

II CHRONICLES 13-16

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 about 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.

This is interesting to me because here in II Chronicles all we see mentioned is this battle with Jeroboam, the good that he did.

But, in I Kings chapter 15, as I have said, we see that he sinned by not following after the Lord.

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

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 two to one.

We might not think too much about that, but it was a huge 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.

In other words, 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

That is a pretty good speech. It is pretty powerful. One writer put it like this, ***“Abijah is the aggressor. He’s moved his army into the northern kingdom – the mountains of Ephraim. But before he wages war, he calls out Jeroboam, and gives him a tongue-lashing.”*** (Sandy Adams, II Chronicles 13)

But keep in mind that Abijah and the Southern Kingdom of Judah are outnumbered in this battle two to one 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.

Please understand that 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.

Also, he said that he would be harder on them than his father, Solomon, was. They wanted tax relief and he was not going to give it to them!

And then Abijah speaks of what Jeroboam was doing, how he was leading the people into idolatry.

Remember that Jeroboam, the Northern Kingdom of Israel's first King, 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 was trusting in these idols in this battle 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 they went to Jerusalem to minister.

And Jeroboam placed worthless men in that position, and everyone was happy except God!

Folk's, when you can buy into a ministry position, it will 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!

Here's the thing. 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!

How will Jeroboam respond to what Abijah said?

Let's read on and see.

VERSES 13-14

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.

So it gets even worse for Abijah as they are not only 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!

Let's apply this to our own life and see what we can glean from this.

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

Here we see that over half of Jeroboam's men are killed by the smaller army of Judah.

How can that be?

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, for the victory we can have in these battles we face.

VERSE 18

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.

What we see here 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 JERICO***.

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 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 us the victory!

VERSES 19-22

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

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

With the death of Abijah his son, Asa now reigned in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. What is interesting here is that this ungodly King has a son who was very godly.

In fact, Asa was one of the few godly Kings in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He brought reform to the land, and during his reign the land had rest for ten years!

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, because 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!**

Now what did Asa do that was good and right before the Lord?

Let's read on and see.

VERSES 3-8

Asa, in doing what was good and right, he 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.

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!

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 so 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

Make no mistake, the enemy will never give up, they will continue to come against you.

For Asa, this is what he was preparing for during those ten years of peace.

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 two to one, and now it was time to put into practice that which he had learned during those times of peace, those ten years when they had rest from their enemies.

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 coastal 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!

And notice what Asa does when he sees the situation that he is in, that he is outnumbered almost two to one. 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!

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

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, we see that 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!

This is the place we need to be careful; for it is after the victory we can easily take our eyes off the Lord and fall.

If you doubt that, then listen to the warning that is giving to Asa after this great victory!

II CHRONICLES 15

VERSES 1-7

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!

Many times we think we know more than God knows, and we quickly come to find out we were wrong.

And remember that question from before, that is it not, ***“Is God with us?”*** but ***“Are we with God?”***

And we see here that 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!

You will never be good enough for God to love you. The amazing thing is that God loves us and died for us when we were still sinners and His love for us is unconditional. In fact, in Romans 8:39 Paul tells us that nothing **“... shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Here’s the thing. God is looking for people who are faithful, for people who seek Him and if we seek Him, we will find Him.

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

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.

What was before Asa was not easy because the nation had embraced idolatry. There were those spiritual forces that were trying to keep them in this idolatry.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel was heavy into idolatry.

Maybe he was struggling with his own fleshly desires in regard 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

Here we see that 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!

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!

So we see these people come before the Lord in prayer and worship not because they had to, but because 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

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.

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!

Now in regard 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 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.

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.

Let’s read on and see that Asa did not heed the warning that was given to him by Azariah.

II CHRONICLES 16

VERSES 1-3

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.

Why were they leaving the Northern Kingdom of Israel and heading down to the Southern Kingdom of Judah?

The reason is simple. As word got out how God was blessing Asa and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, they were moving down south. 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.**”

Also, the Temple was there in Jerusalem and Jeroboam was heavy into idolatry and God was not blessing the Northern Kingdom of Israel. So here is this exodus down south!

What does Basha do to stop this?

We see that Baasha builds up Ramah, which was located about 5 to 8 miles north of Jerusalem, on the border between the two kingdoms, and on an important trade route linking Egypt and Mesopotamia.

He is trying 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.

Remember that Asa was warned not to turn from the Lord and that is what we see him do here. Instead of crying out to the Lord, he cries out to Ben-Hadad the King from Syria for help.

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.

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 cannot let our guard down, even at the end of our life!

VERSES 4-6

Ben-Hadad had a treaty with Baasha, King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. But now Asa gets him to break that treaty by paying him off and he now comes to the aid of Asa.

Keep in mind that Baasha is down in Ramah, in the southern part of his kingdom, building it up, stopping the flow of his people down South.

To stop Baasha from doing that we see that Ben-Hadad strikes Israel at its northern borders.

The reason he did that is simple. By attacking in the northern part of the land it caused Baasha to stop his work down in Ramah and go and protect his northern borders from this invasion.

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.

VERSES 7-9

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!

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.

Draw close to God, be in His Word, let God speak to you and help you to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Listen again to what we are told in II Chronicles 16:9, **“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars.”**

Who is God looking for?

Talented men?

Wealthy men?

Good looking men?

Educated men?

No! No! No! No!

What we see here is that 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.

Because of that, the battles will continue because he tried to defeat the enemy by the works of the flesh instead of the power of the Spirit!

How will Asa respond to what Hanani said to him?

Let's read on and see.

VERSE 10

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.

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

We see here that a few years down the road Asa becomes sick in his feet and the intimation here is that if he had sought the Lord he would have been healed, but instead he went to the world for his help.

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.

This is not saying we should not go to doctors, not at all!

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!

Think about this for a minute. 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!

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!

He was not cremated, but this fire was more of a ceremonial bonfire!

There is nothing wrong with being cremated. All cremation does is speed up the process of our bodies going back to the dust of the earth.

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 folks, 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!