

So Long Self: Living for Him in a Me-First World

Asa - The Tragedy of Not Finishing Well

2 Chronicles 14-16

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I. Maybe Your Commitment To God Is At An All-Time High

Asa was on a spiritual mountaintop high and drove a stake in the ground to say, "This is our God and this is our commitment forever!"

2 Chronicles 15:12-14 "And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul, ¹³ but that whoever would not seek the Lord, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman. ¹⁴ They swore an oath to the Lord with a loud voice and with shouting and with trumpets and with horns."

Asa's life is a sober warning. In light of all that Asa had going right in his life, you can see how 25 years later his life began to tank and take a gradual turn to the south and how he refused to heed the warnings that God sent into his life to try and get him back on track.

II. Don't Ever Think You Can Just Hit "Cruise Control" In Your Spiritual Life

2 Chronicles 16:1-3 "In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might permit no one to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. ² Then Asa took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the Lord and the king's house and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Syria, who lived in Damascus, saying, ³ 'There is a covenant between me and you, as there was between my father and your father. Behold, I am sending to you silver and gold. Go, break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me.'"

After 36 years of serving God, seeing God's victories and faithfulness, and experiencing God's blessings, he turned to someone other than God for help.

Make note that Asa was probably in his late 50's or early 60's at this point in his life now.

1 Kings 15:9ff tells us that he reigned 41 years, so we know that this turn of events took place in the last five years of his life and ministry. That's scary! In the last five years of his life, Asa stops trusting God, stops remembering all that God's done, and turns to his own resources and his own ingenuity to get through a trial.

This happened because of some pitfalls that Asa didn't recognize.

Pitfall #1 - You'll Never Outgrow The Temptation To Trust In Your Own Human Resources

1. Relying On Money Can Keep You From Crying Out To God

2 Chronicles 16:2 "Then Asa took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the Lord and the king's house and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Syria, who lived in Damascus..."

That verse is a shocking contrast to how Asa responded 25 years earlier in his ministry.

2 Chronicles 14:11 "... O Lord, there is none like You to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on You, and in Your name we have come against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God; let not man prevail against You."

After nearly four decades of seeing God work, he turned to his own financial resources instead. The older you are and the more financial resources you have put away, the easier it can be to respond to problems with a knee-jerk reaction and to think you can buy your way out of a problem.

2. Human Alliances Can Short-Circuit Your Need For God

2 Chronicles 16:2-3 "Then Asa took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the Lord and the king's house and sent them to Ben-hadad king of Syria, who lived in Damascus, saying, ³'There is a covenant between me and you, as there was between my father and your father. Behold, I am sending to you silver and gold. Go, break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me.'"

The longer you live, the bigger and broader your network of human relationships becomes, and so if you're not careful when you hit a wall your first thought might be, "Who do I know that can solve this? Who can see me through this? Who do I know that's been through something just like this? Who do I know that has expertise in this area?" And you don't turn to God.

Asa didn't even stop and pray, he just reached out to Ben-Hadad king of Syria.

Pitfall #2 - You'll Never Be Free From The Sinful Pride That Makes Us So Resistant To Correction

The path Asa is heading down now just keeps getting scarier. Once you start putting your trust in what you have and who you know, you really don't want anyone getting in your way. You're not open to any midcourse corrections and you're certainly not open to an all-out rebuke.

God tries to get Asa's attention. He sends a prophet to warn him and remind him of what God's done in the past.

2 Chronicles 16:7-8 "At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, 'Because you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the Lord your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you. ⁸ Were not the Ethiopians and the Libyans a huge army with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the Lord, He gave them into your hand.'"

2 Chronicles 16:9 "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward Him..."

- *NASB* "completely His"
- *NIV* "fully committed to Him"

As His eyes move to and fro throughout the earth, would they stop on you? Do you have the kind of heart He's looking for?

Pitfall #3 - Seeking God Now Doesn't Guarantee You'll Seek Him Then

2 Chronicles 16:12 is one of the saddest verses in the Bible because three years later his heart had only gotten harder and he'd only pulled back from the Lord even more. No doubt bitterness had set in and his heart got infected long before his feet ever fell ill.

2 Chronicles 16:12 "In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe. Yet even in his disease, he did not seek the Lord, but sought help from physicians."

What a tragic way to end a life that began so well.

Our enemy is so cunning that he's willing to wait forty or even fifty years to set a trap.

Just because you've started well, doesn't mean you'll finish well. You have to guard and direct your heart year after year after year. Don't get sloppy, lazy, careless, presumptuous, and don't you dare hit "cruise control."

1 Corinthians 10:13 "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."

Make sure you know what the previous verse says.

1 Corinthians 10:12 "... let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall."

The Message "Don't be so naive and self-confident. You're not exempt. You could fall flat on your face as easily as anyone else. Forget about self-confidence; it's useless. Cultivate God-confidence."