

Seeking My King & His Kingdom

#5 Beware Of The Banana Peel

The Bible often compares the Christian life to running a race. Words like endurance and *perseverance* are frequently used in association with it. Believers are in this race for the long haul. Not only is it a race we must run well, but it's also a race we must finish well. It isn't enough to lead the pack for years, only to fall back in the end.

I Cor. 9:24-27 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. [disqualified]

Phil. 3:13-14 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Paul was giving the picture of a runner, perhaps in the final lap. Every muscle is straining. The runner has the goal in sight and is not going to look back. He is not going to allow himself to be disqualified. He is determined to make it across the finish line.

Acts 20:24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Sadly, the pages of the Bible are filled with many who did not cross that line - many who had great potential. They started well but ended miserably.

Saul: Tall, handsome and brave; anointed by God to be Israel's king.

I Sam. 10:1c Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

I Sam. 10:6,9 And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you, and you shall prophesy with them, and shall be turned into another man. And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

Key Point #1 Saul had tremendous potential to do good for his nation.

Key Point #2 He disobeyed God and allowed pride and paranoia to destroy him.

Key Point #3 Ultimately he came to a tragic end on the battlefield.

I Sam. 26:21 "Indeed I have played the fool and erred exceedingly"

Everything was there for him to make a difference, but he threw it away.

Mighty Samson was supernaturally blessed with superhuman strength. Yet he squandered and wasted his potential in continual compromises, which culminated in his own death.

He had moments of greatness when God worked through him.

Samson's potential was never fully realized.

King David was from humble origins and was known as the man after God's own heart. But like his predecessor, Saul, he also played the fool and erred exceedingly, almost throwing his whole life away. David started well, sputtered and almost was destroyed. Fortunately, David came to his senses, repented and was restored. However he faced the continual repercussions of sin.

Gideon came from humble origins, yet he was handpicked by God to lead the children of Israel into battle. He battled fear, discouragement and disbelief. He was mightily used by the Lord to vanquish his enemy, but in the end he lowered his standards and fell into immorality and pride. Everything came crashing down in the end. Gideon's life illustrates an important truth: *Greatness Does Not Guarantee Permanence.*

King Asa - II Chronicles 14-16 - Ruled for 41 years

I. Time Of Peace & Victory - II Chron. 14:1 - 15:7

1. His 1st 10 years were peaceful and prosperous. He walked with God. [II Chron. 14:1, 2, 6]

a. Began his reign with a heart like David

"Perfect" means King Asa had a heart for God. The Scofield Bible says, "The word implies whole-heartedness for God, single-mindedness, sincerity - not sinless perfection" (p. 399).

2. He used the Time Of Peace to Prepare For Future Conflicts. Great National Reforms

a. He stamped out idolatry; tore down pagan altars, removed the high places. [14:3, 5].

b. He fortified the land by building defense cities and assembling a 580,000 men army.

c. He commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers; to obey His law and commandments. [II Chron. 14:4, 7]

II Chron. 14:9, 11 And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah. And Asa Cried Unto The LORD His God, [Note: Relationship with God was already in place!] and said, LORD, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O LORD our God, for We Rest On You, and In Your Name we go against this multitude. O LORD, You are our God; do not let man prevail against You!"

1. To appreciate King Asa's faith, we must consider what he was up against. There were one million Ethiopians soldiers, plus 300 chariots moving in against King Asa and his army.

I Peter 5:7 says, "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."

Psalm 50:15: "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and you shall glorify me."

2. Asa said of Judah = "those who have no power." Enemy = ~2x larger + chariots

3. He attacked the enemy "In The Name Of The LORD" to bring glory to God for the victory.

God's Response: II Chron. 14:12-13 So The LORD Struck the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. Asa and the people that were with him pursued them unto Gerar; and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before the LORD, and before his host; and they carried away very much spoil.

1. The LORD soundly defeated the Egyptian army.

2. Judah's men plundered the cities and brought back an immense amount of spoils.

3. The Egyptians didn't attack Judah again for almost 300 years.

II Chron. 15:1-14 - After The Victory

1. Spirit of God came upon the prophet Azariah who went out to meet King Asa.

a. "Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while you are with Him; and if you seek Him, He will be found of you..." [II Chron. 15:1, 2].

b. However, Azariah added this warning, "but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you" (15:2b).

c. Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.

Truth: After victories, seek the Lord, obey and trust Him, and be strong in the Lord.

Response: They used this time of peace to prepare for future conflicts.

They were exhorted to continue the work, build the nation and serve the Lord faithfully.

a. Asa took courage.

b. He put away all the abominable idols.

d. He renewed the altar of the LORD & assembled the people to renew their covenant.

II Chron. 15:9 Then he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those who dwelt with them from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, for They Came Over To Him In Great Numbers from Israel when They Saw That The LORD His God Was With Him.

II Chron. 15:11-15 And they offered unto the LORD the same time, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; That Whosoever Would Not Seek The LORD God Of Israel Should Be Put To Death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.

¹⁴ And they swore unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and He Was Found Of Them: and the LORD gave them rest.

e. They had peace until the 35th year of Asa's reign. [II Chron. 15:19]

II. KING ASA STOPPED RELYING ON THE LORD II Chron. 16:1-6

Recall: King Asa had earlier cried out to God and God delivered him from the Ethiopians.

II Chron. 16:1 In the 36th year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah and built Ramah, that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.

Note: It seems Asa became careless in his walk with the Lord. He devises his own plan.

II Chron. 16:2-3 Then Asa brought silver and gold From The Treasuries Of The House Of The LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-Hadad king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, saying, "*Let there be a treaty between you and me, as there was between my father and your father. See, I Have Sent You Silver And Gold;*

come, Break Your Treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me."

Spurgeon: Imagine! A man of God being an instructor for Satan!

1. Rather than look to God for help, King Asa turned to wicked, worldly King Ben-hadad of Syria (II Chron. 16:1-3).

Spurgeon: "You would not have supposed that he would be the man who...would be running after an idolater and cringing before him and praying him to help him!"

2. It does seem strange indeed, that when faced with a million invaders, King Asa calmly relied on God, but now, when a small problem comes up, King Asa relies on a heathen king.

3. Maybe: King Asa thought he could manage a smaller problem without God's help.

Spurgeon: Believers frequently behave worse in little trials than in great ones.

Consider: King Asa started off well, but he started doubting; unbelief.

Recall: Jesus' words to Peter when he started to sink?

"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matt. 14:31).

4. Because King Baasha "left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease," King Asa assumed everything was going to be OK. He forgot the words of his great-grandfather, King Solomon in Eccl. 8:11 "Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

Prov. 28:26a "He that trusts in his own heart is a fool."

III. KING ASA FINISHED BADLY - II Chron. 16:7-14

1. Therefore, God sent Hanani the seer to rebuke Asa for his Lack Of Faith (16:7-9).

2. The prophet Hanani told King Asa: If you had relied on the LORD, you not only would have defeated Israel, but Syria too [16:7]. Then your own kingdom would have grown stronger by defeating these rival kingdoms.

II Chron. 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may Strongly Support Those Whose Heart Is Completely His.

3. Your results: (a) Judah gained a few towns. (b) The Lord's treasury was robbed.

Consider: All the resources God gives for victory are stolen by the enemy.

(c) You are in a sinful alliance with Syria. (d) Syria became a constant problem to Judah.

"O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer."

16:9b You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars."

4. Asa revealed the wickedness of his heart. He refused to repent, rejected the prophet's message, and put him in prison. He brutally oppressed the people who opposed him.

Note: The king with a perfect heart for God now had a hard heart. [Lack of faith]

Problem: Asa's heart was divided - now he is trusting the arm of the flesh.

"He led a good life; he was eminent in the service of God, and did much; but there was an unhappy day in which the weakness of the flesh mastered the inner life."

5. Compare II Chronicles 16:1 and 16:12. God gave King Asa plenty of time to repent.

In The 39th year of his reign, God afflicted him in his feet [16:12].

Heb. 12:6 "For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

6. King Asa's "disease was exceeding great" (16:12) very painful.

7. Turned his back on God; refused to confess his sins and seek God.

8. King Asa sought help from the physicians. Two years later, he died.

Lesson: Asa made a good beginning and lived a life of faith, but when it came to his final years, he rebelled against the Lord. Spiritual progress had stopped.

"He was a good man, but there was a sad period of weakness and inconsistency, and though he was deeply penitent, yet from that unhappy day he went limping to his tomb."

5 Warnings In Hebrews To Believers: Drifting > Doubting > Dullness > Despising > Defying

Spurgeon: "Now, a life may begin well, and yet may be clouded before its close. The verdure of earnestness may fade into the sere and yellow leaf of backsliding. We may have the grace of God in our earliest days, but unless we have, day by day, fresh help from on high, dead flies may pollute the ointment and spoil the sweet odor of our lives. We shall need to watch against temptation so long as we are in this wilderness of sin. Only in Heaven are we out of gunshot of the devil. Though we may have been kept in the ways of the Lord, as Asa was, for 50 or 60 years, yet if left by the Master for a single moment we shall bring discredit upon His holy name."

Oswald Chambers: Walking with God is a tedious marathon full of sweat and grit and a rugged determination. Running a marathon means enduring all the way to the finish line.

II Chron. 16:9a For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.

Regardless of age, ministry position, or status, I will leave this earth either as one who finishes well or as one who stumbles. My desire is to finish well with wholehearted devotion to God.