

# A GOOD START -- A SAD END

BIBLE TEXT : II Chronicles 14:1-15; 15:1-19; 16:1-14.

LESSON 295 Junior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD" (Jeremiah 17:5).

## BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

### 2 Chronicles 14:1-15

<sup>1</sup> So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years.

<sup>2</sup> And Asa did *that which was* good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God:

<sup>3</sup> For he took away the altars of the strange *gods*, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves:

<sup>4</sup> And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment.

<sup>5</sup> Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him.

<sup>6</sup> And he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years; because the LORD had given him rest.

<sup>7</sup> Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about *them* walls, and towers, gates, and bars, *while* the land *is* yet before us; because we have sought the LORD our God, we have sought *him*, and he hath given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered.

<sup>8</sup> And Asa had an army *of men* that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand: all these *were* mighty men of valour.

<sup>9</sup> And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah.

## BIBLE REFERENCES:

### NOTES:

#### **Destroying Idols**

When Asa became the third king of Judah, there was peace for ten years. "Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the LORD." Asa encouraged the people to seek God and to obey His commandments. He took away the altars of the strange gods and destroyed the groves and images of idolatrous worship.

Asa's parents were not worshipers of the true God. His father's reign over Judah had been evil. Asa's mother had made an idol in a grove (**1 Kings 15:13** <sup>13</sup> **And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burnt it by the brook Kidron.**). Even though Asa's parents were not serving God, Asa did that which was pleasing in God's sight. Sin, idolatry, and a poor example, were all around him but Asa did what he knew was right. We can expect God to be with us, too, and help us when we do what is right even though others about us are not obeying God.

#### **In Time of Peace**

Asa told the people that the Lord had given them peace because they sought God. In time of peace, they were busy. The cities were made stronger with walls, towers, gates, and bars. The people built and prospered. Asa's army was enlarged and made stronger, too. In the time of peace, Asa was busy preparing for a time when the enemy would come against him. It is a good thing for a Christian to be always strengthening himself, too. Instead of being idle, a Christian should be busy studying the Word of God for that brings strength, faith, and courage to him. We are told that the Word of God is the "sword of the Spirit" (**Ephesians 6:17** <sup>17</sup> **And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:**). By prayer, too, a Christian is strengthened and dressed in the armour of God, which includes the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, and the shield of faith.

#### **A Prayer and Victory**

In time, Zerah the Ethiopian, did go to battle against Asa. The army of the enemy was about twice as large as Asa's army, besides having 300 chariots. But Asa was not afraid, because his confidence was in God. Asa prayed and asked God to help him. Asa said: "Help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude." Asa had enlarged his army and strengthened his land. Nevertheless, he was trusting in God to deliver him. Asa neither expected God to do all the fighting nor did he put his trust in men and equipment.

God answered Asa's prayer. The Ethiopians were smitten by God before Asa. When they fled, Asa and the people pursued them and the enemy was overthrown. God gave the people of Judah victory over their enemies – and more, too. Asa and his armies smote the cities round about and captured many cattle,

<sup>10</sup> Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.

<sup>11</sup> And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, *it is* nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou *art* our God; let not man prevail against thee.

<sup>12</sup> So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled.

<sup>13</sup> And Asa and the people that *were* with him pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before the LORD, and before his host; and they carried away very much spoil.

<sup>14</sup> And they smote all the cities round about Gerar; for the fear of the LORD came upon them: and they spoiled all the cities; for there was exceeding much spoil in them.

<sup>15</sup> They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem.

## 2 Chronicles 15:1-19

<sup>1</sup> And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded:

<sup>2</sup> And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD *is* with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

<sup>3</sup> Now for a long season Israel *hath been* without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.

<sup>4</sup> But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.

sheep, and camels, so they had more than before the war started. Because Asa did that which was right, God gave him rest, prosperity, and victory, and answered his prayer. Do you think that it paid Asa to do that which pleased God? Does it pay to serve God and to do the right thing, today?

### A Warning

Azariah the son of Oded had a message for Asa and the people. He said, "The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." They had proved the first part of Azariah's message. Had not Asa sought God's help and they were victorious in battle? They did not want to be forsaken by God, so they took heed to the Prophet's warning. He had said, "Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded."

### True Worship

Asa renewed the altar of the Lord and called the people to worship. They sought God "with all their heart and with all their soul." They made a covenant with the Lord and brought offerings to Him. They made a vow to God that any person who would not pray and seek God would be put to death. Even the queen, Asa's mother, who had made an idol in a grove, was removed. Asa cut down her idol, and burned it by the brook Kidron.

The people gave offerings to the Lord as Christians today make consecrations to Him. When the people of Judah sought God with all their heart and "with their whole desire," He was found of them. There was great rejoicing with shouting, trumpets, and cornets. God gave them peace and rest, with no war for many years.

People today may have spiritual peace by seeking God wholeheartedly, by making vows unto God, and by giving unto Him in consecration. We should remember the words of Azariah the Prophet. The Lord will be with us while we are with Him, but the Lord will forsake us if we forsake Him.

### Another Battle

The heart of Asa was perfect all the days that he walked with God. There came a time when the peace of the land was again disturbed. One would expect Asa to pray for the Lord's help, and to trust God. Asa had been delivered from the Ethiopians by God. The Prophet Azariah had warned them that God would forsake them if they forsook Him. They had made a covenant with the Lord to seek Him with all their heart. What did they do in time of trouble? Did they keep the vows and consecrations that they had made before God?

Asa sought the help of Ben-hadad, King of Syria, who had never been a friend to the Children of Israel and who had never done them any good. Asa removed the treasures from the house of the Lord. Many years before, he had dedicated this gold and silver to the Lord but now he took them back. To gain Ben-hadad's favour, Asa gave him gifts of these treasures, which were not Asa's to use in this manner. Asa made a league with Ben-hadad, and by so doing he broke his covenant with the Lord. No longer did Asa rely on the Lord to fight for him. Asa was now putting his trust in a man.

### A League

Was it wrong for Asa to make a league with Ben-hadad? This league showed that Asa was relying on Ben-hadad and was no longer depending upon God to deliver him. In the Bible we read: "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength" (Psalm 33:16). There is a

<sup>5</sup> And in those times *there was* no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations *were* upon all the inhabitants of the countries.

<sup>6</sup> And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity.

<sup>7</sup> Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.

<sup>8</sup> And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that *was* before the porch of the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God *was* with him.

<sup>10</sup> So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.

<sup>11</sup> And they offered unto the LORD the same time, of the spoil *which* they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep.

<sup>12</sup> And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;

<sup>13</sup> That whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.

<sup>14</sup> And they swore unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.

<sup>15</sup> And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the LORD gave them rest

woe pronounced upon those who put their trust in men and equipment rather than to depend upon God and to seek Him (Isaiah 31:1 <sup>1</sup> **Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because *they are many*; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!**). There is a curse pronounced upon the person who trusts in man and departs from trusting the Lord (Jeremiah 17:5 <sup>5</sup> **Thus saith the LORD; Cursed *be* the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD**).

Ben-hadad did not love God or God's people. He was a natural enemy of the Children of Israel. Ben-hadad's people had caused trouble for the Children of Israel and had fought many battles against them. No doubt, the reason that Ben-hadad entered into the league with Asa was to get the silver and gold. He did not particularly care about Asa and his people.

Ben-hadad represents the world, which is no friend of God's people. God does not want us today to be joining forces with Satan (our enemy) or any of his followers. Ben-hadad gave the appearance of helping Asa but he was not concerned about the prosperity of Asa nor his relationship with the Lord.

What was the result of this league with Ben-hadad? The Syrians sent their armies against Judah's enemy, and many cities were captured, but Asa did not have peace. In the years past, Asa had said that the Lord had given them rest because they had sought God. When they no longer sought God, there was no peace or rest.

### Trusting God

May we learn a lesson from Asa's experience. Let us look to the Lord for our help, and we shall have peace and rest. Let us not be making a league with the world and with men, as Asa made a league with Syria who had been his natural enemy in the past and would be in the future, too. God has been with us in the past, and if we do not forsake Him, He will be with us in the days to come.

There are blessings and promises for those who will obey God (Deuteronomy 28:1-14 <sup>1</sup> **And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: <sup>2</sup> And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. <sup>3</sup> Blessed *shalt thou be* in the city, and blessed *shalt thou be* in the field. <sup>4</sup> Blessed *shall be* the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. <sup>5</sup> Blessed *shall be* thy basket and thy store. <sup>6</sup> Blessed *shalt thou be* when thou comest in, and blessed *shalt thou be* when thou goest out. <sup>7</sup> The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. <sup>8</sup> The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. <sup>9</sup> The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. <sup>10</sup> And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. <sup>11</sup> And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers to give thee. <sup>12</sup> The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of**



round about.

<sup>16</sup> And also *concerning* Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from *being* queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped *it*, and burnt *it* at the brook Kidron.

<sup>17</sup> But the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days.

<sup>18</sup> And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels.

<sup>19</sup> And there was no *more* war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa.

## 2 Chronicles 16:1-14

<sup>1</sup> In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.

<sup>2</sup> Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Benhadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying,

<sup>3</sup> *There is* a league between me and thee, as *there was* between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.

<sup>4</sup> And Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelmaim, and all the store cities of Naphtali.

<sup>5</sup> And it came to pass, when Baasha heard *it*, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease.

<sup>6</sup> Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof,

thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. <sup>13</sup> And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do *them*: <sup>14</sup> And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve *them*.). In many places in the Bible we are told to trust God: "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man" (Psalm 118:8); "Whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25).

We have studied about David who was king over the Children of Israel. David trusted in God and was delivered from his enemies. He gave praise to the Lord for His help. (See Lesson 244.) In the Psalms what David wrote about trusting the Lord (Psalm 18:31 <sup>31</sup> For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God? Psalm 32:1-2 <sup>1</sup> Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. <sup>2</sup> Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. Psalm 34:20 <sup>20</sup> He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. Psalm 37:3 <sup>3</sup> Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.)).

Job is another man who put his trust in God. Even though Job suffered the loss of his children, his flocks, and almost everything he had, he still trusted in the Lord. Satan, Job's enemy as well as ours, afflicted Job "with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (Job 2:7), but Job trusted in God. When his friends came to comfort him, Job let them know that his trust was in God. Job said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). As a result of Job's trust, "the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before" and the Lord blessed the latter end of Job's life more than the beginning (Job 42:10-12 <sup>10</sup> And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. <sup>11</sup> Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. <sup>12</sup> So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.)).

## No Peace

Job profited by trusting God. But did Asa profit by relying on Ben-hadad? The last years of Asa's life were much different from the lives of those who trust God. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3). Although Asa's enemies were chased away for the time being, and he did build two cities with the spoils, Asa took himself out of God's protection and care and had no peace.

Hanani the Prophet had a talk with Asa. He reminded Asa that God had delivered his armies from a huge host of enemies when he had relied upon the Lord. Hanani told Asa that he had acted foolishly, and that he would have no peace, but war. Those words came to pass. There was war between Asa and Baasha, King of Israel, all the days that remained of their lives. Later, the Syrians with whom Asa had made the league, went to battle against Asa's son who reigned in his stead.

Asa did not like the words of Hanani the Prophet, even though they were true. Asa did not act like a man who loved the Lord. He imprisoned the Prophet because of his words, and was "in a rage

wherewith Baasha was building; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.

<sup>7</sup> And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand.

<sup>8</sup> Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand.

<sup>9</sup> For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of *them* whose heart *is* perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

<sup>10</sup> Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for *he was* in a rage with him because of this *thing*. And Asa oppressed *some* of the people the same time.

<sup>11</sup> And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

<sup>12</sup> And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease *was* exceeding *great*: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.

<sup>13</sup> And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign.

<sup>14</sup> And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds of *spices* prepared by the apothecaries' art: and they made a very great burning for him.

with him because of this thing." Hanani was not the only one whom Asa mistreated. Some of the people were oppressed by him at the same time.

### Unfaithful

How sad to read those words about Asa who had started in such a fine way to serve and to work for the Lord! Jesus said, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22). The Bible teaches that the reward is for those who are faithful to the end of their lives. We must not only start to follow Christ but we must also finish our lives trusting the Lord. At the close of Paul's life, he said: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (II Timothy 4:7, 8).

### Sad and Sick

The last years of Asa's life were sad and unpleasant. He must not have felt very good about putting the Lord's Prophet in prison. He must have felt condemned because he had abused the people. There is no reason to believe that he repented and asked God to forgive him. Under the circumstances, Asa could not have been happy. Besides, he was sick. He was diseased in his feet "until his disease was exceeding great." Still Asa did not seek God.

Others in the Bible trusted God for healing. We know that God heals sick people today. The Bible tells us what to do when we are sick: "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. . . . Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up" (James 5:13-15).

But Asa sought the physicians, and he died. Although he was given a fine burial with many kinds of spices for embalming, and with much burning of incense for sweet odours, how much better it would have been if it could have been said that he had trusted in the Lord to the end of his life, and that he had received the reward that God has for His faithful ones. "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" (Psalm 31:19).

### QUESTIONS

1. How did Asa start his reign?
2. In what way did he trust the Lord?
3. What did he do to establish true worship?
4. What happened to his mother's idol?
5. Who helped Asa in the battle against the Ethiopians?
6. Why did Asa have rest from war?
7. What was Asa's mistake?
8. Who went to battle against Asa's son?
9. What lessons can we learn from Asa's life?
10. What are some promises to those who trust God?