

2 Chronicles 13-16

In chapter 13 Abijah steps on to the stage of scriptures history; and the overall legacy that he left was this, “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.” 1 Kings 15:3 Now as you know when we read here of, “his father David,” that’s not a reference to the fact that David was literally his father; David was literally his great, grandfather. But this is simply a figure of speech that points to the fact that Abijah was of the family and lineage of David. But that sorta sets the scene for the son of Rehoboam who took the throne after his dad’s death. Which obviously makes for sort of a sad situation indeed; Abijah walked in all the sins of Rehoboam his father and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God.

Now we’re not going to spend a lot of time here in chapter 13 (though we’ll stop here and there along the way) but I basically just wanted you to realize that overall Abijah was not a good king. However the account we have before us is one that is commendable. And so it seems that the overarching theme that basically permeates chapter 13 is that even when someone’s life is generally characterized by sin and rebellion that should he/she cry out to the Lord from a true heart and a desire for deliverance that God in His grace stands ready to forgive and willing to deliver.

You have to remember that Chronicles was written to encourage the returning remnant of exiles that’d been in Babylonian captivity for the last 70 yrs. The idea being that they had been in rebellion and standing at odds with the will and ways of God for sometime as a nation; and because of that they were given into captivity. Their lives a nation characterized by sin and transgression against the Lord, yet if they were willing to repent, if they would cry out to the Lord from a true heart and a desire for deliverance that God in His grace would forgive them, deliver them, and restore them as a nation unto Himself.

Chapter 12 ended with the death of Rehoboam, he reigned 17 yrs. Now in the 18th yr of king Jeroboam (the king of Israel, remember they took the thrones simultaneously when the nation of Israel split) Abijah reigned in the place of his father.

Vs1-3

Obviously Abijah is in a bad way here because he’s out #’d 2 to 1. He’s outgunned and overwhelmed statistically, so he’s going to try and talk some sense into them, negotiate a bit, try and reason them into surrender. But can I just say that God loves to be statistically overwhelmed, He loves it when the odds are stacked against Him so much to the point that it creates an impossible situation. Now we don’t like that, because we’re too often left in the dark with respect to what God’s going to do, we simply feel the stress of being outgunned and overwhelmed. and I don’t know about you but I don’t particularly enjoy the feeling of being pressed into a corner whereby there’s no way out, I’m in an impossible situation.

But God likes it when the situation comes to that point; not because He likes to see us struggle, but because He likes to show Himself strong on our behalf. Often times we say it like this, “Man’s impossibilities become God’s opportunities.” As long as we can handle it, we don’t need God. But when we get to that point that we can’t handle it, it has to be God or it isn’t going to happen. Then God alone gets the glory for the work that He does. But right now Abijah is in that place where he’s measuring up the battle lines, he knows he’s statistically defeated he seeks to talk his way into a truce, get them to come to terms with him.

Vs4-12

Now let’s reflect on this for just a moment. 1st of all his speech, though it sounded real good wasn’t altogether accurate, he sorta mismanages a bit of his information. He makes his dad Rehoboam out to be an innocent victim of their deceitful and worthless ways. and It’s true that they came together and took Israel out of his hands, but you remember it wasn’t simply because they were taking advantage of his inexperience, he was 41. Rehoboam played the fool in demanding of them more than they could give saying that he was going to be a tyrant over them demanding of them whatever he wished and that in his weakest area he would be stronger than his dad’s strongest. He acted foolishly, and he also tries to make Judah out to be righteous compared to the wickedness of Israel. and Perhaps compared to the wickedness of Israel they were, yet the scriptures teach us, “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” 2 Cor 10:12 It’s not wise to use someone else as your barometer or your measuring stick of righteousness. As if to say, “You do this, or don’t do that, however I don’t do this and I do that so it’s obvious that you’re wicked but I’m righteous.” Compared to me you may be, but unfortunately for you I’m not your standard, and according the word of God what was the evaluation of Abijah? “...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.” So compared to the northern kingdom of Israel he may’ve been looking pretty good, but the bottom line is that he himself was lacking in an abundance of ways. So his speech sounds pretty good, but it’s got some flaws in it.

But there are basically 2 points that he makes here that he predicates his position on. #1 Prophetically the nation belongs to the lineage of David. And #2 Practically you guys have walked away from the Lord and are serving false gods. and He says that with those 2 things stacked against them they should realize that in reality they’re the one’s who can’t win. In Vs 5 where he mentions the covenant of salt that speaks primarily of permanence. Now it also points to purity, it points to value (they didn’t have Morton’s in that day, salt was highly valued) but primarily it points to permanence, that preserving factor. When God was proclaiming how He was going to provide for the priesthood and how that they were to be supported by the tithes and offerings of the people He said, “All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD with you and your descendants with you.” Num 18:19

So 1st of all Abijah says, “The fact that the house of David is to rule Israel has been given prophetically by God to David by a covenant of salt, it’s to be permanent. So you’re in violation already because Jeroboam isn’t of the house of David.” Then to add to that he says, “But even if you were doing ok on that level, on a practical level you’ve turned your back on God and walked away from Him. You worship idols, you’ve cast out the priests of the Lord from your land, and you’ve placed the ministry up for sale to whomever will pay the purchase price of a young bull and 7 rams. However we still have the priests here about the business of the Lord, we still acknowledge the Lord as our God; we even have His priests here with us today to sound the trumpets against you. So don’t fight against the Lord God of your fathers because you just can’t win.”

Now I’ll give him that, it never pays to fight against the Lord, you can’t win. People try it, but with out exception sooner or later, in this life or the next people come to realize that it’s an effort in vain; you just will not prosper when you fight against the Lord.

Vs13-18

And the fact is that this is the secret to their success here, they relied on the Lord God of their fathers.

Jeroboam tried to do him dirty. While he was talking to the troops he had a portion of his army circle around behind him. And as if it weren’t uphill already, now it’s impossible for Abijah to win on his own. He’s got nowhere to go, he’s encircled by his enemy all around, out #’d overwhelmed, what can he do? Exactly what he does do, he calls in an air strike so to speak. The enemy may surround you on every side but he cannot cut off your communication with the Lord.

I’m going to tell you that he was putting up a front to this point, but when he looked around and saw the situation for what it was, he freaked out. In Vs 14 where it says they, “Cried out to the Lord.” The idea is they cried out for help, it was a cry of distress, “O God help us!” and It came from the core of their beings; they knew they were dead apart from God’s divine intervention. and To that cry that came from their heart God responded. It wasn’t because they were so holy and Israel was so wicked, it was because they called upon the name of the Lord to save them and God was faithful to deliver them. We read in Ps 50:16 where the Lord has said, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” And that’s exactly what we have going on here. The bottom line is that Israel was subdued and Judah prevailed because (Vs 18) “...they relied on the Lord God of their fathers.” It doesn’t matter where you’ve been or what you’ve done if you cry out to the Lord from a true heart and a desire to be delivered He will hear your cry and answer your prayer. They weren’t in that great of a place spiritually, but when they turned to the Lord He heard them, met them where they were at and delivered them from the enemy.

Vs19-22

Now Jeroboam's ministry outlasted Abijah's, Abijah only reigned 3 yrs. But the damage that Abijah inflicted on him here was enough to effectively remove him as a viable threat for the remainder of his reign in Israel.

One other thing before we move on. We mentioned how that the heart of God is so gracious and merciful that He will turn toward and respond to the true cry of the human heart. But I think we also do well to remember the overall legacy of Abijah's life. Overall he didn't do well, he walked in all the sins of his father and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God. What's my point? That one great spiritual victory doesn't make for an entire life before God. You can't rely on the fact that one time God moved powerfully in your life to make you perpetually right before God. The question is one of abiding. We need to abide in Christ, maybe God did something great in your life one time yrs ago, and that's awesome. The question is what's He doing today? Where are you at in your walk and relationship with Him today? Are you abiding in Christ or perhaps relying on a victory that you held, or an experience you had with God previously in the past? It's imperative that we abide in Christ.

Ch14

Vs1

Now as to where Abijah had a sad and tragic legacy we'll find that Asa had a heart that was loyal to the Lord all his days. He surfaces as one of the great kings that came along in Judah's history. And there are a few things that will stand out about him along the way. The 1st thing we see pops up right off the bat and that is that he was a man of peace. "In his days the land was quiet for 10 yrs." The proverbs tell us, "When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." Prov 16:7 Obviously that doesn't mean that there will never be any bumps in the road or that warfare will never surface in the believers life, we know that's not true. But generally speaking the believer's life is one that's marked by peacemaking, not peace breaking.

From time and again we're reminded of the fact that Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Not, "Blessed are the peace breakers." Asa was a man of peace, in his days the land was quiet for 10 yrs.

Vs2-8

In here we find the 2nd quality in Asa that we want to draw out. But before we do that we want to note Vs 2. "Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord. Which speaks to both the outward movement and the inward motive; doing what is good speaks of what's going on outwardly. Doing what is right speaks of what's going on inwardly the motive behind his actions. You see it's possible to do what is good and wrong. You might tithe, that's good. But if you do it out of legal obligation, or as a carnal investment thinking that because of it God somehow owes you, that's wrong. Perhaps you are a person of prayer, or you help out in ministry or do good works practically with regularity. That's good, but if you do it because you believe it makes you a little more righteous and puts you in a little bit better position before God than others are then that's wrong. Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord.

What he did was good, and why he did it was right; then we have a running commentary on what some of the changes he made actually were. and In short it was a reformation, a tearing down and taking away of things that pertained to idolatry and a refocus upon the word and the worship of the one true Living God. You start seeing these kinds of signs, a turning from empty religions and carnal appeal found in them, a resurge of interest and a refocus upon the word and the worship of the 1 true God. You know you're on the brink of a revival, things are stirring.

But what I wanted to draw out here as far as this 2nd quality found in Asa is concerned is that he was also a man of preparation. He was 1st of all a man of peace, and 2nd of all a man of preparation. Realizing he had peace, we read in Vs 6-7 that he purposed to take that time to prepare for any attack or warfare that may come his way in the future. He didn't just look around and say, "Life is good, think I'll kick back and take it easy." He actively pursued preventative measures to keep the enemy out (walls), to maintain proper perspective (towers), yet he assured himself access beyond the walls, he wasn't trapped in his Christian bubble (gates) his influence permeated beyond the walls. And he exercised discernment as to what had access and what didn't (bars hold shut the gates) what came in and what went out. He took this time of peace to really grow and establish himself so that he would be prepared should the enemy come. Because the enemy is always going to come, it's never a matter of "if" it's only a matter of "when." and If we've done nothing during the time of peace to grow, or root ourselves in our walk and relationship with the Lord feeling as though we're going to just take life easy then when he comes in like a flood we won't be prepared. Asa was prepared. and That was wisdom, notice.

Vs9-11

Asa's army was nothing to scoff at, remember 580,000 strong (Vs 8). But again it's dwarfed when placed before a million men marching and 300 chariots! Those are #'s on a battlefield that are practically too much to really take in and comprehend. And it's here that we see that 3rd quality found in Asa that we want to draw to the surface. It's found in Vs 11. Asa was a man of prayer. So he was #1 a man of peace, #2 a man of preparation, and #3 a man of prayer, he cried out to the Lord his God. and It wasn't a long drawn out prayer, there were know huge introductions or explanations, why? Because it was under-girded by 10 yrs of seeking and walking with the Lord in preparation for a day like this. During his time of peace, he made preparations for war, having sought the Lord diligently he was ready in the day of adversity to turn to Him and trust in Him.

And I like the fact that he was comfortable keeping it brief before the Lord. We so often get caught up in long prayers thinking that because of that we'll be heard. Jesus said Ch 6 there in Vs 7 that we ought not to think that we'll be heard because of our many words, that's the mistake the heathen makes. God knows our needs before we speak them, it's ok to keep it brief before the throne. If it's on your heart to pray longer, go for it, but the strength of prayer doesn't lie in the length of prayer and I think that's something we do well to remember.

Asa just said, “Lord be it with many, or with few to You it makes no difference, so we’re asking for Your help, and we rest in You. We’re going out in Your name; don’t let man prevail over You.” And that was it, seconds to utter but underneath it was 10 yrs of walking with the Lord.

And the reminder is good. That with God, the difficulty levels of man don’t apply, cancer, the common cold, to save by many to save by few, one isn’t greater odds for God than the other. Be it simple, difficult, or impossible for man, it’s all equally as easy for God. We have a tendency to ascribe limits to God, someone comes back from Iraq with their leg missing and they say, “Would you pray for me I think God really wants to grow me a new leg.” I would immediately feel pressed to begin to explain why God wouldn’t do that, or perhaps I’d pray but probably not believe that God would really do it, why? Because I’ve placed limits on God, He’ll do it for a crab, or an earthworm, why couldn’t He do it for man? with God nothing will be impossible, but that’s difficult for me to take in. Principally I agree, practically it’s challenging for me to absorb. Asa says, “God this doesn’t present a problem for You, so we rest on You.” May God help us to rest on Him, it’s easy to pray and remain restless, Asa prayed and said, “Now we rest on You.”

Vs12-15

So in a sense they weren’t only conquerors but they were more than conquerors, the Lord went before them, brought victory to them and did exceedingly abundantly above all they could think or even ask in giving them victory over these cities that had exceedingly much spoil in them. He enriched them.

Ch 15

Vs1-2

Azariah comes to Asa with a word of commendation and a word of exhortation. “God is with you as long as you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.” And there’s nothing inconsistent about this, God will give you what you want, draw near to Him, He’ll draw near to you. Forsake Him, and He’ll honor your desire there to. The apparent changes in God’s dealing with man aren’t a reflection of the inconsistency with God; they’re a reflection of the inconsistencies of man. The man who seeks the Lord with all his heart will find Him, that’s a promise from the word of God. But should you abandon the Lord He won’t force you to stay and you’ll reap the ramifications of your own ways.

Now Asa may be thinking, “What are you talking about, ‘forsake the Lord’ I would never forsake the Lord, look what God has done; how could I ever turn my back on Him?” But as we mentioned not too long ago with respect to the warning God gave Solomon, God doesn’t warn us but that we don’t need the warning. God seeks to prepare me for what lies ahead of me, so that if He warns me, no matter how great things seem now, I do well to heed the warning. God says to Asa, “Things are going great, stay on this path, if you seek Me I’ll be found by you, forsake Me, and you’ll be forsaken of Me.”

Vs3-7

There's a little bit of ambiguity around exactly what period of time God is talking about when He says that Israel had been without the true God or a teaching priest, or the law.

But the point remains the same. God has always been true to reveal Himself to those who would call upon His name in truth. Asa called upon the Lord and God was there for him. And the essence here is, "Don't grow weary in that, don't slow down, you're doing well don't relax the standard, be strong and you'll be rewarded." The NT equivalent being, "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." 1 Cor 15:58

Vs8

Or to understand that another way; God's word stirred him to action. He took God's Word to heart, it was implanted in him and brought forth fruit through him, and that's always the desired result of our time spent in God's word; fruit brought forth from our lives to His glory. That we would be stirred practically by what we take in principally.

Vs9

Revival is breaking loose, people in Israel up north are seeing what God's doing in Judah down south and they're flocking to it, they're coming in mass quantities. When you submit your life to the Lord, and allow yourself to be used by the Lord, people are drawn to that. You become a light calling people out of darkness, to come out from among them and be separate unto the Lord, that's what's happening here.

Vs10-13

Now, you can't legislate righteousness so I'm of the opinion that this move was a bit extreme. However the point remains clear, if you're not whole heartedly committed to the Lord then you better get out of here because we won't tolerate anything less. And that frame of heart is commendable; you just need to be careful how that works out practically, death seems a bit extreme. ;0)

Vs14-16

Now back in Vs 2 of Ch 13 we read that this was actually Abijah's mom. So much like David being his father meaning that he's of the lineage of David; it seems most probable that this is a reference to his grandmother. But this is hardcore, "Sorry grandma, you gotta go. You're not committed to the Lord." Jesus said, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." Matt 10:37 And it's not that we're not to love our family; they're to be 1st on our list of loved ones under Jesus. The Lord is to be our highest priority, period. And that's what we're seeing here.

Vs17-19

Ch 16

Vs1

There was nothing original about the Berlin wall. Baasha didn't like everyone defecting from Israel to be apart of what was going on in Judah so he built Ramah thereby blocking the main route entering Judah from the north.

Vs2-6

They tore down the wall. His plan worked, was successful, all is well that ends well right? Wrong, you can't judge success by outward appearance. What happened here? Asa was getting nervous over this situation so in an effort to cinch up foreign relations he bought off the king of Syria so that he'd break his relations with Israel thereby weakening Israel's stronghold in Ramah. Now politically that sounds great, spiritually it was horrible because Asa trusted in the arm of flesh rather than seeking the strong arm of the Lord like the prophet had warned him about. Instead of seeking God for a remedy he sought the help of a pagan king.

Vs7

Asa in all "his wisdom" probably thought, "Yes, it worked!" But the wisdom of man is foolishness with God. How often we fall short of seeing how God sees, walking in His ways. Hanani comes to Asa and says, "You relied on the king of Syria and not on the Lord, and because of that the king of Syria has escaped from your hand." Asa must've thought, "What do you mean 'escaped' I paid for his help!" But you see God wanted to do more than what Asa could see. Asa was so concerned with Israel up in his face he just thought, "If I can get Syria to break relations with Israel, Israel won't be able to stand against me." But God's desire was to give Asa victory over both the northern territory of Israel and Syria simultaneously. He wanted to do another mighty work reminiscent of the day He delivered Asa from the million man army from Ethiopia. But Asa faltered in his faith and didn't trust the Lord.

Vs8-9

This goes back to what we were saying earlier. God just looks for people in whom He can entrust with impossible odds, so that He can magnify and glorify Himself through their lives. But it takes a heart that is loyal to Him, that won't turn from Him in the pinch, that won't look to or lean on man, but is committed wholly to Him. and Asa was that guy, for a season, but later in life, when he got more experienced, didn't need the Lord as much, had the necessary resources; he forgot whom it was who was his true deliverer. It was the Lord.

Vs10

And here we have the 1st recorded persecution of a prophet of God by a king of Judah. And not only content with afflicting him he oppressed others who supported him. He should've been humbled, brought to his knees in repentance; instead he was enraged, imprisoned the prophet and oppressed the people who agreed with him.

Vs11-14

This isn't a reference to cremation but rather a royal funeral ceremony of high honors. Interesting that he became diseased in his feet toward the end of his reign. Sorta typical of his walk with the Lord in those latter times wasn't it?

And the intimation in Vs 12 is that had he sought the Lord, God would've healed him, but he refused. Instead he only sought physicians. And it's not that it's wrong to seek physicians, I believe we should. It's that's it's wrong to not seek the Lord, seek the Lord and go to the doctor, but don't trust in the doctor over the Lord. God is our healer, whatever means He brings it through is up to Him, but it comes from Him.

So Asa is a man who began well, but didn't finish well, good beginnings don't guarantee good endings. We've got to abide in Christ, seek the Lord, and continue to seek the Lord, not trusting in our own strength, or our cunning wit, or ability to negotiate. We're to trust in the Lord, look to the Lord, and walk with the Lord from this day to our final day drawing near to Him, drawing strength and wisdom from Him all the way.

Prayer Points:

Father may we trust in You and walk with You day by day until we meet You face to face. That we not trust in ourselves, or our own experience as time goes by. But that rather than growing independent we might grow more and more dependant upon You realizing who we're not, who You are seeing so clearly our need to abide in You. Father there's been a lot to consider and soak in through this passage of Your Word, may we respond to it and may You bring forth fruit by it in our lives.