

# Finishing Well

Lesson #11

Warning #3 Hebrews 5:11 - 6:12

March 31, 2021

*A Great Start*

After an exhaustive study of the men and women of the Bible, Howard Hendricks of Dallas Theological Seminary concluded:

- There are approximately 100 detailed biographies in the Bible.
- Approximately 2/3 of those men and women ended poorly.
- They turned to immorality or drifted away from the faith or ended their life in a backslidden condition.

"Something happens to a vast majority of Christians somewhere along their growing years. They quit maturing in Christ and revert to earlier stages. It comes to a point in our Christian walk, when we ought to be teaching & serving in greater capacities, we are hamstrung by immaturity."

Hamstrung: to disable by cutting the hamstring or hamstrings; cripple. to render powerless or useless; thwart: Their efforts were hamstrung by stubborn pride.

This is not natural!

Every Christian should experience growth in his or her spiritual life, pressing on the upward way.

- I'm pressing on the upward way, New heights I'm gaining every day;
- Still praying as I onward bound, "Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."
- My heart has no desire to stay where doubts arise & fears dismay;
- Though some may dwell where these abound,
- My prayer, my aim, is higher ground.

They need to quit drinking the pabulum of the word, settling once & for all what they believe about the basic tenets of the faith. Progressing to the meat of the things of God.

Heb. 6:1 Therefore, having left [once and for all] the elementary principles of the teaching of Christ, LET US go on to perfection. [5th Let us statement]

- He is emphatic: There is a peril in not progressing!

Consider: Believers who rebel against God and will not submit to sanctification will miss out on the blessings of their inheritance today and will suffer loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Press on = #5342 = phero = be borne along like a ship by the wind

The use of the passive voice:

- Emphasizes the exertion of power on the individual from an outside source.
- Conveys the thought of the need of the recipient to willingly surrender to this outside influence

The present tense emphasizes the continual need for this activity.

- The writer lumps himself in this group needing to be continually borne along.
- The idea is "Let us be carried along by God's Spirit."
- Let us be carried forward to maturity.
- God enables us to progress as we yield to Him, receive His Word and act on it.

Submit to the Holy Spirit whose transforming power will complete the work in you.

Phil. 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; [Promise> Reckon> Surrender>Thank Him]

Heb. 6:12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Scripture Bears Out: The great moments of victory are perhaps one of the most dangerous moments in a Christian's life. Ex: Joshua had experienced a tremendous victory at Jericho. This was closely followed by a tragic and humiliating defeat at Ai because the power of the enemy was underestimated. The people of God imagined that their great achievement at Jericho - which was not their own at all, but entirely God's - had imparted to them some peculiar inherent strength for future battles.

Truth: There is no experience in my Christian life, no matter how exhilarating or triumphant, which imparts to me strength for my future battles.

Consider: It seems that the higher the peak of victory, the deeper the fall a believer can sustain.

Ex.: II Sam. 11:1-5- Darkest hour in the life of King David - He gave way to selfish desires that left a blot on his name that time has not erased. David's sin of adultery led him to commit murder. He sank into spiritual deadness with no apparent thought of repentance until God shook him to the very depths of his soul.

THEN he returned to his senses and sought God's forgiveness.

Truth: To be careless in spiritual things and to underestimate satanic power is not a sign of "spirituality" or extreme bravery, but of complete folly. Every alert soldier of the cross will always be prepared for the possibility of a counterattack from the devil.

A principle of my life should be to: WATCH and PRAY. [Luke 21:36]

The first warning sign, drifting, a first step to "back-sliding," leads to doubting and being dull of hearing.

Slothful; Condition Of Spiritual Apathy & Laziness That Prevents Spiritual Development

Gal. 5:7 You were running so well. Who prevented you from obeying the truth?

#### Lessons From King Asa - II Chronicles 14-16

King Asa ruled for 41 years. [910 BC - 869 BC]

- He began his reign with a heart like that of David. [I Kings 15:11; II Chron. 14:2]

Heart like David: A heart that repents and always returns to God

"The LORD is on my side! What can man do to me?"

- Asa did *what was good and right* in the eyes of the LORD his God for most of his life.
- However, during the last 5 years of his reign, he rebelled against the LORD.

Gal. 5:7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

A. The first 10 years of his reign were marked by peace. [II Chron. 14:1]

George Washington: In time of peace, prepare for war.

1. He used the time of peace to Prepare For Future Conflicts. [wise decision]
  - a. He urged and emphasized to the people: Seek the LORD. [II Chron. 14:2-5]
  - b. He led a national reformation: He Cleansed The Land of idolatry.

II Chron. 14:3, 5 For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: Also, he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him.

Consider: The first step on the path to peace is the step of obeying God. Simply attending church is not enough to secure God's peace. We must actively remove anything in our life that is offensive to God. Becoming more active in church or good works will still leave us in turmoil if we have failed to eliminate sinful practices in our lives.

We should continually ask the Holy Spirit to remove any such obstacles from our lives.

- c. He Fortified The Land by building defense cities and assembling a 580,000 men army.

II Chron. 14:7 Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about them walls, and towers, gates, and bars, while the land is yet before us; because we have sought the LORD our God, we have sought him, and he hath given us rest [freedom from enemies] on every side. So they built and prospered.

Spiritual Principle: Times of peace are not just for resting. Prepare for times of trouble by building your defenses. The moment of attack will be too late.

It is difficult to withstand spiritual attack unless defenses are prepared beforehand.

Decisions about what to do when temptations arise must be made with a cool head in the peace of untroubled moments, long before the heat of temptation is upon us.

II Chron. 14:8 And Asa had an army of men that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand: all these were mighty men of valor.

Several passages in the Bible describe tribe of Benjamin as being pugnacious. [eager to fight] For example, in the Song of Deborah, and in descriptions where they are described as being taught to fight left-handed, so as to be able to wrong foot their enemies [Judges 3:15-21; 20:16, I Chron. 12:2] and where they are portrayed as being brave and skilled archers [I Chron. 8:40, II Chronicles 14:8].

Judges 20:16 Among all this people *there were seven hundred chosen men left-handed*; every one could sling stones at an hair *breadth*, and not miss.

B. The Egyptian army, led by Zerah, a Cushite, attacked Judah at Mareshah, about 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem.

- Egypt's army, ~2x larger than Judah's army, had many chariots.

II Chron. 14:9-10 And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah. Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.

II Chron. 14:11 And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let no man prevail against thee.

1. Asa was not ignorant of his plight. He identified Judah as "those who have no power."
  - He called on the LORD during the time of trouble.

Ps. 20:7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

II Sam. 22:4 I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

- Whether by many soldiers or by a few, the LORD could work in mighty power.
- He attacked the enemy "in the name of the LORD of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel" in order to bring glory to God for the victory.

Note: Sudden deliverance in the midst of battle is a repeated theme in II Chronicles.

Spiritual Principle: The secret of victory is first recognizing the futility of unaided human effort and then trusting God to save. His power works BEST through those who recognize their limitations. If you think you can do it on your own, you are in the greatest danger.

II Cor. 12:9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2. God's response to Asa's prayer of faith:

II Chron. 14:12, 14-15 So the LORD soundly defeated the Egyptian army.

- The LORD enabled Asa and his men to pursue the Egyptians south to Gerar where the men of Judah and Benjamin plundered the cities and brought back an immense amount of spoils.
- <sup>15</sup>They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem.
- The defeat of the Egyptian army was so complete and humiliating that they did not attack Judah again for almost 300 years.

3. The LORD sent Azariah the prophet to Asa's victorious army to give them a message of encouragement and warning. [I Kings 12:21-24; II Chron. 15:1]

II Chron. 15:1 And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin;

- The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

Many have won a battle but later lost the war because of pride or carelessness.

➤ Azariah's message: After the Victory...

Seek the Lord, obey Him, trust Him and be strong in the LORD. [II Chron. 15:1-7]

Azariah reminded them of the dark days of the judges when the nation did not have a king, a godly priest or anyone to enforce the law. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Result: The people turned to idols, their land was overrun by the enemy and it was not safe to travel. [Judges 5:6; 19:20]

➤ Fulfillment of God's covenant warning [ Deut. 28:25-26, 30, 49:52]

However, when the people cried out to God and forsook their idols, He mercifully forgave them and defeated the enemy.

➤ Azariah admonished the king and the people: After the Victory...

- Get to work, build the nation and serve the Lord faithfully

II Chron. 15:7 Be ye strong therefore and let not your hands be weak:

for your work shall be rewarded.

Note: Recognition and reward are great motivators that have 2 dimensions.

➤ Temporal: A life lived by God's standards may result in acclaim here on earth.

➤ Eternal: Permanent recognition and reward will be given in the next life.

Don't be discouraged if you feel your faith in God is going unrewarded now. The best rewards are in the life that is to come.

4. King Asa Heeded The Words Of The Prophet.

After the victory he continued to bring reform and renewal in the people and the land.

[II Chron. 15:8-19] He dealt with sin more severely.

➤ 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. He expelled the shrine male prostitutes. [God's law prohibited this practice.]

b. He removed his own grandmother from being the queen mother because she had made an obscene idol to Asherah. [That took courage!]

c. He repaired the altar of sacrifice.

d. He called the people to worship the LORD and renew their covenant. Renew devotion

Note: Not only did the people of Judah and Benjamin attend, but devout people came to Jerusalem from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon. [They saw God was with Asa. 15:9]

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. <sup>12</sup> And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;

<sup>13</sup> That whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. <sup>14</sup> And they swore unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.

<sup>15</sup> 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 round about.

Note: They had undivided hearts and clearly declared themselves for God. Their decisive and wholehearted commitment pleased God and resulted in peace for the nation.

Ps. 86:11 unite my heart to fear thy name. [Lord, give me an undivided heart.]

If you want peace, check to see if there is some area where total commitment to God is lacking. Peace comes as a by-product of committing one's life wholeheartedly to God.

Note: Asa didn't reorganize the priesthood or remodel the temple, nor did he import new worship ideas from the pagan nations around him. He simply led the people in rededication to the covenant that God had already given them.

They sought the Lord with all their heart and He heard them.

- They had peace for another 20 years. No more war until the 35<sup>th</sup> year.

#### 5. Asa's Relapse & Rebellion: [II Chron. 16:1-14]

Apparently, King Asa became careless in his walk with the Lord.

a. The LORD sent Baasah, King of Israel, to war against Asa.

b. Baasha fortified Ramah, which was located about 6 miles north of Jerusalem.

From this vantage point, Baasha would be able to monitor his own people who might go to Jerusalem and he could launch his own attack on Jerusalem.

- King Baasha gathered his army and moved south to the border of Judah. Baasha had made an alliance with the King of Syria and gathered a powerful force to threaten King Asa.
- Baasha's army took the city and fortified it.
- They now controlled the border so no-one could go in and out of Judah.

c. King Asa needed to recapture Ramah but knew that would be difficult while King Baasha had the support of the powerful King Ben-Haddad of Aram and his army.

- Instead of asking God for help and trusting Him, Asa devised his own plan.
- Warning #1 - Departing or drifting from what He knew about God.
- Warning #2 - Doubts God and Faith Begins To Waver

d. Asa, in his unbelief, turned to politics for help. He gave the dedicated treasures from the temple to Ben-hadad, king of Syria, and entered into a pact with a pagan nation. [bribe enemy] The Temple treasure arrived in Damascus with a message from King Asa, 'Let there be a treaty between Judah and Syria as there was between my father and your father. I am sending you silver and gold. Now break your treaty with King Baasha of Israel so he will have to withdraw.

d. With Syria attacking Israel from the north, Baasha would have to abandon Ramah and move north to defend his country.

- e. Ben-Hadad took the gold and silver belonging to God, broke his promise with Israel and helped Judah. He immediately gathered his army to attack Israel.
- f. Commanders and troops were dispatched to conquer the towns of Ijon, Dan, Abel Maim and other nearby places where food was stored. In this way, he gained control over the major trade routes and crippled Baasha's power and income.
- g. When Baasha heard that he was being attacked in the north he withdrew his troops in the south to defend his land.
- h. Having achieved his purpose, Asa conscripted the people to go to Ramah and carry off the stones and timber. With that material the king built two fortified cities: Mizpeh about two and a half miles north of Ramah, and Geba about the same distance to the east.

Consider: Everyone was happy except the LORD.

- God sent the prophet Hanani to rebuke Asa.
- If you had relied on the LORD, you would have defeated both Israel and Syria.
- The results of your plan and disobedience: 1. Judah gained a few towns.  
2. The Lord's treasury was robbed. 3. You are in a sinful alliance with Syria.

Consider: All the resources God gave for victory were stolen by the enemy.

Remember: God did not fail you when Zerah and the huge Egyptian army attacked Judah.

- Both Judah & Israel suffered from faithless forgetfulness.
- Although God had delivered them when they were outnumbered, they repeatedly sought help from heathen nations rather than from God.
- Asa sought help from Syria: Evidence of the spiritual decline of the nation
- His confidence in God must have slipped. He sought only a HUMAN solution.

II Chron. 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore, from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

Note: Judah would pay for this mistake for years. Syria became a constant problem to Judah.

Problem: Asa's heart was divided - one day trusting the Lord and the next day trusting in the arm of the flesh.

Note: A perfect heart isn't a sinless heart but a heart wholly yielded to the Lord and fully trusting Him.

1. Asa revealed the wickedness of his heart by becoming angry, rejecting the prophet's message, and putting him in prison. He brutally oppressed the people who opposed him.

Note: He has progressed from Warning #1 - Warning #4

2. God gave Asa time to repent, but he refused.
3. Three years later, God afflicted him with a disease in his feet.
4. He turned his back on the Lord and refused to confess his sins and seek Jehovah, but he turned for help to his physicians. Two years later, he died.

Truth: 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 stopped. The people made a very great bonfire in his honor, but in God's sight, the last years of Asa went up in smoke. His greatest failure was missing what God could have done with his life if he had been willing to be humble. His pride ruined the health of his reign. He stubbornly held on to his failure until his death.