in Ramah and King Asa did not even bother to pray.
12. King Asa was no longer trusting in God.
13. Simply trusting every day,
Trusting through a stormy way;
Even when my faith is small,
Trusting Jesus, that is all.

Trusting as the moments fly,
Trusting as the days go by;
Trusting Him whate'er befall,
Trusting Jesus, that is all. -- Edgar P. Stites
14. Perhaps because it was such a smaller problem that King Asa thought that he could manage it himself without God's help.
15. "Believers frequently behave worse in little trials than in great ones...It only proves this, that it is not the *severity* of the trial, it is the having or not having of God's presence that is the main thing!" (Spurgeon).
16. Somehow King Asa was no longer enjoying the presence of God. Are you enjoying the presence of God? Not just in church on Sunday, but every day?
17. How do we lose the presence of God? Lack of prayer. Lack of Bible reading.
18. Christians who read their Bibles and have devotions every day and attend church regularly enjoy the presence of God.
19. King Asa grew cold. He got careless. He lost the presence of God.

III. KING ASA FINISHED BADLY

1. King Baasha started building Ramah, which was only six miles north of Jerusalem. He did not want any of his people to go down to Jerusalem to worship (II Chron. 16:1).
2. God allowed this to happen in order to test King Asa. Proverbs 21:1 says, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will."
3. King Baasha was stirring up trouble for King Asa, but rather than seek the Lord, King Asa turned to the heathen king of Syria for help (16:3-6).
4. What is particularly disturbing about all of this is that King Asa, a saved man, instructed a heathen king to break his promise. King Asa

- encouraged King Ben-hadad to break his league with King Baasha (16:3).
5. While we expect this sort of behaviour from the ungodly, this is not the way godly people are supposed to conduct themselves. This is why so many people despise politics. It is a dirty business.
 6. Furthermore, King Asa took the silver and gold from the temple, which belonged to God, in order to purchase his alliance with the king of Syria. It was not his money. It was God's.
 7. In other words, King Asa bribed King Ben-hadad (to break his league with King Baasha) with God's money. Malachi 3:8 says, "Will a man rob God?" But this is what King Asa did.
 8. From a worldly perspective, King Asa's plan was a great success, but from God's perspective it was "foolish". Therefore, God sent Hanani the seer to rebuke Asa for his lack of faith(16:7-9).
 9. Because King Baasha "left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease," King Asa assumed everything was going to be OK. He forgot the words of his great-grandfather, King Solomon, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11).
 - 10.Or, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Pro. 28:26).
 - 11.King Asa thought all was fine, when in fact he was in trouble with God. There are many Christians like King Asa. Everything seems to be going well for them (good job, good health, money, etc.) and so they are confident they are still enjoying the blessings of God.
 - 12.But a good job, money in the bank, and a nice home does not mean you are enjoying the blessings of God. There are many wealthy people who have everything this world has to offer. But they do not have peace with God.
 - 13.The prophet Hanani told King Asa that if he had relied on the LORD, he not only would have defeated Israel, but Syria too (16:7).
 - 14."O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer."
 - 15.If King Asa would have humbly accepted the prophet Hanani's rebuke, God could have easily turned things around. But unfortunately King Asa refused to repent. He responded angrily to the prophet's rebuke (16:10).
 - 16.His lack of faith made his heart hard. I have seen this many times.
 - 17.King Asa put God's man in prison. Others (probably those who defended Hanani the seer) were oppressed (16:10). The king with a perfect heart for God now had a hard heart. King Asa was now acting like a haughty despot.

18. By comparing II Chronicles 16:1 and 16:12, we see that God gave King Asa plenty of time to repent. But King Asa did not repent so God afflicted him in his feet (16:12).
19. The Bible says, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6).
20. The Bible says King Asa's "disease was exceeding great" (16:12); i.e., very painful. The chastening rod of the LORD can be very, very painful. "Now did the king learn that embroidered slippers give no ease to gouty feet and that sleep flies when disease bears rule" (Spurgeon).
21. This would have been a good time for King Asa to pray, but rather than pray, King Asa sought help from the physicians.
22. He should have first gone to the "Great Physician."
23. It is not wrong to send for a physician. In fact, in most cases it is the right thing to do. But it is very wrong to send for physicians in place of crying out to God.
24. King Asa's affliction was punishment from God, and he knew it, but he refused to get right with God (16:12). King Asa ignored God.
25. So King Asa died the death of a backslider. He started out well but he finished badly.
26. I have been to a few funerals for backsliders. It is very sad. In some ways it is even worse than going to a funeral for someone who never had a testimony for God.

CONCLUSION:

1. I remember a few years ago getting a phone call telling me that a former member (a terrible backslider) had died in Atlantic City. At the funeral home his son asked me, "Do you think my father is in heaven or in hell?"
2. I hope no one has to ask that question at your funeral.