

Lessons From Kings - Asa

When it comes to the OT, most every believer will read Genesis, Psalms, and Proverbs but after that it gets kind of spotty. Much of it seems like a history lesson and if you aren't a history buff, it may not be easy to read...there's a lot of it!

But we've got to see the OT as more than "just history". It's not there for head knowledge, it's there for our benefit. Every story in the OT is an opportunity to learn.

Romans 15:4 (NKJV)

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

Over the next several weeks, we're going to spend some time learning "Lessons From Kings". Some of these kings like David will be familiar to you, others like Asa might not. But we can learn something from them all...

Before we get into Asa's story, here's a little background: When the Israelites settled down in the Promised Land, each tribe got their own region or area.

The first kings: Saul, David, and Solomon ruled over what was called the "United Kingdom" where the 12 tribes were united under one king. After King Solomon's death, the United Kingdom split into two kingdoms: the "Northern Kingdom", made up of 10 tribes which kept the name of "Israel." The "Southern Kingdom", made up of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin became known as "Judah."

The first king of the Southern Kingdom was Rehoboam. When he died, his son Abijah ruled but only for three years. And then his son, Asa, became king and ruled the Southern Kingdom for 41 years.

2 Chronicles 14:2-8 (NKJV)

Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God, 3 for he removed the altars of the foreign gods and the high places, and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images. 4 He commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandment. 5 He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah, and the kingdom was quiet under him. 6 And he built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest; he had no war in those years, because the Lord had given him rest. 7 Therefore he said to Judah, "Let us build these cities and make walls around them, 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 has given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered. 8 And Asa had an

army of three hundred thousand from Judah who carried shields and spears, and from Benjamin two hundred and eighty thousand men who carried shields and drew bows; all these were mighty men of valor.

Asa is a man who takes over for his father who ruled only for three years. And in his years of his father and grandfather being king...he saw that they used the name of the Lord in battle, yet the scriptures tell us they walked in the sins of their fathers and their hearts were not loyal to the Lord. (read Kings and Chronicles in parallel to get the full picture)

So Asa takes over after seeing this short reign of his father...one that was shortened because he did not honor God. Asa knew he needed to do things differently.

Have you ever taken over leading something and had all these ideas of how you want to do it differently? Some of those decisions are based on the mistakes of whoever was before you, others are just based on preference or vision.

Change is a part of leadership. If you take over for someone else and you have no desire to change a single thing...you probably aren't a leader. Even moreso, if you are leading something and you aren't constantly evaluating things to see what needs changed, you probably aren't a leader...

Asa comes in with a wrecking ball...but:

2 Chronicles 14:2 (NKJV)

Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God,

What I see here in Asa, is a man who let the Lord get a hold of his heart! It's like when a person gets saved. When they look at their history and they realize this is not working. They think there has to be something more... something better than this!

Can I tell you this morning that there IS! Jesus Christ has come to give you new life, which is a full life, a better life. And as you let Him in...and the Holy Spirit begins to work in your heart...you see things more clearly. You see sin differently...you realize it's negative effects...that it leads to death...

It springs up a desire to do what is good and right in the eyes of the Lord!

2 Chronicles 14:3 (NKJV)

for he removed the altars of the foreign gods and the high places, and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images.

Asa was like a radical, freshly saved person. He sees the goodness of God, the evil of man...

And immediately he begins to remove sin from his life. He removed the things that led to worshipping other gods. This was how his family operated for years...it's how he was raised...it's how he lived...

But Asa desired something more! Asa knew that the Lord was God. That He was the only one worthy of worship, that all these other things were nothing compared to Him and in fact they drew you away from the Lord so they had to go!

Church we've got to tear down the idols we worship. Sometimes the problem is identifying those idols. In America we tend to live for "stuff", buying the next thing, we want to be on top. Work/money becomes the object of our affection. Listen...for stuff that's all going to burn one day! You can have nice things...but do you worship them, or God?

But then you've got to drill a little deeper...the issue is more than what we have...it's also what is in us:

Colossians 3:5 (NKJV)

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Why does America, even the church, have a problem with fornication (sex outside marriage)? Because people think it's OK, even though God clearly calls it sin. Drive to any big city, pick up any magazine, watch any tv show...sex is idolized, it's worshipped...it's made public...something God created to remain private between husband and wife.

To live a life that is pleasing to God, we have got to tear down idol worship in our lives!

2 Chronicles 14:4 (NKJV)

He commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandment.

Asa saw the importance of a connection with the Lord. It was never just about destroying idols...it was about getting them to see the One who was worthy of worship.

Now that the distractions are gone, now that you can see clearly...seek the Lord, hear His word!

Some of you have tried cutting some things from your life only to find that they just keep coming back...have you sought Jesus? Have you got in the Word?

If your focus is just to live a life free of sin by removing temptations, YOU WILL FAIL! You've got to get close to Jesus! You've got to know Him. You've got to allow Him access to your heart, to your life! He will set you free...and who the Son sets free, is free indeed!

If you get to this place where you are tearing down idols in your life, and seeking Jesus...I want you to see what that produces in your life:

2 Chronicles 14:7 (NKJV)

Therefore he said to Judah, "Let us build these cities and make walls around them, 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 has given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered.

REST! Doesn't that sound nice? How many of you could use some rest?

Now I don't know about you, but when I hear rest, I think about taking a nap. I think about watching a ballgame in a recliner. I think about time where I can do whatever I want...

Jesus said "come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Rest does not just mean a time to sleep or be lazy...(I know, it's disappointing). Rest is a break from labor in order to recover and regain strength!

When you lift weights, there are scheduled times of "rest". If you do the bench press every single day, constantly doing more reps at more weight...it's only a matter of time before the muscles can't take it anymore and you get injured. You have to fit in rest.

You can still use your arms, even pick things up...but you are not straining, and pushing those muscles...they need to recover and regain strength!

Asa took this time of rest (10 years of no war) and he strengthened his city and his army...WHY?

Because a time of rest is a time for preparation. Get ready for what's coming. Recover and regain strength! Because you're going to need it!

A time of rest is a time to draw near to Jesus. It's a time to build yourself up!

Jude 1:20 (NKJV)

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

I can promise you that without Jesus, you'll never be strong enough for what's coming.

Asa found this season of rest coming to a close. The Ethiopians attacked! But look at how Asa responds...with his great army? His fortified cities?

2 Chronicles 14:11 (NKJV)

And 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!"

As Asa relied on the Lord...the Lord, who is mighty in battle, overpowered and defeated the enemy.

Asa continued to have peace. He continued to tear down idols (because they keep coming back), and he continued to worship the Lord and tell others to do the same. Asa was a good king, "good and right in the eyes of the Lord"

You know something about sin...it rarely works quickly...it's usually a slow but steady influence. I would say Asa is in a pretty good place here, wouldn't you?

Destroying idols, seeking God, telling others to seek God, resting in Him, preparing for what's to come, praying when trouble arises, sees a victory, restarts the process....destroying idols, seeking God...etc.

But there's one main issue here. These "high places" keep coming back. A high place was a place of worship on high ground, elevated, regional, dedication to "a god".

What are the high places in our society? Don't we constantly see high places, things that are elevated in the media and worshipped by the people? They draw our attention away from the Lord and the dedication of the people go to "another god".

Sometimes they will even clearly say they want to keep Jesus out of it. That we need more than prayer but we need people to do X, Y, or Z...and maybe we do, but more than we need God???

If you don't tear down the high places, you will worship them. And when you worship them, you forget about your reliance on Jesus.

This is where Asa found himself...Asa who is one of the best kings that God's people ever had...he began to take things for granted. He relied on other people instead of God. He took things into his own hands. And he suffered the consequences of not relying on the Lord.

Asa went from relying on God's Spirit to trusting in his own resources, skills, and abilities.

Asa had a man, Hanani, who warned him to keep his dependence on the Lord...but Asa didn't listen. He ended up with a foot disease...and he didn't seek the Lord, only the physicians. Then he died.

Galatians 3:3 (NKJV)

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Christianity is not just about repeating a prayer and 'getting saved". It's about relying on Jesus every single day of your life. Because without Him you can do NOTHING of real, eternal value...

John 15:5 (NKJV)

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Where are you today?

- Are there idols, foreign gods, objects that need to be removed from your life?
- Do you need to seek the Lord?
- Do you need to be more vocal about seeking the Lord in your home, your areas of influence?
- Do you need a time of rest...and if you are in that time, what are you doing with it? It's a time to recover and strengthen...a time of preparation for what's to come...
- Have you let the high places slowly get rebuilt?
- Have you lost the connection to Jesus?