

God's Manhunt

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the importance of relying on God for strong support, highlighting the story of Asa in 2 Chronicles 16. Asa's victories and failures illustrate the consequences of relying on man versus relying on the Lord. The sermon encourages complete trust and dependence on God, acknowledging His ability to provide help in all circumstances. It emphasizes the need for prayer and a heart that is blameless and fully committed to God to receive His support and guidance.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 16:9, Matthew 7:7, James 4:8, Psalm 34:17, Philippians 4:6

Topics: "Dependence on God", "Prayer and Commitment"

Description

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Transcript

Go ahead and turn in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles 16. I want to speak this morning on God's manhunt. God's manhunt.

We see that in verse 9. Hamani the seer, he says to Asa, the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth. God's looking to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless, is whole toward Him. Let's start in verse 7 here.

Asa has just had a victory in some sense, but it wasn't a good victory. It wasn't a good victory. He relied on the king of Syria.

Verse 7, at that time, after this had happened, Hamani 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, who's your enemy, they've now escaped you because you made this covenant with them and relied on them. Verse 8, he says, we're not the Ethiopians, he's looking in the past for Asa, he's reminding him, we're 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. He did this because the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless

towards Him.

You, Asa, have done foolishly in this, in this reliance upon the king of Syria, for from now on, you will have wars. And then we see Asa's response to this reproof. Then Asa was angry with the seer, and he didn't just dismiss him.

He put him in the stocks in prison, for he was in a rage with him because of this. And Asa inflicted cruelties upon some of the people at the same time. God's manhunt.

God is looking to give strong support to people whose hearts are holy towards Him. Let's pray. Father, thank You that, Lord, even just that thought there, You're a God.

You're the one true God, and You're our God. And something that characterizes You is that You're looking to give strong support. Lord, thank You, because we need that support.

Lord, we need that. And so, Lord, thank You. We thank You.

We praise You for who You are. And Lord, I just ask that You would make this real for all of us this morning. And Lord, that we would be people who do rely on You, and do experience the wonderful, precious encouragement of having You strongly support us.

In the midst of trials, in the midst of our battle against sin, in the midst of our fears. Lord, we need You. And so, Lord, we praise You today for who You are.

Open this up, I ask. Lord, help right now. Give me more of Your Spirit.

In Jesus' name, Amen. So, I want to ask three questions. One, why did the Syrian army escape? Let's start there.

Why did the Syrian army escape? Let's make sure we get this. Verse 7, Hanani is coming to reprove and correct Asa. And he says, because you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the Lord, the army of the king of Assyria has escaped you.

So why did the king of Assyria escape him? He did not rely on the Lord. He relied on the king of Syria. What does it mean to rely? What's a synonym? Trust? Yeah, when you rely on something, you're putting your full confidence.

And whatever that thing is, or whatever that person is, you're depending upon it. When I rely, I'm depending. I'm depending on this factor for there to be a victory here.

My complete trust is in this person. I'm leaning fully upon this wall, this thing. If it doesn't hold me up, I'm in trouble.

Now where did this relying on the king of Syria happen? Look at chapter 16, go to verse 1. In the 36th year of the reign of Asa. Has Asa been ruling for a while now? He has. 36th year.

This person Asa, he's nearing the end. He's not at the beginning of the race. He's nearing the end.

Let's not forget that. In the 36th year of Asa, Basha, king of Israel, went up against Judah. So Judah, Israel, the kingdom is split at this point in history.

And he built Ramah. That he might permit no one to go out or to come to Asa, king of Judah. You can say, well, what's happening there? Look at 2 Chronicles 15, 9. He gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim and Manasseh and Simeon who were residing with them for great numbers had deserted to him from Israel.

So a lot of people were deserting and coming over here to Asa's side. Basha didn't like this. So he's building a city to keep these deserters from getting there and to keep his own people from coming out and people from coming in.

So here, Asa is facing this problem just like we face trials. And what does he do? Verse 2, Then Asa... stop. Then James.

Then Craig. Then... you put your name there. Trial is before you.

Then you do what? Then I trust in the Lord? No. Then Asa took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the Lord. So it's not just he's not trusting in the Lord here, he's taking resources from the house of the Lord and the king's house, and he sent them to Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, who lived in Damascus, saying, there's a covenant between me and you as there was between my father and your father.

Behold, I'm sending to you silver and gold. You go break your covenant with Basha, king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me. And Ben-Hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel.

They conquered those cities and all the store cities of Naphtali. And when Bashar heard of it, he stopped building Ramah and he let his work cease. So Asa got what he wanted to happen.

The city's work stopped. Verse 6, Then King Asa took all of Judah and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber with which Bashar had been building, and with them he built Geba and Mizpah. So Asa got what he wanted.

The city is removed. But he did it with the wrong means. It doesn't matter if you get the result if the means is wrong.

And that's the time, verse 7, at that time, Hanani the seer came to Asa to reprove him. Isn't that how it is often with us? We take a step not relying on God, and God in love sends someone at that time to have a word of correction for us. As we already saw, Asa did not receive the rebuke.

He did not let it be oil for his head as David prayed. He refused it. So Asa relied not on the Lord.

So that's why the Syrian army escaped. That's what Hanani says right here to him. Next question, why did the huge army of the Ethiopians and Libyans get destroyed? Why did they get destroyed? 2 Chronicles 16, verse 8, here Hanani reminds him of something that's happened.

We're not the Ethiopians and Libyans a huge army. Okay, how many people did they have? Look back. 2 Chronicles 14, verse 9. How many people did they have? A million.

A million. Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots. Now, 300 chariots is not a lot compared to a million men, but chariots could pack a punch and came as far as Madaresha.

Okay, so this is a big army. So let's ask again, why did the huge army of the Ethiopians and Libyans get destroyed? Verse 8, 2 Chronicles 16, we're not the Ethiopians and Libyans a huge army, a million men, with very many chariots and horsemen. And why did he have victory? Because, yep, even though that was a big army, because you relied on the Lord, He gave them into your hand.

So why did he have victory? His full confidence was on God. Victory. Why did he not have victory? His full confidence was not on the Lord.

And then Asa gives verse 9. He says why you had victory when you relied on the Lord, and that's because the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless towards Him. You had victory against a million men because you have a God who's willing and wants to give strong support, and you look to Him, and He gave that support, and the enemy was defeated. Let's look at what this even looked like.

Go to 2 Chronicles 14. Back to verse 9. Because here he's saying, this is a time you relied on the Lord. What does that look like for you to rely on the Lord? Because whatever it looks like to rely on the Lord is what verse 9 says at the end, whose heart is blameless towards Him.

Well, let's look at a time when Asa's heart was blameless towards the Lord and what that looked like. What does that look like? Because he says that here. He's going to help those whose heart is blameless towards Him who rely on Him.

What does that look like? 2 Chronicles 14, verse 9. We can start in verse 10. And Asa went out to meet Him. And they drew up their lines of battle in the valley of Zephathah at Moresah.

And Asa cried to the Lord his God, 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.

That word, we rely on You, in the King James, it's we rest on Thee. That's where that one sister wrote that song. We rest on Thee.

And in Your name, we have come against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God. Let not man prevail against You.

Verse 12, So the Lord defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah. And the Ethiopians fled. Asa and the people who were with him pursued them as far as Gerar.

And the Ethiopians fell until none remained alive. A million men dead. None remained alive.

For they were broken before the Lord and His army. The men of Judah carried away very much spoil. None remained alive.

They had victory. Okay? You see Asa there. He's praying.

Lord, there's none like You. Is Asa just using God as like padding? Well, Lord, if this other thing doesn't come true, then I'm going to have You as a backup plan. Does the Lord sound like Asa's backup plan in chapter 14? No.

It sounds like the Lord is Asa's what? Only plan. He's not looking at His options. He sees I've got one option here.

Lord, there's none like You to help. Again, we've got a God who actually wants to help. That's incredible.

So, the Syrians escaped because he did not rely on the Lord. The Ethiopians did not escape because he did rely on the Lord. Look at the dedication.

2 Chronicles 15, verse 12. Different things had happened after they had this victory. There was different reform going on.

Becoming more and more zealous to follow the Lord. In verse 12, it says, they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, with all their heart, with all their soul. But that whoever would not seek the Lord, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman.

They swore an oath to the Lord with a loud voice and with shouting and with trumpets and with horns. And all Judah rejoiced over the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and had sought Him with their whole desire. And He was found by them.

You see, all in. Full confidence. All desire.

Lord, You're the only option. And He was found by them. Okay, what's this look like? Look at verse 16.

It looks like Asa forsaking his family for the cause of God's glory. Even Macha, his mother, King Asa, removed from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. And Asa cut down her image.

So Asa, he's all out. Lord, You just had this one victory. We're wanting to be more consecrated.

We're wanting to be more holy. We're wanting to follow You more, more, more. Even forsakes his own mother.

Yet, we already read, you know where this ends up. It ends up with Asa being a proud king who did not listen to the reproof of Hanani the seer. A third question.

What does this say about Asa that he went from relying on the Lord to relying upon man? What does that say? That should make us pause. We should look at his biography, and when you see the end of it compared to the beginning of it, it should make you pause. It should make you say, wait, what happened here? What's going on? Over time, does Asa's reliance on God increase or decrease? Decreases.

Lessons. We see here in Asa, as in many other people in the Old Testament, the need to endure. Jesus Christ said, it's the one who endures to the end who will be saved.

True Christianity isn't just starting out relying on God. It's continuing that all the way to the end. How did Asa respond to reproof? It said there he got in a rage in v. 10.

He was angry at the reproof. It makes you think of Ecclesiastes 4.13. It reads this, Better was a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who no longer knew how to take rebuke, advice, or instruction. Can you take rebuke? Think of the last time someone sought to correct you.

Did you listen or dismiss it? We kind of tend to think, well, of course I can take rebuke. But when someone comes to rebuke you, that's kind of the test. Can you take rebuke or not? Why didn't Asa take rebuke? Why don't we receive pride? Our thoughts of ourselves are inflated.

Our thoughts of God, again, are decreasing. They're getting smaller. Look at 2 Chronicles 16.12. In the 36th year was when what we read happened.

Now look at the 39th year. So three years are going by. In the 39th year of his reign, Asa was diseased in his feet.

And his disease became severe. But look what it says next. Yet even in his disease, he did not seek the Lord, but sought help from physicians.

Meaning, he relied on man. So three years. Here a three year period where this king, he's not looking to the Lord.

Yet the history is he was relying on God. He even forsook his mother from being the queen mother and destroyed her idols. He had a radical season in his life.

He prayed that prayer we read in chapter 14. Oh Lord, there's none like You to help. So he was someone praying good prayers in the prayer meeting.

He was someone being radical. But did he make it to the end? Will you? Will I? Will we persevere? Here, we have to finish the race. How someone is in the last years of their life, that's very telling.

Hebrews 3.12 says, we must take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God. You see unbelief creeps in. You start to not believe that you need God completely.

And you start to rely on your own powers. You start to rely on all these other things. And you all of a sudden have an evil, unbelieving heart where you're not supremely looking to the Lord Jesus Christ.

You're not supremely looking to God. You're relying on other things. So, the three questions we asked.

Why did the Syrian army escape? He relied on man. Why did the Ethiopian army get destroyed? He relied on God. What does this say about Asa? He went from relying on the Lord to relying on man.

He's not enduring in his confidence and his trust in the Lord. Fourth question, what does this text say about our Lord? What does this text say about the Lord? First, it says God promises. Promises to give strong support to you if you fully look to Him.

He promises to do that. And again, look at v. 8. This is Hanani the seer reproving Him and he says, we're not the Ethiopians, the huge army. You relied on the Lord.

He gave them into your hand. V. 9 is His reason why He gave them into your hand. This is the reason you had victory.

That's what He's trying to say to Asa. And the reason you had victory has nothing to do ultimately with you. Yes, you need to look to the Lord, but it has to do with who the Lord is.

V. 9, you have a God whose eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless towards Him. That's why you had victory, Asa, because you have a God who wants, is looking for opportunities to give strong support to those who will look for Him. Do you hear that? God is looking for opportunities to give you strong support, believer.

Your battles against sin, you may not be facing a million Ethiopians, but you know what? We're facing millions of lustful images in this crooked and perverted generation. We face thousands of proud thoughts that try to get in and get a foothold in our mind. We'll face areas of unbelief when things don't seem to be going the way we anticipated.

Am I going to rely on God and look for His strong support in the midst of that trial? God is on a manhunt looking for people. His eyes are looking. Now, v. 9 uses what we would call anthropomorphic language.

That is, God is relating to us in human terms. Here, eyes are attributed to God the Father, who elsewhere it says has no form. The point is that the Lord is fully aware of everything.

And this language is used to make that point. I thought about Hebrews 4.13. It says, no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account. Right now, the Lord is observing everything.

He sees everything. He's omnipresent. In other words, God goes beyond any spatial limitation.

He's immediately present in every part of His creation. Everything is immediately in God's presence. When the Bible speaks of the Lord coming and going, ascending and descending, this doesn't mean God was not there.

It means when He ascended, it means He's all the more uniquely manifesting Himself there. He didn't leave one location and go to another location. His eyes don't come right here, and then they're somewhere else and He's not seeing us here.

That's not what the point is. The Lord is everywhere. He's omnipresent.

But, for those who rely on Him, His strong support is uniquely manifested to them in the midst of that situation. The lost. What do the lost think about the Lord and Him being everywhere? When I was a kid, I was more afraid of what my parents saw me doing than what God saw me doing.

God's in the room. He sees what I'm doing. But when my parents are coming in the room, that's when I'm really afraid.

You see, I didn't really believe God was omnipresent. Job 24, verse 15, it says this, the eye of the adulterer also waits for the twilight. Why would he wait for the twilight? Saying, no one will see me.

Guess what? God sees you. You're naked and exposed before Him to whom you will give an account. Psalm 94, verse 7, the lost say this, the Lord does not see.

The God of Jacob does not perceive. Wrong. God does see.

He sees. Everything is before His eyes. Proverbs 5.21, a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and He ponders all His paths.

Proverbs 15.3, the eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on all the evil and all the good. Children, there are things that you have done or thought that your parents don't know about, but God does know about it. That should put fear in you where you should ask yourself, if I've got things that bother my conscience that I'm ashamed of, who can save me from those sins? And there's only one person who can, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, verse 9 speaks of a manhunt that's taking place right now. God is actively doing this right now. He's looking, even right now, to those whose hearts are fully towards Him to give them strong support.

He doesn't do it for 22 hours a day and then take two hours off. What's going on 24-7? The Lord is looking for those who will rely, trust, depend upon Him wholly, and He will uniquely manifest Himself and show them strong support. I use that term manhunt.

When you think of a manhunt, you tend to think of something negative, right? The United States of America, we had a manhunt for Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden. The troops were seeking to arrest or kill them. God is seeking to show you strong support.

When you think about the Lord's help, is it minor assistance when God shows you strong support? Does it say He's going to give you support or strong support? Strong. Answer this question. Who would you rather have support from? The Lord or anyone else? Can you think of anyone that you would rather have support from than the Lord? No! I hope not.

There's no one like our God. That's what Asa said. Oh Lord, there's none like You to help.

When he was relying on the Lord, that was his view. He realized there's none like God. He's the only one.

He's the only way. A couple chapters earlier in 2 Chronicles 13, someone has said, do not fight against the Lord, the God of your fathers, for you cannot succeed. Our enemies cannot succeed against God.

We have every reason to trust Him, to have full confidence in the Lord. Now, I was thinking about this issue of assistance and getting support and having assistance. And I was thinking about the cave in Thailand.

Some of you maybe recently saw this on the news. But in Thailand weeks ago, a boys' soccer team went exploring in a cave in Thailand. While in the massive cave, a flash flood happened.

The water rose. They were trapped. After nine days of searching, some divers found the soccer team.

You know, with the Lord, it doesn't take nine days. After nine days of searching, some divers found the soccer team. And with amazement, they were all alive and the massive rescue operation began.

Well, now when you have a rescue operation, you're thinking, who do we rely upon? Whose assistance, whose support will be strong enough for these circumstances we're facing? Someone with a whole lot of resources. A billionaire. The founder of Tesla, Elon Musk.

He offered his support. He even flew over there. He even went in the cave himself.

He tried to think of a way to help rescue the boys' soccer team. He sent a mini-sub they designed and the hope was they would send the sub in, put a boy in, and they would be able to take the sub out. Did this billionaire with all of his resources, did his assistance, was it the turning point? It wasn't.

You know what they said? They said the mini-sub was impractical for the situation that they were facing. Is God's support ever impractical? Uh-uh. Is there ever this situation you're in, believer, where if you rely on Him, you're going to find that, well, this was too complicated for our Lord to know what you need in that hour? Uh-uh.

Never going to happen. So my point is, God's assistance, it's strong, it's all-knowing. There's never going to be a place where it's just impractical.

You know, I rely on the Lord for everything, but this one trial, this one thing of sin, the Lord's help is impractical here. It won't work. You're never going to find that, Christian.

God is able to support, able to guide. Yes, He uses means. He brings people with different skills to help.

So how did the boys get out? The divers literally dragged and carried them out. They were somewhat sedated. And they had one person in the front swimming, holding the oxygen tank, the boy in the middle, and another person behind.

Here this boy is sedated, and they're just carrying him out of the cave. And they got all of them out alive. And you know, that reminded me of how the Lord helps us.

He carries us. He helps us. Charles Leiter did a sermon on Deuteronomy 1.31. And in the wilderness, where you have seen how the Lord your God carried you as a man carries a son.

So when you think about the Lord delivering Israel, it's likened to a father carrying his son. You just pick the little boy up and you carry him out. That's what God's support is likened to for Israel, Deuteronomy 1.31 says.

That's how it is. Lord, I need You to do something. I'm relying on You.

Lord, I've got nowhere else to go. This feels overwhelming. This feels complicated.

All I can do is cast that burden upon You. Ask yourself this. Right now, when the eyes of the Lord gaze upon you, what does He find? What does He find? Are you facing a trial? And are you turning your face towards the Lord? Or are you turning elsewhere and you're not committing it to God in prayer? You're not going to Him in faith.

Another question, what speed does this help come? Like I mentioned, it took the divers nine days just to find them. It took a longer period of time to get them out. Our text says here, the eyes of the Lord run to and fro.

There's some idea of speed there. Again, God is omnipresent. He's omniscient.

He's omnipotent. He's got all power. You don't have to worry.

The Lord might delay for a long period of time before He removes those circumstances. He might keep you in those circumstances for five years. But that doesn't mean He's not able to support you in the midst of that trial and give you grace.

Deuteronomy 33, 26, it says there is none like God who rides through the heavens to your help through the skies in His majesty. You know, you hear the fire truck, the alarm in your house, and you hear it coming, and you know, the fire truck is riding through the streets to aid someone. Maybe a fire.

Maybe someone collapsed. They're riding. Here the Bible says, our God rides through the heavens to your aid.

That doesn't literally mean He comes down. Again, it's giving a picture. Believer, you're in that situation.

You're in that trial. Rely on the Lord. Who is like our God who rides through the heavens to your aid? Who is like your God who knows your circumstances, knows the trial, knows the enemy? You say, well, the enemy's a million men.

It doesn't matter. The Lord is able to slay them in a moment. This is just the same reality.

Philippians 4.13 I always have strength through Christ who strengthens me. Or 4.19 My God will supply every need of yours according to His riches and glory in Christ Jesus. The issue is never with the Lord having a lack of supply.

The issue is with us being slow and dragging our feet to rely upon our God. Can God miss spotting someone who's relying on Him? Can He miss you? You know, the eyes are going, I miss someone there. That won't ever happen.

He's not going to miss you. Nothing's outside of His sight. Don't ever say there's no support here.

No, His grace is sufficient. A fifth question. We were kind of looking at the idea of assistance right there.

Fifth question is this, what is the condition of the Lord's support? What is the condition? Look at verse 9, 2 Chronicles 16. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to give strong support, and then He mentions a specific type of person. To those whose heart is blameless, is whole, as the King James says, is perfect toward Him.

Obviously, that doesn't mean, especially the King James rendering it perfect, you know that doesn't mean sinless perfectionism, and that's the only type of person the Lord's going to help. If you haven't sinned for the last six months, you look to the Lord. He's going to help you.

Clearly, that's not what's being said. Even with His help with Asa beforehand, 2 Chronicles 15-17, it even says the high places were not taken out of Israel. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was wholly true all his days.

At least, all of those days at this period until the 36th year. So Asa, he hadn't removed the high places, and yet he was receiving the help of our God. So what does this condition, what does it mean? And I've already tried to define this, but the best thing to ask is this.

Let's define it by the context that we've been looking at. What does it mean whose heart is wholly towards the Lord? What did we see in chapter 14? That's the example of where Asa's heart is wholly towards the Lord. Verse 11, Asa cried to the Lord as God, O Lord, there is none like You to help.

He's completely relying on the Lord. Verse 15 of chapter 15. It says there, they sought Him with their whole desire.

Your heart being wholly towards the Lord, it just simply is Lord. I've got nowhere else to go. You've got to help me.

I've got no one else to look to. And you're not saying that, and at the same time, you know, I'm not really trusting in the Lord. I'm really trusting in this over here.

You can say it with a good conscience. Lord, I've got no backup plan. You're the only plan.

I've got nowhere else to look. The Christian Holman, it renders it for those whose hearts are completely His. Lord, I've got no options except You.

In 2 Chronicles 15, it said their whole desire was towards Him, and it says He was found by them. And this condition should not bother us. 1 Peter 3.12, For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayer.

But the faith of the Lord is against those who do evil. If you have sin in your life that is unrepentant, that you're refusing to acknowledge, that you're refusing to forsake, and you're going to the Lord asking for help, the Lord is saying there's something more important to do. Forsake this idol.

Turn from this. Then come to Me. Or come to Me as you're turning from that and say, Lord, help.

Help, please. So, what is the condition? Are you wholly relying on God? Meaning, do you have your full confidence, your full trust in Him, and right there, you're in a spot where you realize, Lord, I have no other options. Because you know there are times we catch ourselves, something happens, we're going through a trial, and there's no acknowledgement of God.

And we're not getting His support until we stop and say, wait a minute. All this has happened so fast, and yet we've not even taken it to the Lord. We've not even looked to Him and asked for His help.

Why do men not rely on the Lord? That psalm, it said our own weakness feeling. You know why men don't rely on the Lord? They don't feel their own weakness. They're proud, self-reliant.

We need to say as Paul, when I am weak, then I am strong. We need to believe the reality of John 15 that apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, I can do nothing. This promise is not for the half-hearted.

It's not for those following from far off. Those putting on an appearance. Those playing with sin.

Again, if you're playing with sin, your whole desire is not towards the Lord. And you're going, Lord, help me. Give me strong support.

The Lord is saying forsake that. Turn from that. Be holy for Me.

All out for Me. Sadly, most do foolishly. They don't wholly trust God.

The seer, he told Asa, verse 9, the second half, he says, you have done foolishly in this. For from now on, you will have wars. In other words, you won't have God's support.

You face that trial. He didn't rely on the Lord. And the seer says, you're going to face wars from now on.

We either get strong support from the Lord, or you could say we get strong opposition from Him. 1 Peter 5.5, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. God will oppose you if you go in a way of sin, a way of half-heartedness.

It even says here in verse 12, in the 39th year of his reign, Asa was diseased in his feet. God gave Asa a disease. God is opposing this man who's not relying on Him.

Even in that affliction, he did not seek the Lord. Think about it. What victory against sin? What victory of a significant trial in your life where you look back and it's like, wow, I endured through that trial.

You're amazed. What victory can you look at that has not been because of the Lord's help? You can't find one. Every single victory, you look back and you know that was the Lord's hand.

He supported us strongly. That's why this happened as it did. Christian, you never have to go forth alone against the foe.

You never have to go alone. The Bible says our God is a God Who will fight for us. As Craig mentioned in the first hour, that doesn't mean we just sit down and do nothing.

We go to God in prayer. We forsake things. We're absolutely involved.

But our hearts have got to be, Lord, I'm having full reliance, full confidence on You. Because Asa relied on the Lord, there was victory. His full confidence, his full trust was on the Lord.

Think about it. Whose support is better than Him Who created all things? What's the greatest support that the Lord has offered us, Christian? You guys have to speak up. Too much whispering.

Yeah, salvation. The greatest support you could ever have is to have all of your sins forgiven. To have a perfect righteousness given to you.

And God the Father has provided that for us in His Son. And if He did not spare His own Son, how much more would He not graciously with us give us all things and help us in all situations and provide strength no matter what situation it may be? It's to our shame that we don't journal more. And when the Lord strongly supports you, you write it down.

I mean, I journal, but it's sporadic. And sometimes I'll open my Google Spreadsheet, I'll have a date, and I'll have what happened. And I'm amazed at the things the Lord has done.

And I forgot about it. I even journaled stuff that happened in other people's lives in the church that was so amazing that I didn't want to forget about it. But, think back.

The Lord has never failed you. The issue is in our own pride and self-confidence. We don't go to the Lord.

We rely on something else or someone else. We put our full confidence in that thing and not in the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Chronicles 14.

Like I mentioned, that hymn that we sang, the last one, is from verse 11. O Lord our God, help us, for we rely on You. We rest on Thee.

And in Your name, we have come against this multitude. Why is that psalm such a famous psalm? Maybe some of you never heard it. Because Jim Elliott and the other four men sang that psalm before they went in to try to reach the Akua's in Ecuador.

And those five men were killed and speared to death. Your question is, why would they sing that psalm? I don't know about you, but if I'm putting myself in a situation of trying to talk to natives who are known for being killers, where are you going to rely on? What options do you have? A million men? Ten natives? Twenty natives? You go to the Lord. Lord, we're in Your will, right? In Thy strength we go against the foe.

And they got killed. Did God not strongly support them? He did strongly support them. In the midst of them being killed, they were strongly supported.

And then the Lord strongly supported their five widows and all their children who lost their fathers. God's support was absolutely alive there in 1956 when they were martyred. And you know who wrote this hymn? Edith Cherry.

Has anyone heard of her? She died when she was 25. Twenty-five. She was stricken with polio in infancy, and for the rest of her life, she walked with the aid of crutches.

It's recorded that most of her poems were written before she was 15 years old. I couldn't figure when she wrote *We Rest in Thee*, but she maybe wrote that before she was 15. Here this girl is.

Polio. She had a stroke when she was 25, and it led to her death. Who is she resting in for great support? The Lord.

Whose strength did she go in against the foe of physical suffering? The Lord's strength. Whose strength did these missionaries go in? The Lord's. What's Trevor doing over there in Indonesia? I hope Trevor's not over there relying in his own power and physical fitness.

Should he get physically fit to try to survive all the malaria? Yes. But ultimately, Lord, You've got to support us or we're toast. I'm still reading through John G. Patton's biography.

I know I referenced this months ago at a prayer meeting. You want to talk about the Lord? You rely on Him and He gives you strong support? I mean, this is pretty amazing. In the 1800's, just if you don't know who Patton is, he went to the islands of the South Pacific.

Shortly into his laboring there, his wife and child died. Fellow missionaries died. He served on a cannibal-infested island.

And the Lord's strong support was incredible. Page 213. He's already survived getting killed by the natives like seven times in a short period of time.

So here like the 8th is. Listen to this. About 10 o'clock, the savages again surrounded the mission house.

My faithful dog Clutha cleaning still to me amid the wreck of all else on earth, sprang quietly upon me and pulled at my clothes and awoke me, showing danger in her eye, glancing at me through the shadows. I silently awoke Mr. and Mrs. Matheson." Those were his co-laborers. You know what they did? You just woke up.

Savages are surrounding you. Yep, we committed ourselves and hushed prayer to God. Lord, we need strong support.

And then we watched the natives knowing that they could not see us. Immediately, a glare of light fell into the room. Men passed with flaming torches.

And at first, they set fire to the church building all around. Then they reed-fenced, connecting the church building to our house. And in a few minutes, the house too would then be in flames.

And armed savages waiting to kill us on attempting an escape. Taking my harmless revolver, he had no bullets left, just had a revolver, so he's not trusting in that gun. In the left hand, and an American tomahawk in the right, I pled with Mr. Matheson to let me out and instantly again locked the door on himself and his wife.

He was very reluctant. He's holding me back. He said, stop here.

Let's just all die together. You'll never return, I said. And then he said, be quick.

Leave that to God. In a few minutes, our house will be in flames and then nothing can save us. He did let me out.

So see, he has to go out in faith. You don't just sit in there, Lord, we rely on Thee, we're doing nothing. He went in faith.

Had a plan. He did let me out. They locked the door again quickly from the inside.

And while his wife and he prayed and watched for me from within, I ran to the burning reed fence. I cut it from top to bottom and tore it up and threw it back into the flames so that the fire could not be carried to our house. I saw on the ground shadows as if something were falling around me.

And I started back. Seven or eight savages had surrounded me. They raised their great clubs in the air.

I heard a shout, kill him! Kill him! One savage tried to seize hold of me. But leaping from his clutch, I drew the revolver from my pocket. I leveled it as if I was going to use it.

My heart going up to prayer to my God. I mean, he's praying why this is going on. I said to them, dare to strike me and my Jehovah God will punish you.

He protects us and will punish you for burning the church, for hatred to His worship and people, and for all the bad conduct. We love you all. And for doing you good only, you want to kill us? But our God is here now to protect us and to punish you.

That's a bold claim. Our God is here now. Lord, your eyes, they run to and fro.

Come! Where was I at? Okay. They yelled in rage. They urged each other to strike the first blow.

But the Invisible One restrained them. I stood invulnerable beneath His invisible shield and succeeded in rolling back the tide of flame from our dwelling house. At this dread moment occurred an incident which my readers may explain as they like, but which I trace directly to the interference of my God.

A rushing and roaring sound came from the south like the noise of a mighty engine or of muttering thunder. Every head was instinctively turned in that direction. And they knew from previous hard experiences that it was one of their awful tornadoes of wind and rain.

Now mark this. The wind bore the flames away from our dwelling house. Had it come in the opposite direction, no power on earth could have saved us from being all consumed.

It made the work of destroying the church only that of a few minutes, but it brought with it a heavy and murky cloud which poured out a perfect horn of tropical rain. Now mark this. The flames burning the church were thereby cut off from extending to and seizing upon the reeds and the bush.

And besides, it had become almost impossible now to set fire to our house. The stars and their choruses were fighting against Sisera. And he's referring to Judges.

It says in Judges, from the heavens the stars fought. From their chorus, they fought against Sisera. He goes on.

The mighty roaring of the wind, the black cloud pouring down and ceasing torrents, the whole surrounding awed the savages into silence. Some began to withdraw from the scene. All lowered their weapons of war.

And several terror-struck exclaimed, this is Jehovah's reign. Truly, their Jehovah God is fighting for them and helping them. Let us away.

Amazing. A panic seized upon them. They threw away their remaining torches.

In a few moments, they had all disappeared in the bush. And I was left alone praising God for His marvelous works. Oh, taste and see that God is good.

Blessed is the man that trusts in Him, that relies in Him. Patten went on, how much help, blessing, and joy we lose every day because we do not take all to Jesus as we ought. Often since, I have wept over His love and mercy in that deliverance.

And I've prayed that every moment of my remaining life may be consecrated to the service of my precious Friend and Savior. 1800s. You know, you hear that.

Praying, and God sends a tropical tornado, the perfect spot not to fire out. All of that aligning. That's just like some of these examples you see in the Old Testament.

Gideon, these other things. Our God's a living God. And it took faith to go out there and do what Patten did.

And throughout this whole ordeal, they're praying to the Lord. And he's acknowledging our God fights for us. Christian, that's why you've got to rely.

Look, unbeliever, you need to rely on the Lord Jesus because He'll fight for you and pay for your sins. And once you've had that battle won through the cross of Calvary, then you keep trusting Him the rest of your life for help against sin, endurance in the faith, to not fall away with an evil, unbelieving heart from the living God. As someone has said, one man with God is a majority.

You don't need all these other things if you have the Lord. He will use a means, but brethren, we need God. We need to rely on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whether small, whether big, our God is looking for opportunities to support us. What's He find when He looks to you? Are you fully relying on Him? Are you looking to Him? I see our brother back there just broke his arm working and fell off the tree. He was in the hospital.

What are you looking to? Here, finances, all these things. Lord, help. We rely on You.

Don't let us down. Don't fail us. And He won't.

He might wait until the last moment. He might delay. But God will come through and give strong support.

And He's hunting. God's on a manhunt today to find people whose hearts are holy towards Him. To find people who are relying on Him.

Their whole desire is, Lord, You're my full confidence. Psalms 102.16, it says, the Lord builds up Zion. He appears in His glory.

He regards the prayer of the destitute. He does not despise their prayer. If you're lost, if you're destitute, He won't despise your prayer.

Go to Him. Rely on the Lord Jesus Christ to pay for all of your sin. Rely on the Lord Jesus Christ to break the power of sin through regenerating you from the dead and giving you life and new desires.

Removing the deceitfully wicked heart and giving you a good and honest heart as Luke 8.15 says. Psalms 102 goes on. Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created we weren't created back then, we weren't alive back then, may praise the Lord.

That the Lord look down from His holy height. From heaven, the Lord look at the earth. And He's looking right now, today.

I hope I trust you're relying on Him. That like Patton, you're going to God in prayer. Last thing before I close.

I reread the report that we had from our missionary brother who serves in incredibly dangerous areas. And in his last report, he said this, we cannot in reliance upon our own abilities prevail against the opposition of the world. Do you hear that? We cannot in reliance on our own abilities prevail.

That's what Asa did in the end. He relied on his own abilities. We're getting some rain.

That's good. So maybe I'll get 30 more minutes, because if it's raining, you guys don't want to get wet yet, right? Okay, he goes on. We cannot in reliance upon our own abilities prevail against the opposition of the world.

Survive the assault of the powers of darkness, and at the same time, build the church, advance the Gospel in the world. We undertake and fulfill this momentous responsibility. We need divine enablement.

And for that, we must be given over to prayer. Prayer. How do I rely on God? You go to Him completely in prayer.

Lord, I need You. And you knock and you seek and you keep asking, Lord, help. He goes on, our Savior is our supreme example.

When everyone went to bed, He often spent the whole night in prayer. He exhorted His followers to keep watch and pray so that they may not fall asleep spiritually. Paul exhorted the recipients of His letters to give themselves ceaselessly to prayer.

Look at the great men of God in history. Men and women through whom God shook and shaped the world. Without a single exception, they were people of prayer.

Prayer protected them from sin. Guarded their hearts from pride. Asa, he had pride near the end.

Empowered them as though they were connected to a heavenly spiritual nuclear power plant. You hear that? God empowered them as though they were connected to a heavenly spiritual nuclear power plant. Because you are.

If you're a Christian, you're connected. If you abide in Christ, He will strengthen you. He will empower you.

Look at the great movements of the Spirit of God in history. The great revivals, without a single exception, were all fruits of prayer. Those who have left a lasting mark upon their generation and the generations to come have achieved that through prayer.

That is to say, God has achieved His work through them in their recognition and admission of their inability. No matter how gifted they are. Let me read that again.

God has achieved His work through them in their recognition and admission of their inability. No matter how gifted they were in their acknowledgment of their complete dependence upon God in prayer, seeking His counsel, His wisdom, His ways, and His enablement. If that's not you, you're missing out.

If your life is not one of prayerfully relying upon the Lord and acknowledging Him in all your ways, you're missing out. You're having wars. You've done foolishly.

Hanani told him. God is willing to help you. He's willing to give you strong support.

Go to Him in faith. He's looking for people who do that. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank You that You, the living God, are aware of everything going on in this world. Lord, that You would even pay attention to us. That You would even have Your eyes run to and fro.

Meaning You're aware. Lord, You're aware of us. And You're looking to give us strong support? Help? Lord, we praise You.

You are such a good God. Lord, we thank You for saving us. We thank You for all of the help You've given.

And Lord, here we are this morning. Lord, we're wanting to be here with hearts wholly toward You. With hearts relying on You for help in the battles that will come this week.

Lord, we want You to fight for us. We want You to enable us. We want You to give us strength.

Lord, we want to believe You and keep taking You at Your Word. And so, Lord, I pray You'd even enable us, You'd work in us to will and to work for Your good pleasure as we seek to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Lord, we're trusting we can only do that because You're working in us to desire the right things.

And so, God, we cast ourselves on You. Lord, we're shipwrecked upon You this morning. You're our only hope.

Lord, help us. Help my brothers. Help my sisters.

Lord, help us here today to honor You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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