



God's Grand Story: Good Kings, Bad Kings, & King Asa

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Asa, the king of Judah, reigned from 911 to 870 B.C. He started so well. He continued well. And he ended in foolish unbelief. The story is told in 2 Chronicles 14–16.

Romans 15:4 — "Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope."

God's purpose for giving us the Old Testament is to help us hope in him.

1. King Asa began well.

"Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God." [14:2]

"He removed the foreign altars and the high places." [14:3]

"Even his mother, King Asa removed from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah." [15:16]

"He commanded Judah to seek the Lord." [14:4]

"He had no war in those years, for the Lord gave him peace." [14:6]

"So they built and prospered." [14:7]

2. He continued well

"Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah, and 280,000 men from Benjamin." [14:8]

"But Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots." [14:9]

"Asa cried to the Lord his God, "O Lord, there is none like you...Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on you...O Lord, you are our God; let not man prevail against you." [14:11]

"So the Lord defeated the Ethiopians before Asa." [14:12]

"The heart of Asa was wholly true all his days...And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa." [15:17, 19]

Asa trusted God and not his own ingenuity or strength, and God came to His support because of Asa's reliance on Him.

What does trusting in the Lord and relying on Him look like in Asa's life, and ours?

First, he recognizes that no one and nothing can help like God — "O Lord, there is none like you to help." [2 Chronicles 14:11]

Second, he acknowledges his own weakness and God's strength: "O Lord, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak." [2 Chronicles 14:11]

Third, Asa took the courageous next step in reliance on God. He prayed, "Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude." [2 Chronicles 14:11]

When Asa runs to God for help, God runs to fight for Asa: "*So the Lord defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled*" [2 Chronicles 14:12].

3. Asa turns from relying on God to relying on man.

"In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel went up against [Asa, and besieged Judah] that no one might go out or come in to Asa king of Judah." [16:1]

"Then Asa took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the Lord...and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Syria,... saying, ...Go, break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me." [16:2–3]

"And Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel." [16:4]

"And when Baasha heard of it, he [withdrew]." [16:5]

"But Hanani the seer came to Asa 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.'" [16:7]

"You have done foolishly." [16:9]

Instead of turning to the Lord, he turned immediately to human resources.

Asa's unbelief brought short-term relief but long-term hardship.

When we rely on ourselves and our own resources, things seem to go well for a season. But we miss tremendous blessings and bring unnecessary hardship on ourselves.

We know from other scriptures (e.g., Romans 8:28) that if we repent of unbelief, God will even take the chastisements of hardship and turn them for our good.

But Asa doesn't repent, in fact, he never does... Then Asa was angry with the seer and put him in prison, for he was enraged at him for this, oppressing some of the people at the same time.

2 Chronicles 16:12 – "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."

For 35 years, Asa sought and relied on the LORD, but for his last 6 years, he did not seek or rely on the LORD.

God warned Asa through the prophet Azariah:

2 Chronicles 15:2 – "Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the LORD is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you."

And God warned Asa through the prophet Hanani:

2 Chronicles 16:9 – "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."

What was the message to Asa?

If you seek God's help in your desperation, no one and nothing will be able to harm you. But if you run elsewhere for help, and do not turn to God, no one and nothing will be able to save you.

Asa teaches us through stubborn failure: if we rely on ourselves and look elsewhere for help, not only will God leave us to fend for ourselves, but the wars may never end.

What if Asa would have seen just how much he lost when he won the battle without God?

2 Chronicles 16:10 – "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."

That's how stubborn self-reliance responds when confronted with the truth – in Asa and in us.

2 Chronicles 16:12 – "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."

Is there a more pitiful demise? He preferred to die in a physician's hands rather than entrust himself to God's.

When God reminds us, through his word, how much we need him, either pride will rise up in rage to defend ourselves, or humility will send us to our knees with brokenhearted repentance.

The very nature of God is that he is eager to show his power on behalf of people who trust him.

2 Chronicles 16:9 – "The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show His might in behalf of those whose heart is blameless [whole, i.e., wholly relying on him, that's what the context requires] toward him."

This is what God is doing all the time, everywhere (cf. Zechariah 4:10).

The God and father of our Lord Jesus who loved us and gave Himself for us.

The God who hears all your prayers.

The God who created the universe and holds it all together.

The God who stands in this room right now teaching you and calling you to trust Him and call upon Him for every need that you have.

Seek Him. Trust Him. Rely on Him in everything, and He will come through for you.