

Learn from King Asa's ways! (1 Kings 15:9-24; 2 Chronicles 14:2 – 16:14)

Br. Anup Kollanoor Johny

Asa became the King of Judah after King Ahijah, son of Rehoboam, son of King Solomon. He reigned in Judah for 41 years. He is considered to be one of the best kings of Davidic origin who was committed to obeying the commands of the Lord. He had an army of 580,000 strong men from Judah and Benjamin tribes together. His first 10 years, God gave him rest. This was because Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

I. Asa's trust in the Lord results in Judah's rest!

1. He removed foreign altars, sacred stones and Asherah poles – Brought in true worship!

2. He commanded Judah to seek the Lord – Exhibited true leadership!

3. He built up fortified cities for Judah – Brought in the strength of unity!

This is mostly the case, when a leader takes step to exhibit true leadership to bring his flock to focus on trusting the Lord for all their needs, empower them to embrace unity of its members and encourage his sheep to remove their hindrances - whatever those may be - to touch the love of God. A right leader leads his flock to focus on God.

II. Asa's trust in the Lord questioned – He wins!

His trust in the Lord was tested after 15 years of his reign – Cushites (an enemy of Judah) marched against Judah! He was victorious because he sought the Lord. He was fully aware the God would give him command over the Cushites if he and his people genuinely sought the Lord. That was what happened. He rewarmed his efforts to destroy malicious idols from his kingdom and repaired Lord's altar in the temple. He brought in a covenant relationship with God. He even deposed his grandmother as queen mother because she made an Asherah pole. He gave due respect to Azariah's (seer's) words. 21 years passed with complete rest for Asa and his kingdom! A time of sluggish faith and trust in God!

III. Asa's trust in the Lord questioned after a long break – He fails!

In the 36th year, Baasha, King of Israel, came to war against Judah! He took the gold and silver in the temple and his palace, gave to Ben-Hadad, King of Aram – enemy of both Judah and Israel, technically, made him an ally against Baasha.

What were the problems?

1. Trust in God is replaced by strategy.

Asa's trust in the Lord was replaced by forming treaty with his gentile foreign neighbors, the Arameans, against the rest of Israel (10 tribes under King Baasha). Asa stopped seeking the face of the Lord and started working on strategies! And, what was that strategy - HIRING someone

to win HIS war, when God himself is Jehovah Sabaoth (Tzevaot; 1 Samuel 17:45) - the God of the armies of Israel? Are we following this? Although God gave Asa victory over Baasha, strategies that were in place of trusting God was thoroughly condemned by God through his seer, Hanani. Trusting on our own understanding in places and times when we need supernatural wisdom - What a folly!

2. Corrections are not taken!

Asa put the seer/prophet (Hanani) in prison, who commanded to him the words of the Lord. The seer said, "Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen? Yet when you relied on the LORD, he delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war." Earlier, when Asa was given a comforting message by another messenger of God, Azariah, after Asa's victory over Cushites, another gentile neighbor, those words were well taken. Then, on a later day, when the correction came because of a wrong doing, the messenger became a liar and needed to be corrected! Most of the times, when we are overwhelmed with successes, we think that we don't need God's counsel any longer. We become gods of experience! What an irony!

3. Finding alternatives to God!

In the 39th year, Asa met with a disease in his feet that led to his death. Even in the severity of disease, he did not seek the Lord, but consulted physicians. Consulting physicians was not the problem, rather the decision not to consult God on why that disease happened to him was the problem. Are we like this? When a brother is afflicted, do we judge him as afflicted by God, and when similar conditions happen in our life, do we take those conditions as mere physical and not an intervention of God?

Interpretation:

Some of us are like King Asa. We delve in keeping the commands of the Lord in our early lives when we are touched and provided in plenty by the Lord. As soon as God gives us rest from all problems, as we are comfortable in our church and family doing the same old things over and over, we become sluggish in our faith, get diverted from the ways of the Lord, lose focus on the ever-embracing love of God, start not trusting in him in our day-to-day lives, think that we are full in all wisdom and do not need God's people to correct us, and apply alternative (easy to do, away from God's purpose) ways to support our church, service and life.

My friends, this is the time for us to go back to the mats on our prayer room's floor and ask God for forgiveness for our bad judgments and seek his face as King Asa did in his earlier years of reign!

Let our Lord Jesus reign in our hearts. Have a blessed Sunday!