

Lessons from the Son of Abijah

By Kent Heaton

In the days of the divided kingdom of Israel and Judah, few kings of Judah were righteous kings. Among the few good kings, Asa son of Abijah was one of bright stars of the people of God. He did what was "good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God" (2Chron. 14:2) removing the trappings of idol worship and commanding Judah "to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandment" (2Chron. 14:4). But more than giving commands Asa proved his own devotion by example. When Zerah the Cushite marched out against Judah with a vast army and 300 chariots, Asa "cried out to the Lord his God, and said, "Lord, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!" (2Chron. 14:11). Judah destroyed the army of Zerah (2Chron. 14:12-15).

Following the great victory over Zerah, Azariah son of Oded came and prophesied to Asa reminding him that "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" (2Chron. 15:2). Azariah confirmed to Asa the blessing and curse of the Lord (Rom. 11:22) when men choose to follow the will of God and when they chose to follow their own will. This gave Asa courage (2Chron. 15:8) as he continued to purge the land of unrighteousness. Because of the power of God working in the land of Judah large numbers of people had come over to Asa when they saw the Lord his God was with him (2Chron. 15:9).

Declaring their faithfulness to the one true God, Asa assembled all Judah and Benjamin together in Jerusalem to enter a covenant to seek the Lord with all their heart and soul. This covenant was emphasized in a most remarkable manner: "whoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel was to be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman" (2Chron. 15:13). Asa was not a man after God's heart in word only but in action. The righteous sought the Lord "with all their heart and sought Him with all their soul; and He was found by them, and the Lord gave them rest all around" (2Chron. 15:15).

The story of Asa that began with such promise however had a tragic end. For unknown reasons the king used the wisdom of man to protect the land against the army of Baasha king of Israel. Making a treaty with Ben-Hadad with the silver and gold Asa had put in the temple of God, Asa sealed his final years with war. Hanani the seer warned Asa that rejecting the council of God for his own wisdom was folly (2Chron. 16:7-9). Had the king forgotten the great victory over the Cushites and Libyans? "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" (2Chron. 16:9). Angered the king put Hanani in prison and brutally oppressed some of the people.

"And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa became diseased in his feet, and his malady was severe; yet in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians. So Asa rested with his fathers; he died in the forty-first year of his reign" (2Chron. 16:12-13). There are lessons to learn from the son of Abijah.

The Word of the Lord Endures Forever

"Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because 'All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever'" (1Peter 1:23-25).

Voltaire, the 18th-century French atheist who was one of the greatest writers of his time, wielded a bitter pen against Christianity. In a moment of triumph he once boasted, "In twenty

years Christianity will be no more. My single hand shall destroy the edifice it took twelve apostles to rear." But Voltaire's arrogance was swallowed up in his death. He died, in his own words, "abandoned by God and man." Shortly after his death, the very house in which Voltaire wrote was made a depot of the Geneva Bible Society! (From Why I Preach the Bible is Literally True, by W.A. Criswell, p. 103-104)

In 1874 the Scriptures were under severe attack by critics, and John W. Haley published a defense entitled "Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible." In the preface he wrote, "Finally, let it be remembered that the Bible is neither dependent upon nor affected by the success or failure of my book. Whatever may become of the latter, whatever may be the verdict passed upon it by an intelligent public, the Bible will stand. In the ages yet to be, when its present assailants and defenders are moldering in the dust, and when our very names are forgotten, God's Word will be, as it has been during the centuries past, the guide and solace of millions."

All the critics and assailants of the Bible will decay into dust, but the Word of God will stand forever. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

Numerically Speaking

Paul Rogers of Centerville, Tennessee, has done some calculating of just how far the Apostle Paul walked in his efforts to spread the gospel. According to Acts, he took three missionary journeys. The second of these alone amounted to three thousand miles, two thousand of which would have been on foot. The average daily distance a traveler of that time would cover was twenty miles, with a Roman inn being located every twenty to twenty-five miles along the roads. These inns were unbelievably filthy, immoral and bug infested. Paul traveled through snowy mountain passes and spring floods. He walked through areas famous for harboring robbers and criminals. He braved wild beasts that imperiled every traveler. The travel recorded in Acts 16 would have covered 740 miles. That of chapter 15 would be 500 miles. And to think he wasn't walking for his own health, but for the spiritual well-being of others. (Editor's note... questions to provoke all of us: How many contemporary Christians find it burdensome to travel 20 minutes in air-conditioned cars to come to Sunday evening and Wednesday night services? What would the Apostle Paul say to them? ---prb)

Horses or Donkeys?

"Stephen Brown explains that when a group of wild horses face attack, they stand in a circle facing each other and, with their back legs, kick out at the enemy. Donkeys do just the opposite; they face the enemy and kick each other. How often some in the church do just that -- ignoring the real enemy while attacking fellow believers."