



Writing Life Faith



Life of a King: Asa's Provider

The Sixth King.

You can read King Asa's story in 1 Kings 15:9-24 and 2 Chronicles 14-16

When I, Asa, son of the late king Abijam, became king, I made every effort to right the wrongs my father had committed. I immediately tore down the detestable idols and shrines which my father had tolerated for too long. I then fortified Jerusalem and other key towns, but not from a desire for self-preservation. I protected the cities because God had charged me with ensuring the land's safety.

I also engaged in many conflicts, notably when the Ethiopians attacked us with one million men. I knew the odds were slim, which is why I called on the LORD my God. I knew He alone could save us, and He did!

After this battle, Azariah the prophet came to me and announced the LORD's intent to stay with us as long as we stayed with Him. I gathered the people, repaired the altar in the LORD's Temple, and we made many sacrifices. That day, all Judah declared their allegiance to Yahweh.

In the thirty-sixth year of my reign, King Baasha of Israel invaded Judah. With no better options, I took the silver and gold from the LORD's Temple and sent it to Ben-hadad of Aram. We made a treaty, and he rescued me from Israel. I thought things were good. Then Hanani the seer called me out for trusting in people over God. He said I missed my opportunity to destroy the king of Aram. He humiliated me! I had done the right thing. I had used God's assets to summon aid. In disgust, I threw Hanani out of my presence.

Then my feet started to hurt...

While Scripture doesn't tell us which of Abijam's wives gave birth to Asa, we soon see that he's nothing like his father. For the first time post-split, Scripture records a king doing "what was pleasing in the LORD's sight."

While Kings only devotes a few verses to this man's life, Chronicles dedicates a full three chapters. Despite having no godly influence for three generations, how did Asa come out on fire for the LORD? What was his secret to success?

The Beginning.

"Asa also removed the pagan shrines, as well as the incense altars from every one of Judah's towns. So Asa's Kingdom enjoyed a period of peace." (2 Chronicles 14:5)

I bet you've asked yourself, "How do I experience God's peace?" I can't give you a formula, but I can show you what Asa did. His first recorded act was eradicating all idols from Judah.

Asa removed every source of compromise.

If you're like me, you may have wished God would work in your life, but neglected to obey the commands He's given us. However, Asa teaches a different story. **Our obedience enables God to help us, not the other way around.** To be clear, I'm not advocating for works-based salvation or a give-get mindset. Rather, we ought to remember that Asa found peace *after* he eliminated compromise.

The Middle.

"Then Asa cried out to the LORD his God, 'O LORD, no one but you can help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O LORD our God, for we trust in You alone...'"
(2 Chronicles 14:11a)

Asa didn't live without his share of battles. Despite fortifying the key towns of Judah, we witness Zerah the Ethiopian attacking the country with a million men. Asa deploys his troops (obedience) and cries out to God (faith). Often God requires both faith and obedience for His plans to succeed.

Remember what I said last week about Abijam and the men of Judah calling out to God? In that passage, Scripture records 'the God of their ancestors' saving Judah. In Asa's case, we see a distinct difference: 'The LORD his God.' **Asa had genuine faith in God, not as a lucky charm, but as His provider.**

At a recent youth night, one student highlighted the distinction between believing God *can* do something and believing God *will* do something. Abijam believed God *could* save him, while Asa believed God *would* save him. The outcome would have looked the same, but the posture of these men's hearts was certainly not.

After winning the battle, Azariah son of Oded comes to Asa and declares that God will remain with Judah as long as Judah remains faithful to God. In response, Asa rebuilds the altar in the Temple, offers many sacrifices, and the people pledge their loyalty to the LORD.

The End.

"Asa responded by removing the silver and gold from the treasuries of the Temple of the LORD and the royal palace. He sent it to King Ben-hadad of Aram..." (2 Chronicles 16:2)

After many years of peace (which nearly always leads to complacency), King Baasha of Israel joins the chat, invading Judah. In a manner directly opposite his reaction to Zerah's invasion, Asa snags the Temple's silver and gold and uses it to bribe Ben-hadad of Aram to rescue them. In Asa's case, **peace, not conflict, led to his big error**. I truly don't think Christians should worry about conflict; it's in tribulation that God works. We need to worry about a lack of conflict.

Hanani the seer soon confronts Asa. This is a big moment: will Asa respond in humility, like David did when confronted with his sin? Nope. Hanani calls Asa a fool for trusting in mere humans. This touches a nerve, and Asa yeets Hanani into prison. He then begins oppressing some of his own people. Not a happy ending.

In the final paragraph of his life, God causes Asa to develop a serious foot disease. Maybe now Asa will repent and trust God. He doesn't. Asa refuses to ask for the LORD's help. **The source of Asa's provision shifted from godly help to human help**. More frightening is Scripture's lack of backstory for why this happened. How did Asa go from completely trusting the LORD to completely ignoring Him? Perhaps it was a lack of endurance in his spiritual walk.

What Defined Asa?

Asa's life kicked off with a bang, and up until the final chapter, we see him seeking God. He destroys idols, turns to God when faced with conflict, and leads Judah to commit itself to God. Yet in his final years, complacency seems to take him down. I found two takeaways from Asa's life. I'll begin with the good, then jump to the bad...

Faith plus Obedience equals Effectiveness

"When Asa heard this message from Azariah the prophet, he took courage and removed all the detestable idols from the land of Judah..." (2 Chronicles 15:8a)

Short and simple: Asa was effective because he blended faith with obedience. Pursuing God isn't one or the other. Unlike other religions, Christianity requires obedience *in response to faith*. It also requires faith *to follow through with obedience*. Asa had faith in God, but destroying altars and winning battles also required obedience on his part.

As you may know, I've spent the last two summers working at camp. It isn't always easy, and I'd be lying if I said the prospect of a 'worldly' job wasn't appealing. This year, as I've felt God leading me towards a third summer at camp, I've come to terms with how important the obedience/faith split is. If I had faith without obedience, my actions wouldn't align with my

heart. If I had obedience without faith, I'd be working aimlessly for personal glory. **Blending faith with obedience allows me to copy Asa and trust God's providence.** Please pray I can find the balance.

Follow Through with Your Beliefs

"At that time Hanani the seer came to King Asa and told him, 'Because you have put your trust in the king of Aram instead of in the LORD your God, you missed your chance to destroy the army of the king of Aram.'" (2 Chronicles 16:7)

As the years wore on, Asa's spiritual walk dragged. When trouble came, he turned to men as his provider.

Allow me to encourage you today. If you're young, stay passionate for God by asking Him for guidance and studying the Word. Don't let your walk with Him lapse. We can never become "spiritual enough" to stop pursuing God. And for those who are more mature in the faith, please persevere. **Asa never rejected God, but he did let his relationship with God lapse.** Let's do our best to stay faithful until the end.

Good/Bad.

Asa is the best king Judah's had in a while. Yet it's sobering to see him make big mistakes. Unfortunately, we won't see a perfect King until this series' conclusion. Despite Asa's sin of seeking human help, God still calls him a good king. This reminds me that God desires faithfulness and obedience, not perfection.

Faults accounted for, Asa selflessly sought the LORD by trusting Him and abolishing idolatry. Which is why we need to put Asa in his place on the Kings Chart. He is our second king on the 'Good' side.

Next week, we'll look at the life of Jehoshaphat, son of Asa. For anyone who thinks righteous living can't make a difference, look at Judah's attitude towards God under Abijam, then see how they responded to Asa. See 2 Chronicles 15:15... *"All in Judah were happy about this covenant, for they had entered into it with all their heart. They earnestly sought after God, and they found Him."*



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