

II CHRONICLES

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to II Chronicles chapter 13 as we continue our study through the Word of God. We have seen in our previous studies that King Solomon has died and his son Rehoboam was now king. And the people wanted some tax relief and they asked the king to help them out, as Jeroboam was their spokesman. And the king rejected the counsel of the wise men and listened to his buddies who said that he should even be harder on the people.

When the people heard what the king had to say, the ten tribes departed, they broke their ties with Judah and Benjamin and they were now the Northern Kingdom of Israel under the reign of Jeroboam. And the king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Rehoboam, did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord and he did evil before the Lord. Now, after a seventeen year reign, Rehoboam died and his son, Abijah became king. And as you read of his story in I Kings, he is not considered a very good king. In fact, we are told in I Kings 15:3, **“And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him; his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David.”** But as we will see here in II Chronicles there was an episode in his life where he did honor the Lord and God recognizes that. That is where we will pick up our study this evening, in II Chronicles chapter 13, starting in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

II CHRONICLES 13**VERSES 1-3**

1. Here we see war about to break out between the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Southern Kingdom of Judah. But Abijah, king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah was outnumbered in this battle 2 to 1. And, obviously that is a big disadvantage. So, as we will see, Abijah is going to try and talk his way out of this battle, explaining that David and his descendants have the right to the throne and Jeroboam doesn't. He is going to speak very boldly, as we shall see, and I think it is because he knows that what he is saying is what God has already promised. He is confident in what God has promised to David will come to pass, it won't be derailed you might say!

VERSES 4-12

1. Now keep in mind that Abijah and the Southern Kingdom of Judah are outnumbered in this battle 2 to 1 and yet, he falls back on the promises of God. Yes, he was not a very good king, not a godly king, but most of what he is saying here is true. You see, Abijah was right in saying that God had established the house of David to rule over the nation, and no other dynasty shall rule. This covenant of salt spoke of preservation, and thus, the dynasty of David was not to end.

Here is where I think he is wrong. Abijah blasts Jeroboam and his men by saying that they took advantage of his father Rehoboam when he was young and inexperienced and that they had gathered worthless men around them. The division of the kingdom was not because Rehoboam was weak and inexperienced; it was because of the sins of the people, that they turned from the true and living God to worship the gods of the Gentiles and thus, this judgment was from God.

And then Abijah speaks of what Jeroboam was doing, how he was leading the people into idolatry. Remember that Jeroboam set up calf worship by placing a golden calf in the south, in Bethel, and in the north, in Dan, so the people could worship God by. And now he has brought these idols with him into battle with his great multitude to fight against the kingdom of the Lord.

Not only that but Jeroboam also fired all the priests and made for himself his own priesthood. Anyone could become a priest, all you needed was a young bull and seven rams. The ministry was for sale. You see, the true priests would never stand for what Jeroboam was doing, so he got rid of them and placed worthless men in that position and everyone was happy except God!

Folk's, when you can buy into a ministry position, it will only be a disaster. Ministry is not for sale but it is given to us by God - you can't buy it! And all we do when we place someone in ministry is acknowledge what God has already done in their life as evident by the fruit in their life.

On the other end of the spectrum, Abijah is telling them that they have not forsaken God, that their priests were of the lineage of Levi, and they are doing those things that God has told them to do. But Jeroboam and the Northern Kingdom of Israel were not!

2. Now do you really want to fight against the will of God? Do you really think you will win if you do? And even if you could win in your battle against God, guess what? You will lose because God has what is best for your life and you don't! He knows the beginning from the end and you don't! Isaiah 45:9 says, "**Woe to him who strives with his Maker! . . .**" You can try all you want and fight against the will of God, but you won't be successful. You will only be frustrated and discouraged. But when you don't strive against the will of God, when you surrender your life to Him, when you follow what He has said, then you will find peace and comfort, you will find true joy. Why are so many people struggling today? Why are so many people in therapy and unhappy with life? *Because they are striving with their Maker!*

VERSES 13-14

1. Now as Abijah is giving them this lecture, while he is rebuking them, while they are still talking about the battle plans, while they were still in negotiation, the enemy had encircled Abijah and his men. Now, not only are they outnumbered, but the enemy is all around them. They are in a hopeless situation. So what did they do? Did they become depressed or run for their lives? Did they check their horoscope to see if it would be a good day? No, they cried out to the Lord. Too often that is the last thing we do, when it should be the first!

2. Now think about this in our own life. How often do we see the enemy do this, attacking us from behind and in front! What do I mean by that? I mean that he brings up the past issues in our life, our sins, our failures, the things we did five years ago or even yesterday. But he not only attacks us from behind bringing up our past, but he also attacks us from the front or getting us to worry about the future! How many of you can change the future? None of us can, only God can and He knows the future for each of us. But we worry about this and that. “What if the job falls through?” “What if I don’t get that raise?” And that list can go on-and-on and the only thing, the best thing we can do is to bring it before the Lord and rest in Him!

Meyer put it like this, “The point to remember is that our enemies may shut us in on all sides, preventing reinforcements from north, south, east, and west; but no earthly power can ever shut off God from above us. . . . The way upwards is always kept clear; the ladder which links the beleaguered soul with God and heaven can never be blocked, except by transgression and sin.”

Remember what Paul said in Philippians 3:13-14, “**Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**” Let the past go, Jesus has forgiven you, don’t let Satan condemn you!

And remember what Jesus said in Matthew 6:34, “**Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.**” Focus on today and leave tomorrow to the Lord!

You see, the secret of a happy, successful Christian experience is to neither live in your past nor worry about tomorrow, but to enjoy where you are right now, keeping your eyes on Jesus day by day, moment by moment. That is where we will find true rest, in Him!

VERSES 15-17

1. Here we see that over half of Jeroboam's men are killed by the smaller army of Judah. You see, God gave the Southern Kingdom of Judah the victory. They were far outnumbered and the only difference was that they had surrendered to the Lord. Now keep in mind that they were not perfect but God was waiting for them to call upon Him and when they did He intervened and gave them the victory! We don't know how it was done, if God had wiped out the enemy or God gave them the ability to do it, but in either case, the Southern Kingdom of Judah routed the Northern Kingdom of Israel in this battle. And look at what verse 18 says, because this is the secret in living out our faith.

VERSE 18

1. What this verse says is so important for us to understand for here we see an important principle for our own lives and this principle is seen throughout the Scriptures. The battle is never ours; it is always the Lord's. Remember the night before Joshua and the children of Israel were about to have their encounter with the enemy in the land of Canaan, they were going against the mighty fortress of Jericho. And Joshua was out walking, looking at this city, pondering the battle that was quickly coming.

And in Joshua 5:13-15 we are told, **“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, ‘Are You for us or for our adversaries?’ So He said, ‘No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.’ And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, ‘What does my Lord say to His servant?’ Then the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, ‘Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.’ And Joshua did so.”**

As Joshua is walking, looking at those walls of Jericho, wondering how they will defeat the enemy, lots of things running through his mind, totally focused on the battle ahead, all of a sudden there is a man standing with his sword drawn! And Joshua, a soldier, was ready to fight back but before he does, he asks this man, **“Are You for us or for our adversaries?”** That is a great question, an important question. You see, if he was an ally you don't want to kill him but if he is an enemy, off with his head!

Now you have to love the response of this man, he tells Joshua, **“NO!”** That is not the proper response to the question. You see, the problem is that the question that Joshua was asking this man was wrong. It is not the right question to ask. You see, this is no ordinary man but it is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus or a Christophany!

The real question here is not, “Is the Lord for us or against us”, but “Are we for Him or against Him!” And what a great question this is for each of us to answer. You see, it is not, “Lord, I am going to do this, are you with me?” No, it is truly like this, “Here is what the Lord is going to do, are you with Him?” It is not about my will or your will being done, my plans or your plans, but it is about the Lord and are we going to follow Him, are we for Him or against Him in our actions?

Who is going to fight the battle of Jericho? Many would say Joshua as the song goes, the **BATTLE OF JERICHO**. Part of this song goes like this, “Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, Jericho, Jericho, Joshua fought the battle of Jericho, And the walls come tumblin' down.” That is not true, for it was the Lord Jesus that fought the battle of Jericho and the walls came tumblin' down! And folk's, the same is true in our own lives. We can try to tear down the walls around us in our own strength, but it will never be accomplished unless we let the Commander of the **LORD'S** army fight for us, bringing down those walls. That is where the victory is found!

You see, God is the commander of the army, thus, as the enemy surrounds us, we can trust in Him, and walk by faith, and not tremble in fear. And it is the **LORD** who will give to us the victory!

VERSES 19-22

1. Here we see that God gave Abijah and the Southern Kingdom of Judah the victory and strengthened them.

2. Now remember what we have read about Abijah, that he was not a good king, that he did not walk with the Lord. Then what about this incident? Yes, God gave them a victory because they turned to the Lord but keep in mind that one spiritual victory does not make an entire life before the Lord. We should never put our past spiritual victories on the mantel like some trophy, but learn from them and continue walking in the Lord. The Christian life is not a sprint, it is a long distance race and it can be tough, but God will see you through as you look to Him.

Remember what Paul said at the end of his life, **“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”**

II Timothy 4:6-8. May we forge ahead with our eyes focused upon Him!

II CHRONICLES 14

VERSES 1-2

1. Here we see the son of an ungodly king and this man, Asa, was one of the few Godly kings that the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He brought reform to the land, and notice that the land had rest. The Lord blessed the actions of Asa.

And notice what he did do. It says that Asa “**did what was good and right.**” Let me ask you this. Can you do something that is good and yet, it is not necessarily right? Yes you can, for there are many good things you can do with the wrong motives. For example the Pharisees, they fasted and prayed, both good things, and yet they did them in such a way to draw attention to themselves. Yes, this was a good thing, but there was the wrong motive behind it and God will not honor that, God does not want our life filled with hypocrisy. God wants us to do what is *GOOD* and what is *RIGHT!*

2. Now what did Asa do that was good and right before the Lord? Let’s read on and see.

VERSES 3-8

1. Asa, in doing what was good and right launched a reform movement. It was a reformation against idolatry as we are told in I Kings 15:12, “**And he banished the perverted persons from the land . . .**” In other words, he banished these state-sanctioned homosexual idol-temple prostitutes. Not only that, but his grandmother, Maachah, was into idolatry and made this Asherah pole, which was nothing more than a phallic symbol that she worshiped. And now here comes her grandson and he removes her from being queen and burns this image to the ground. Probably not a popular thing to do, and yet it was good and it was the right thing to do.

2. In verse 4 it says that Asa, “**... commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandments.**” Can you force someone to worship the Lord? Well, you can force them at gun point but that is not true worship and I don't think that is what Asa was doing here. I believe he was commanding them to worship the Lord as he was worshipping the Lord. In other words, he was an example to them. We can influence others in their walk with the Lord and even those that don't know the Lord can come to the Lord by our witness, how we live out our faith!

3. One more point here and that is in verse 6 where it speaks of Asa building up, fortifying cities when the land was at rest, there were no wars. Is he crazy, it is time to have some fun, to relax, to enjoy life, isn't it? During those ten years of peace Asa was preparing the nation for when the enemy came against them, they would be ready! That is a powerful lesson for us today as we tend to become lazy, complacent in our walk with the Lord when things are going well. We tend not to prepare ourselves for when the enemy does come against us!

How do we prepare for battle? During those times of peace we should be developing a strong devotional life, spend time with the Lord; spend time in the Word of God, spend time in prayer, so you are ready when the enemy comes against you, and he will! Remember what Peter said, “**Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.**” I Peter 5:8-9. May we be wise and grow in the Lord, even during those times of peace, because the enemy will come!

VERSES 9-11

1. You see, the enemy will come against you and for Asa; this is what he was preparing for during those ten years of peace, of rest. Now we see the wisdom of Asa, that he built a strong foundation to protect him from the enemy. But there is this little problem, Judah had some 580,000 men for war and the enemy was almost twice as large. They were outnumbered around 2 to 1, and now it was time to put into practice that which he had learned during those times of peace, those 10 years where they had rest from their enemies.

2. Why was this place, Mareshah so important that these Ethiopians came to take it? First of all this city was located about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem and it was very near the Via Maris, which was the costal highway that connected Egypt and the land of Canaan making it strategically important. And since Egypt was a strong nation at this time, these large Ethiopian armies were probably mercenaries of the Egyptian king, Osorkon I. And thus, this was an important city to take for Egypt!

3. And notice what Asa does when he sees the situation that he is in, that he is outnumbered almost 2 to 1. He recognized that the battle belonged to the Lord. It did not stop him from doing his part, gathering his men together for battle, but then he gives this battle to the Lord. Asa had the right perspective of the situation. He begins with the cry that, **“it is nothing for You to help.”**

How true that is. It costs God no loss of energy to come to our aide and he realized that God does not need a whole army to win, and thus, Asa is able to rest in that truth. And it seems like Asa reminds God of His responsibility, **“O LORD, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!”** In other words, “Lord, they are fighting against You and if we lose, then You will lose!” Now did God have to be reminded of that fact? Absolutely not, but Asa did and I think that is why he is saying it. He is falling back on who God is and who they are, His people!

4. Now this is something that we should apply to our own lives. Yes, we need to prepare for battle during times of peace, but when that peace ends, we need to bring it to the Lord and rest in Him. You see, the battle is the Lord’s and not ours. And the reason Asa was at peace was he knew God. We can only know God through His Word, and as we know Him we can rest in Him. Remember what Paul said in Romans 10:17, **“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”** May we not forget that! If you want your faith to grow, read God’s Word and then apply God’s Word to your life as you live out your faith!

VERSES 12-15

1. Asa and the Southern Kingdom of Judah come home victorious in this battle against the Ethiopians. They not only defeated these Ethiopians but they plundered these cities that were probably part of Egypt at this time. In fact, Judah had no more battles with Egypt until Josiah met Pharaoh Necho in 609 B. C. And for the Southern Kingdom of Judah, its army, its people, they must have been on a spiritual high, nothing could stop them now. It can't get any better than this and yet, it can get worse! Folk's, this is the place we need to be careful; for it is after the victory we can easily take our eyes off the Lord. Let's read on and see what happens after this great victory, as they are returning home.

II CHRONICLES 15VERSES 1-2

1. Here we see this prophet of God empowered by the Spirit of God, Azariah, come to Asa after this great victory and tells him to continue walking with the Lord, for if you don't, He will forsake you. Now for Asa, and most if not all of us, that would be the farthest thing from our mind. "Of course we are going to follow after the Lord, what in the world are you talking about? Have you been out in the sun too long? Look at this great victory we have, God is with us!" Let me say this, if God takes the time to warn you about something, you would be wise to listen! To many times we think we know more than God knows, and we quickly come to find out we were wrong.

And the question is not, “Is God with us?” but “Are we with God?” I think Morgan put it correctly when he 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.” How true that is!

VERSES 3-7

1. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Azariah reviews the history of God’s people, the Jews and it is not good. They had forsaken the Lord, they had turned from Him. Not only that, but there were no teaching priests and thus, there was no Law being taught. I am not saying there were no priests, there were many but they were not teaching the people the things of God like they should have been! We see that today. We have an abundance of pastor’s today but how many of them are teaching the Word of God from Genesis through the book of Revelation? Not many!

Now as unfaithful as the Jews were, God remained faithful and as soon as they turned to Him, He restored them. It is as Lamentations 3:22-26 says, “**Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘Therefore I hope in Him!’ The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, To the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly For the salvation of the Lord.**”

God is for us, He wants to bless us, all we need to do is seek Him and He is there with arms wide open to embrace us! God is not looking for perfect people, because there are none. God is looking for faithful people! And don't we see that today where people try to be good enough for God to love them, for God to accept them and that will never work! God is looking for people who are faithful, for people who seek Him and if we seek Him we will find Him but if we forsake Him, He will forsake us!

2. And I am sure that the work before Asa was overwhelming and thus, Azariah is encouraging Asa to continue in the work. He is telling Asa not to give up even though others have failed before him. Remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 15:58, **“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.”** Don't give up, even though the work may be difficult and seem unrewarding, for God will reward you, and your labor is not in vain, even though you may not see immediate results. Keep your eyes focused on the Lord!

VERSES 8-9

1. As Asa hears these words he responds in a godly manner. He does not get mad at Azariah for what he said, but Asa listens and then responds to the words of Azariah the prophet. And folk's, like I have said, it was not easy. The nation had embraced idolatry. There were those spiritual forces that were trying to keep them into this idolatry. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was heavy into idolatry. Maybe he was struggling with his own fleshly desires in regards to idolatry. So it was a battle but Asa did what was good and what was right before the Lord and it brought not only the Southern Kingdom of Judah back to God, but when those in the Northern Kingdom of Israel heard of this revival breaking out, they joined in, they went down to the Southern Kingdom of Judah so they could reap those blessings of God!

VERSES 10-15

1. This is exciting to me, the nation comes together and they make a covenant to seek the Lord with all their heart. How awesome that would be if this nation did that. But this all transpired as one person wanted to do what was good and what was right and it affected the entire nation!

2. Now verse 13 is interesting in that they put to death all those that did not want to follow the Lord. Some say that this is speaking of those that broke the Law of God; those Laws that were punishable by death were put to death. That may be true, but it seems to go even farther. You see, they had good intentions, seeking the Lord as a nation, but they went too far when they put to death those who refused to turn to God. Here's the thing. You can't legislate a love for God or force people to love God. What happens if you threaten people like this is that they will say they love the Lord to protect themselves when they really don't mean it. You can't force anyone to love God nor can you legislate a love for God. Why is that? Because, it is not a matter of the Law but a matter of the heart!

3. So we see these people come before the Lord in prayer and worship not because they had to, but they had the desire to. It flowed from their lives. Remember what Azariah said, **“... ‘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.’”** II Chronicles 15:2. They were seeking the Lord with their whole heart and thus, **“... He was found by them, and the Lord gave them rest all around.”** II Chronicles 15:15. Just as this prophet of God had said was taking place. God is faithful and what He has promised He will bring to pass!

VERSES 16-19

1. As I have said earlier Asa's grandmother, Maachah, was into idolatry and made this Asherah pole, which was nothing more than a phallic symbol that she worshiped. And now here comes her grandson and he removes her from being queen and burns this image to the ground. Probably not a popular thing to do, and yet it was the right thing to do. That should be the desire of our heart. To do what is right before God. Yes, it may not be popular but it is a good thing to do, it is the right thing to do. Asa had his priorities right and did what was right, which was so important as the people looked to their king for direction and leadership. Interestingly enough, the name Asa can mean, "healer" and that is what we are seeing in the land, this healing as he cleanses the perversion that has been brought into it by the previous kings!

2. Now in regards to these high places, in I Kings 15:14 we are told, "**But the high places were not removed. Nevertheless Asa's heart was loyal to the Lord all his days.**" But here in II Chronicles 14:3 we are told, "**for he removed the altars of the foreign gods and the high places, and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images.**" So which is it, did he remove these high places or not? I believe he did remove the high places for these foreign gods, but not the ones that were dedicated to the Lord.

3. Yes, Asa did bring great reform to the land, reform that was badly needed, and yet he did not go far enough. We are going to see some of his struggles but Asa's heart was loyal to the Lord and God honored that. For Asa and the nation, they had a time of peace, a time to rebuild, to grow and prepare for the coming battles. But just because he did right the first time, doesn't mean he is going to continue down that path. Asa was a man, a man just like us, and he faced challenges to his faith. He blew it from time to time, just as we do, but God does not give up, He is still working with us, molding and shaping us into the men and women He wants us to be. Let's read on and see what happened to Asa.

II CHRONICLES 16

VERSES 1-3

1. Keep in mind that Baasha was the King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and he is trying to stop the flow of his people from going into the Southern Kingdom of Judah and to block the trade route to Judah. You see, word got out how God was blessing Asa and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and that caused many to come and be part of what God was doing. In II Chronicles 15:9 we read of this taking place. It says, “**. . . for they came over to him in great numbers from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him.**”

So Baasha builds up Ramah, which was located about 5 miles north of Jerusalem, on the boarder between the two kingdoms, and on an important trade route linking Egypt and Mesopotamia, to stop this migration or defection of his people to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. And in the process of doing this, Baasha is bringing his men and supplies into this city to most likely prepare for war against Judah, which would put a halt to the defections that were taking place.

2. And look at the change in Asa here. Instead of crying out to the Lord, he cries out to Ben-Hadad the king from Syria for help. What a contrast we see in what Asa did here versus what he did when the Ethiopians had him outnumbered. Then he trusted in the Lord, but now we see him trust in man. He is in trouble and he has no place to turn, so he turns to man. What happened? During those years of peace Asa did not cultivate a deep relationship with the Lord, but focused on his outward strength. Thus, his actions are born out of an empty spirit. Because of that Asa takes the treasuries of God and gives them to Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, an unbeliever, to help him with his problems.

Spurgeon sums this up like this, “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.”

3. Here is a lesson for us. You never make an alliance with the enemy, you never ask them to assist you, no matter how bad the situation is. Asa started out strong, his reforms were good, but he faded at the end of his life. That tells me that it doesn't really matter how long you have walked with the Lord, the enemy never gives up, and thus, we can not let our guard down, even at the end of our life!

VERSES 4-6

1. Ben-Hadad had a treaty with Baasha, but he was bought out and comes to the aid of Asa. Now Baasha is down in Ramah, in the southern part of his kingdom, so Ben-Hadad strikes Israel at its northern borders. In doing so it caused Baasha to stop his work down in Ramah and go and protect his northern borders from this invasion.

2. What a great plan and it worked! Asa was free of Baasha, and you may think, "Great, this must be of God, it worked!" Wrong! Just because something works does not mean it is of God, and we will see that in the next several verses. Morgan put it like this, "Things which appear successful may be in the life of faith most disastrous." And Spurgeon made these remarks, "Now, many people in the world judge actions by their immediate results. If a Christian does a wrong thing, and it prospers, then at once they conclude he was justified in doing it; but, ah! Brethren, this is a poor, blind way of judging the actions of men and the providence of God. Do you not know that there are devil's providences as well as God's providences?" May we learn the lesson!

VERSES 7-9

1. We don't have to guess what God thinks of what Asa did because we see here that God rebukes Asa through the prophet Hanani for his actions, for his unfaithfulness to the Lord. You see, it doesn't matter if the plan worked or not, he put his trust in man, an unbeliever rather than the Lord. And Hanani reminds Asa that when the Ethiopians came upon him, that he turned to the Lord for help. He did not place his faith in the arm of flesh. Paul tells us in Romans 13:14, "**But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**" If you give the flesh room to grow, like a weed, it will take advantage of the opportunity. If you fill yourself with the Lord, stay focused on Him, you will not give the flesh room to grow!

2. Now we, like Asa, fall into this trap all the time. It is much easier to trust in the arm of man than the arm of God. Why is that? Because we are looking for immediate results and God does not always work that way. How many people run to counselors, seminars, read books to try and overcome the flesh? They are looking to themselves to gain victory over the flesh through these programs and-so-on. It won't happen; at least you won't have complete victory. Think about it this way, how many New Year's Eve resolutions have you made and then within a week or two how many of them have you broken? Yes the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak!

3. How come Asa did not see this? Because compromise blinds us to what we have done and who are true enemies are. For Asa it was not Baasha, it was the Syrians, but he did not see it. And what ends up happening is we make alliances with those whom God would rather give us victory over. We don't partner with the enemy to gain victory in our lives!

It all boils down to what Paul tells us in Galatians 2:20-21. He said, **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”**

Victory comes as we allow God to transform our lives. God removes those desires, those thoughts, He gives us the victory. It is as Paul goes on to say in Galatians 3:3, **“Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”** And Paul's point is simple; you will not be sanctified by the works of the flesh. You see, we became Christians as a result of the Spirit of God working in us, and now that we are saved, we begin a life-long process of sanctification, being molded into His image. Thus, if God has begun the work in us, how can we complete it in the flesh? We can't! And what happens is that people who try to perfect themselves by the works of the flesh is that they only become frustrated and discouraged, never experiencing that victory that is only found in Christ as we look to Him.

God was looking for faithful people to work through, He is searching for those whose hearts are in love with Him and for Asa, he was found coming up short and thus, the battles will continue because he tried to defeat the enemy by the works of the flesh instead of the power of the Spirit!

VERSE 10

1. As Asa is told the truth, how God feels about what he has done, how does he respond? He is mad, Asa is angry and he can't take his anger out on God, so he puts God's messenger in prison and oppresses those who oppose him.
2. Many times people don't want to be corrected, especially when they have seen success in their life as Asa did. Let us never be so proud and arrogant that we never think we need correction. Even if someone is coming against you and what they have to say is not true, listen to see if there may be some truth hidden within all that anger. There is always room for us to grow.

VERSES 11-14

1. And so a few years down the road we see that Asa becomes sick in his feet and the intimation here is that if he would have sought the Lord he would have been healed, but instead he went to the world for his help. Now we should come before the Lord even with our physical problems, but God is not saying that physicians are evil and we should not go to them. The tragedy is that many people read this verse and come to that wrong conclusion and believe that they should never go to physicians. That is wrong.

The thing that God is illustrating here is that this had become the pattern of Asa's life, of not trusting in the Lord and trusting in the arm of man for his strength. God uses physicians to help us and to heal us. When I go to the doctor I pray that God would give the doctor wisdom in treating my illness. When people go to surgery I pray that God would guide the surgeon's hands. You see, my faith is in the Lord and He uses all of us for various things, He can also use physicians as His instrument to help people, and He does!

2. Asa's walk with the Lord had been hampered and we see that with this physical problem, that his feet had become diseased. He had a hard time walking! Thus, in the spiritual realm, he no longer had that intimate relationship with the Lord in his life and was hindered by this; his walk with the Lord was hampered! The same can happen in our own walk with the Lord, be sensitive to that fact!

3. Asa's life, like Solomon's, started out so promising and yet it ended in such disappointment. If only Asa heeded the warning of the prophet Azariah who said, **“... ‘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.’”** Asa trusted more in the arm of man than he did in the Lord in the latter part of his life and when he died, you might say that his life went up in smoke!

Let me leave you with this last point. In II Chronicles 15:17 we are told, **“. . . Nevertheless the heart of Asa was loyal all his days.”** He wasn't perfect and yet God saw him that way and folk's don't let the Devil condemn you because there is no condemnation in Christ. God is working and He will never give up and the work He has begun in us He will complete. He not only saved us, He not only sustains us, but one day He will take us up into glory!