

Have You Ever Heard of Asa?

by Russell Kelfer

The sermon explores the life of King Asa, emphasizing his obedience to God and the lessons learned from his leadership during spiritual warfare.

Duration: 29:16

Scripture: Genesis 22:18, Exodus 20:3, 1 Samuel 15:22-23, 1 Kings 15:11-14, 2 Chronicles 14:1, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Humble Yourself"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Asa from the Bible. He emphasizes that God is looking for obedience, not talent or intellect. The preacher asks the audience if they have ever heard of Asa, and only a small percentage raise their hands. He then goes on to explain that Asa was a man who turned the hearts of the people back to God by tearing down idols and teaching them to seek the Lord and observe His commandments. The preacher highlights the importance of spiritual leadership in tearing down enemy strongholds and teaching people to walk with God.

Transcript

I think you'll agree that one of the wonderful things about reading the Word of God is its utter honesty. It never paints a picture of human nature as being anything less than it really is. It never portrays the children of God as being any more perfect than they really are.

And on the plus side, what that means is that we can be encouraged by the fact that Joseph and Abraham and Moses and David had their weak moments, and yet still God blessed them and used them and honored them in Scripture. But on the other side of the coin, the inherent danger exists that we'll see so many of their faults that we will wrongfully assume that no one really is expected to do things God's way. And we'll tend a bit to cynicism if we're not careful, and begin to justify our own behavior based on the fact that, after all, even the heroes of the faith didn't do it right.

It's a dangerous course. So every so often, our loving God seems to sprinkle the Scriptures with portraits of men and women who did it His way. He pulls back the curtain, and He reveals the miracle of obedience and the blessings that accompany that obedience.

And today's story is such a story. From the dark recesses of the study of Solomon's later years and of Rehoboam's immaturity and rebellion, there comes now a stream of light casting its reflection upon the pages of the Word, illuminating the life of a man who understood leadership from God's. The chances are

you haven't studied a lot about this man. In fact, you may not even recognize his name.

But to God, he represents something far more special than many of the characters in Scripture that are oh so familiar to you. You see, to God, this man represents obedience. And Beloved Mayor, I remind you one more time, that's what God is looking for.

He isn't looking for talent. He isn't looking for intellect. He isn't searching for power.

He's looking for obedience. The title for this morning's lesson is, Have You Ever Heard of Asa? Our outline is in three parts. Have you ever heard of Asa? No one besides thee, and when the battle rages.

Now tell me, how many of you have ever heard of Asa? Could I see your hands? A small percentage. How many of you could write a one-page essay about what you know about Asa? Could I see your hand? Short page. Three by five card.

Chances are he's not a household word around your place. In fact, you probably don't have evening devotionals about David and Goliath, Moses, Abraham, and Asa. Probably not.

Chances are he's not an everyday topic of conversation at dinnertime, but maybe he should be. Maybe we all need to talk a little more and teach a little more about some of the lesser-known heroes of scripture who achieved little acclaim from the world's perspective, but who found real greatness in the heart of God. Maybe we need to do that.

Today we will, and our lesson will be found in 2 Chronicles. We'll be reading from chapter 14. While you're turning there, I would remind you that on our last excursion through the book, we took a look at a man named Rehoboam, and we watched this man fail to achieve any measure of greatness in his life, and the scripture gave us the reason.

It says he did not set his heart. That is, he vacillated in his commitment to God. He did evil.

That is, he never gave God the freedom to fulfill the plan he had for Rehoboam's life. Now, we cannot cover every Old Testament character, so we're going to pass over Rehoboam's son, Abijah, this morning. He's the subject of chapter 13, but simply suffice it to say that he only reigned three years, and he only fought one battle.

That battle was a battle against Jeroboam, a battle which God miraculously intervened and won. Chapter 14 then opens like this. Verse 1, So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David, and his son Asa became king in his place.

The land was undisturbed for ten years during his days. Underline, perhaps, verse 2, And Asa did good and right in the sight of the Lord his God. He removed the foreign altars in the high places.

He tore down the sacred pillars. He cut down the ashram. He commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers and to observe the law and the commandment.

He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah, and the kingdom was undisturbed under him. Verse 6, And he built four to five cities in Judah, since the land was undisturbed, and there was no one at war with him during those years, because the Lord had given him rest. For he said to Judah, Let us build these cities and surround them with walls, towers, gates, and bars.

The land is still ours, he said, reason, 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 they prospered.

Now, beloved, you have heard of Asa. He was the great-grandson of Solomon, the grandson of Rehoboam, the son of Abijah. He follows a long line, then, of kings who were not necessarily noted for their obedience.

But nevertheless, it came to pass one day that he was sworn in as the ruling monarch of Judah, and a nervous remnant of a nation must have sighed in wonder, What will happen next? What happened next was wonderful. A man finally rose to the throne who had a heart's desire to do the will of God. He didn't have a good pattern to follow, that's true, and the world would have said he didn't have a chance.

But he had the word of God, and that's all the pattern any of us really need to become godly leaders. I wish it could be said of me, and I know you wish it could be said of you, what was said of this man Asa. Because this statement is of more value than any list of accomplishments you could achieve in this life.

And Asa did good and right in the sight of the Lord his God. He did it God's way. He realized it wasn't his kingdom, it was God's kingdom.

So he humbled himself and stood before God humbly, and before man he stood tall, and he did what had to be done. What had to be done wasn't easy. It says he removed the foreign altars and high places, tore down the sacred pillars, cut down the ashram, commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers and to observe the law and the commandment.

You see, the whole countryside was covered with an ocean of idols. Everywhere you went, there were altars, sacred places, and temples of worship to demonic beings. Virtually every commandment in scripture regarding the sacredness of the worship of God was being flagrantly violated in the whole nation.

But the tough part you see from Asa's perspective was that wherever there are idols, there are idol worshippers. And these idol worshippers were the king's subjects. So he stood to alienate an entire nation if he did what was right in the sight of God.

It would be much the same as if a new president were elected in the United States, and his first act as chief executive was to outlaw and close most of the existing churches. Even those who never attended church would rise up in rebellion. So Asa was not here to win a popularity contest.

What he had to do was tough. The first thing he did was invoke an ordinance that forbade the worship of idols. And to facilitate that, he destroyed all of the sacred pillars, the temples, and the figures that dotted the landscape.

And then having removed Satan's tools of worship, he called a meeting, called the whole country together, and reminded them that they were children of the living God, his chosen ones, and then he commanded them. Can you imagine? He commanded them to seek the Lord their God and observe the law and commandments. So you have the first two steps here of real spiritual leadership.

Tear down the enemy's strongholds and then teach the people how to walk with the living God. The third thing he did was to build again the fortified cities surrounding them with walls and towers and gates and bars. They were enjoying peace, and that's an important point.

But they didn't accept that peace as a license to lay down the armor, but rather as a call to put it on. They had rest on every side, the scripture says, but they never forgot who the enemy was or where the enemy was and where he was likely to strike next. So they honored God by doing whatever they had to do to keep the enemy from barging in and taking over again.

You see the principle? This is wise counsel in dealing with spiritual warfare as well. First, you tear down any false idols that you've erected in your life. You eliminate the very presence of those things that draw you to anyone or anything other than God.

And then you return to that level of surrender to your Lord that once typified total commitment. And then you begin the process of putting on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. And finally, you never forget where the peace comes from.

Verse 7, Asa called the whole nation together and he said, The land is still ours. May I remind you why? 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 they prospered. Now beloved, you have just seen a nation crippled by idolatry, crushed by strife, and in a matter of weeks a man named Asa turned the people's hearts back to God. And in the process you have seen a formula for dealing with the devil.

In other words, you have just heard of Asa. Now you can imagine what happened next, can't you? Here's a man who believed that God was who he says he was and God could do what he said he could do and he called an entire nation to repentance. And the enemy does not take that sitting down.

So Asa's call to commitment leads, as usual, to a call to battle. 2 Chronicles chapter 14, we continue reading with verse 8 and I'm going to ask you to underline verse 11. 2 Chronicles 14.

Now Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah bearing large shields and spears and 280,000 from Benjamin bearing shields and wielding bows, all of them valiant warriors. Now Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots and they came to Marashah. Verse 10.

So Asa went out to meet him and they drew up in battle formation in the valley of Zephathah at Marashah. Verse 11. This is the key verse in the passage.

Then Asa called to the Lord his God. Listen to what he said. He said, Lord, there is no one besides thee.

No one besides thee to help in the battle between this powerful and those of us who have no strength. So help us, O Lord. We trust in thee and in thy name have come against this multitude, O Lord.

Thou art our God. Let not man prevail against thee. So the Lord routed the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah and the Ethiopians fled and Asa and the people who were with him pursued them as far as Jerar and so many Ethiopians fell that they could not recover.

For they were shattered before the Lord and before his army and they carried away very much plunder and they destroyed all the cities for the dread of the Lord had fallen on them and it spoiled all the cities. There was much plunder there. They struck down those who owned livestock, carried away large numbers of sheep and camels.

Then they returned to Jerusalem. You see, my friend, here is how God's man or woman faces the inevitable warfare of the Christian life. Here is how you and I are supposed to deal with the enemy when

the odds are against us and there seems to be no hope.

When there seems to be no answer to those crushing defeats in your marriage, when there seems to be no hope for that failing business or that job, when there seems to be no rescuing that wayward child, when there seems to be no cure for that pain or that suffering, Satan will whisper in your ear, why not just do it my way? God's not going to deliver you. This thing is too big for God. My friend, you turn to Satan in that hour and ask him just one question.

You say, hey guy, have you ever heard of Asa? When your children begin to doubt that it pays to serve the living God and they begin to wrestle with the compromises of their generation, you ask them, beloved, have you ever heard of Asa? Have you ever heard of a man who inherited a kingdom riddled with division, stifled by idolatry, a man who started right from the beginning to pitch his tent in God's camp and who struck straight as an arrow at the enemy's strongholds, ripped them to shreds, just inviting an invasion? And then tell them what happened when the invasion occurred. Here's what happened. He took all that he had, God wants us to do that, and he lined it up before God.

He had 580,000 men to fight. Now that sounds convincing until you realize the enemy that was coming at him had a million men and 300 chariots, fresh off the assembly line of General Jerusalem Motors, sort of like Podunk Tech University challenging the Dallas Cowboys. And here they come, all million of them down to Marischal.

You can just see the curtain rising or falling as the case may be. So what did Asa do? Did he do what I would have done, cut and run? That would have been my first choice. Or did he take my second choice, call a high-level meeting and prepare to surrender? No, you see, God's man isn't called to surrender or compromise in the light of the impossible.

He's called to rejoice in the light of the impossible. Because you see, only then can a God who delights in doing the impossible be himself. And beloved, if that's where you are today in your Christian life, I simply ask you, have you ever heard of Asa? Let's tune in on station LORD and watch the festivities on television, the massacres, I guess we could call it.

Look, here comes Asa now. He's moving towards Marischal. He's acting as though the enemy doesn't even exist, poor guy.

But his face looks radiant and he looks relaxed. Wait a minute, he's stopping. He's talking to talk to someone.

He's talking to God. Let's listen. He's saying, Lord, there's no one but you who can help me now.

Here we are in one corner, the whole power of the world seems to mast against us. And in our corner, there is nothing but weakness. Lord, we are those who have no strength.

Help us, Lord. You're our God. We trust in you.

We believe you are who you say you are. Lord, it's in your name that we come against this enemy, against this problem, against this impossible obstacle. Thou art our God.

Let not man prevail against thee. My friend, if you've never heard of Asa, hear him now. He is coming against the same kinds of enemies you and I wrestle with, for we're not wrestling against flesh and blood,

and neither was he.

Oh, there were real armies with real chariots, that's true, and your problems and mine are real. But his battle was against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. You see, the battle wasn't between Asa and Zerah.

They were the players on the field. The battle was between Satan and God, and it wouldn't be determined by how strong Asa was, and it wouldn't be determined by how strong Asa's armies were. It will be determined by how strong Asa believed his God was.

And the battle you and I are fighting is much the same. What appears to be the battleground in our lives, marriage, your business, your job, your home, your finances, your health, that's just the playing surface on which the battle is being played. Beloved, the issues are spiritual, and the outcome will either be spiritual victory or spiritual defeat, depending on whether or not we understand the principles of spiritual warfare.

Look at them, fresh from the lips of a man named Asa. You have heard of Asa, haven't you? Yes, you have. Look at how he handled the biggest battle of his life.

First of all, look at the fact that he had already dealt with the enemy strongholds, so he was ready for battle. He had removed everything that stood between them and God, and now they enjoyed a kind of power that no one embracing compromise can experience. They got right with God first.

Then, you see, they were ready for the battle. Secondly, he confronted the issue directly. He didn't pretend that life has no problems and curl up in a make-believe world of spiritual cliches and meaningless phrases and expect the enemy to go away if he hit his face in the sand.

That's what I do. Warfare, you see, involves facing the enemy, not ignoring the enemy. He set his face like flint to the battlefield because he knew when he got to the battlefield, God would be there.

So do you. Thirdly, he didn't assume he could probably win the battle, but it would sure be helpful to have God there to help finish the enemy out. He rather assumed that apart from God, the only word that could characterize his people was those who had no strength.

In other words, his helplessness, his hopelessness apart from God, was paramount in his mind. And, beloved, that was the reason for this whole battle. You see, God allowed an enemy to invade his beloved's life so that his child could be reminded of one fact, that all power belongs to God.

All power, all power, all power. And fourthly, he didn't assume that God was a good possible alternative to victory. He said, there's no one besides thee.

God, I can't depend on my banker plus you. God, I can't depend upon my family plus you. God, I can't depend on my resourcefulness plus you.

God, the only hope I have is you. There is no one besides thee who can help. Now, you see, beloved, that puts the responsibility where it belongs.

And then finally, he openly declared it to be a battle between Satan and God, and he declared God solely responsible for the outcome. He said, in thy name we come against this enemy, O Lord. Let not man prevail against thee.

It's your battle, Lord. I just get, I get to get in on the action. And my friend, that's all God was waiting for.

He routed the Ethiopians, and Asa and his people went in and experienced the spoils, and they experienced the blessings that accompany victory. They weren't timid either. They returned to Jerusalem with a herd of livestock bigger than Texas and a heart full of God bigger than eternity.

They faced an impossible enemy. They enjoyed an incredible victory all because a man named Asa, you have heard of Asa, all because a man named Asa believed that his God wanted nothing better than to take the very conflict that appeared on the horizon of their lives, which seemed to spell doom, and turn it into a celebration of grace that would leave its mark on the pages of the living legends of Scripture from that moment until now. You see, so the issue, beloved, is no longer have you ever heard of Asa.

The issue is, have you ever discovered the power of Asa's God? And have you ever experienced the secret of Asa's victory? Because, beloved, some of us, even right now, are engaged in horrendous personal struggles. Our worlds are crumbling around us. We feel like he did, outnumbered.

We look up there towards Marashi, and all we see are battalions of enemy forces descending through the hills, and they're coming our way. The form they take is inconsequential. Yours will be different from mine.

The reality of it is that they are not the real enemy. The things pressuring us on the surface are not the real problems. They're real, but far, far up there in the heavenlies, there's a conflict being waged so intense that to call it life or death struggle is inadequate.

The principalities and powers of the satanic host are garrisoned about your life and about mine, searching for strongholds to invade, seeking to establish a beachhead on the hill of discouragement or on the mountain of weariness, seeking to destroy that fortress of faith and cause us to down. Or they may be subtly drawing us into a spirit of self-confidence, assuming that apart from God we can do something. Down, down through the annals of time, our great God who has painted on the canvas of eternity golden threads of living legends, whispers to us now in our moment of truth as we behold the enemy and all his power descending in the fear of the flesh begins to encompass us.

He whispers in our ears, Beloved, have you ever heard of Asa? Child, that's how I want you to confront this crisis that envelops your life today. He says, I want you to deal with any strongholds the enemy may have in your life. Tear down those idols.

I don't care what they are. You know what they are. And then confront the issues directly.

The things that appear on the surface to be your battleground in all likelihood are only shadows cast on the mountainside. They're but the reflections of activities in the heavenly. Satan is out to destroy your testimony.

Satan is out to weaken your faith. Satan is out to remove your dependence on the living God. The thing God is allowing in your life right now, Beloved, is only there because he wants to see how will you trust him when there's no place else to go.

He wants you to the end of yourself. He wants you to reach that place where it's no longer you and anything or you and anyone or even God in anything. He wants you to reach the place where you can turn to him like Asa and pray, Lord, there is no one besides thee to help in this battle between the powerful and those of us who have no strength.

So help us, Lord, we trust in thee. In thy name we've come against this multitude. Lord, you are our God.

Let not man prevail against you. Satan will come to you and whisper, no one besides God. You just answer him emphatically, no one.

And memorize that passage, Beloved. It's found in 2 Chronicles chapter 14 verse 11. It's God's answer when a million enemies descend upon your life and you're outnumbered and without hope.

It is God's answer when the pressures of life get too heavy to bear and you want to give up. It's God's answer when your strength is gone and the weariness of the day-to-day battles build and build and build and it's all you can do to get up in the morning. Throw yourself on the mercy of God.

Cry out in abandonment and say, Lord, there is no one besides thee to help in this battle. Confess to him, Lord, I have no strength. And so in thy name I come against this multitude.

Let not man prevail against you. Do you know what will happen? A gentle stillness will settle in your spirit. The weariness and the weakness that have encompassed your soul will give way to an inner strength that rises up within you.

And that very immovable object that was standing before you like a stone wall will suddenly be transformed into a series of stepping stones that lead you gently to a more beautiful walk with God. You will have removed from yourself that mantle of self-righteousness that kept God from being himself. And in an act of surrender, you'll have given the commander-in-chief the right to fight his own battles.

Will the problems go away? Perhaps, but not usually. It all depends, my friend, on why the battle was raging in the first place. It all depends on why your loving God released those heavenly cords that bound the enemy from access to your soul.

If a miracle is in order, my friend, the sun may stand still. Your God can still do that. If a miracle is in order, the waters may part.

Beloved, your God can still do that. If it's time for a miracle, a flood may issue forth from the heart of a rock. Your God can still do that.

Or if it better meets the needs of your life, the dry, parched sun may yet be down upon you longer, and the heavens may yet appear to be silent for a season. But it won't matter, because the peace that now envelops you will sustain you, and the real reason for Satan's onslaught will be over, and he will flee. And as he hastens his departure, and he leaves you standing in the throes of victory, he will in his anger hear you whisper beneath your breath, Hey, Satan, have you ever heard of Asa? He won't even bother to answer.

Let's pray. Our Father, we have heard of Asa, a man after your own heart, a man not known as well as some of the names that ring in our hearts and in our ears when we think of biblical heroes, but a man who is that kind of hero to you because he did what was good and right in the sight of his God. And when the enemy came, he didn't run.

He crawled up into his God, confessed his inadequacy, claimed the victory, and waited on you to be yourself. Some of us here today, Father, in the throes of discouragement and weakness, and yet we're trying to draw upon our own strength instead of facing the enemy the way we're supposed to in your

strength. Some of us need to die again this morning so we can live again.

Some of us need to stop fighting so hard so you can fight for us. Some of us need to stop claiming our strength so that in our weakness we can appropriate yours. Some of us just need to let go and start rejoicing as you defeat the enemy.

We know the circumstances may not change, but we know that when the spiritual victory is ours, the angels in the heavens will rejoice and sing a song, and your purposes will have been performed in our lives, and through all eternity we will be blessed. So may we leave this place consciously aware that we have no strength, but you have it all. We trust in thee.

Let not man prevail against thee. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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