

Fact Sheet for "Asa" 2 Chronicles 14-16¹

Pastor Bob Singer 09/18/2016

^{ESV} 2 Chronicles 14:1 ¶ Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David. And Asa his son reigned in his place. In his days the land had rest for ten years.

Asa would reign for 41 years (911-870 B.C., 2 Chron. 16:13)

² And Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God. ³ He took away the foreign altars and the high places and broke down the pillars and cut down the Asherim ⁴ and commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandment. ⁵ He also took out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the incense altars. And the kingdom had rest under him. ⁶ He built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest. He had no war in those years, for the LORD gave him peace. ⁷ And he said to Judah, "Let us build these cities and surround them with walls and towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the LORD our God. We have sought him, and he has given us peace on every side." So they built and prospered. ⁸ And Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah, armed with large shields and spears, and 280,000 men from Benjamin that carried shields and drew bows. All these were mighty men of valor.

Asa had at his disposal 580,000 men in total. Where did Asa's military might come from... the fortifications, the army, the shields and spears? No! It was because the Lord gave them peace.

⁹ ¶ Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots, and came as far as Mareshah (*25 miles SW of Jerusalem*). ¹⁰ And Asa went out to meet him, and they drew up their lines of battle in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. ¹¹ And Asa cried to the LORD his God, "O LORD, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let not man prevail against you."

Asa was outnumbered and he knew it. He was driven to the Lord as his only real option.

¹² So the LORD defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. 15:1 ¶ The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, ² and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you."

There is more here than just the promise of God's blessing because they relied on the Lord. There was instruction for the future. God didn't promise that there wouldn't be scary situations. God promised His help if Asa relied on Him, and warned Asa that God would forsake him if he didn't. We will all encounter scary situations in our lives. Will we rely on God in those times? Then God gave Asa some more encouragement.

15:7 But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded."

Asa responded by intensifying his dedication to God. Great numbers from the northern 10 tribes started deserting to Asa from Israel when they saw that the Lord was with him (15:9). Then there was a great ceremony.

15:14 They swore an oath to the LORD with a loud voice and with shouting and with trumpets and with horns. 15:15 And all Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and

¹ Parallel: 1 Kings 15:9-24.

had sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around.

Warning: Ceremony can be the true expression of the heart at any one moment, but it does not take the place of continued commitment. Asa then did something that was striking.

15:16 ¶ Even Maacah, his mother (grandmother, cf. 11:20, the Hebrew term could mean either), King Asa removed from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it at the brook Kidron.

Asa was now well into his kingship. He had trusted strongly in God and God had blessed. Asa grew strong, but he had learned to trust in his own wisdom and abilities rather than trusting in God.

16:1 In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and built Ramah (on the border of Israel with Judah), that he might permit no one to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. ² Then Asa took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the LORD and the king's house and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Syria, who lived in Damascus, saying, ³ "There is a covenant between me and you, as there was between my father and your father. Behold, I am sending to you silver and gold. Go, break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me." ⁴ And Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, and they conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali (cities near the Sea of Galilee). ⁵ And when Baasha heard of it, he stopped building Ramah and let his work cease. ⁶ Then King Asa took all Judah, and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber, with which Baasha had been building, and with them he built Geba and Mizpah (on the border of Judah with Israel).

Asa's plan was clever and it worked, but it demonstrated that Asa now trusted in himself rather than in God. This is what Azariah had warned him about in 15:1-2.

⁷ ¶ At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, "Because you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you. ⁸ Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the LORD, he gave them into your hand. ⁹ For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars."

There is no problem that confronts God's people that He does not see and from which He cannot deliver. How was Asa going to respond? When David was confronted by Nathan the prophet over his sin with Bathsheba David responded by writing Psalm 51, a psalm of confession and repentance. Asa was not of the same caliber.

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

Asa imprisoned Hanani and took out his frustrations on the people. In his 39th year Asa's feet got severely diseased, yet even in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but sought help from physicians (15:12). *Seeking the help of physicians was not wrong or inappropriate. It was Asa's exclusive reliance on the physicians and not on God first that was inappropriate.* Two years later he died and was buried with an impressive state funeral. Asa didn't abandon the Lord. He just had gotten to trust in himself more. In 1 Kings 15:14 it says, "Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was wholly true to the Lord all his days." In other words Asa still worshipped the true God, not idols.

Is your first response to turn to God in time of need? Or, is your first response to take care of it yourself? Being smart or clever can actually get in the way of your relationship with the God who created you. The message from God in the life of Asa is clear... turn to God first!