

February 15, 2012

Old Testament:

Asa—How Well a Plan Works is Not Always a Measure of God’s Approval

- SERIES: Old Testament
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 - Last week: Zerubbabel—How To Be A Leader
 - This week: Asa— How Well a Plan Works is Not Always a Measure of God’s Approval

- Sometimes in life, you plan for things to go one way, and it goes perfect.
 - Sometimes, it doesn’t.
 - ◇ I want you to watch these two moments in life that didn’t go quite exactly as planned...
 - Video: “Plans Gone Wrong”
 - Other times in life, plans just seem to go perfect.
 - ◇ (THE TIME MY BUDDY CLIMBED OUT OF DRIVER’S SIDE WINDOW WHILE DRIVING AND I TOOK OVER THE DRIVING DUTIES, WHILE HE CLIMBED UP AND OVER THE OUTSIDE OF THE CAR AND THEN CRAWLED BACK IN THROUGH THE PASSENGER SEAT)
 - The plan, which I reluctantly was forced into going through with because he just started climbing out the window, WAS NOT SMART...
 - **Sometimes, even though plans work out, it doesn’t always mean that it’s a plan that has God’s approval upon it!**

- One guy who made a plan that worked, but it did not have God’s approval, was a man by the name of Asa.
 - Has anyone ever heard or used the term, “The end justifies the means”?
 - ◇ Well, we’ll see, in the case of Asa, that this is not necessarily a correct theory to hold in life.

- The story of Asa starts off very well.
 - Following the death of his father Abijah, Asa took over as the king of Judah, a title he would keep for the next 41 years!
 - ◇ For the first ten years, Asa went about cleaning his country of everything that was defiling it...

■ NAMELY...IDOLIZATION

- ◇ Things were going really good for Judah and for Asa, and it was because he was “cleaning house.”
 - The country was turning itself to God.
 - 1 Chronicles 14:6 says that the Lord was granting them rest from their enemies because of Asa’s cleansing of idol worship—God was giving them peace.
 - ◆ In this time of peace, Judah was able to build and fortify (secure with walls and other security measures) many towns in their land.
 - At the time, Asa had 300,000 warriors from Judah and 280,000 from Benjamin to use at his disposal in case of war.
 - ◇ Well, that moment came when an Ethiopian named Zerah chose to attack Judah with 1,000,000 fighting men.
 - They advanced to the city of Mareshah.
 - After Asa had deployed his army just to the north of the city Mareshah, this is what Scripture says that Asa prayed:
- 2 CHRONICLES 14:11-13 (NLT)
- "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. It is in your name that we have come against this vast horde. O LORD, you are our God; do not let mere men prevail against you!" **12** So the LORD defeated the Ethiopians in the presence of Asa and the army of Judah, and the enemy fled. **13** Asa and his army pursued them as far as Gerar, and so many Ethiopians fell that they were unable to rally. They were destroyed by the LORD and his army...
- In other words, Asa depended totally and completely on God for defending Judah against their enemies.
 - ◇ And, it was BECAUSE of their dependence upon God that they did in fact defeat their enemies—God did the defeating for them!
 - After this battle, a man named Azariah came to Asa and prophesied to him, saying:
- 2 Chronicles 15:2-7 (NLT)
- ◇ "Listen to me, Asa!" he shouted. "Listen, all you people of Judah and Benjamin! The LORD will stay with you as long as you stay with him! Whenever you seek him, you will find him. But if you

abandon him, he will abandon you. **3** For a long time, Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach them, and without God's law. **4** But whenever you were in distress and turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him out, you found him. **5** During those dark times, it was not safe to travel. Problems troubled the nation on every hand. **6** Nation fought against nation, and city against city, for God was troubling you with every kind of problem. **7** And now, you men of Judah, be strong and courageous, for your work will be rewarded."

- Once again, Asa did even more removing of idols
 - ◇ And, he repaired the altar of the Lord
- Many of the people gathered in Jerusalem during Asa's 15th year in reign, and they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord with all their heart and soul
 - ◇ Anyone who wouldn't they would put to death
 - They all were happy about the covenant
 - They sought after God, and God brought them peace
 - Asa even deposed his grandma Maacah from her position as queen mother because she made an Asherah pole (used in pagan idol worship)
 - ◆ He cut it down, broke it, and burned it up!
 - ⊗ He was crazy about following God and trusting Him for peace in his kingdom.
- THERE WAS PEACE—NO WAR—UNTIL THE 35TH YEAR OF ASA'S REIGN!
- In the 36th year:
 - ◇ King Baasha of Israel invaded Judah, fortifying the city of Ramah
 - No one could get in our out of King Asa's territory in Judah!
 - ◇ Asa devised a plan—but the plan was not to go to God and ask for His help, like he did 25 years ago when the Ethiopian attacked Judah.
 - But, the plan seemed AWESOME!
 - ◇ There was another king—King Ben-hadad of Aram—who was an ally with the king of Israel.
 - That meant that he was actually an enemy of Judah as well.

- But Asa sent Ben-hadad a bribe of gold and silver to break his treaty with the king of Israel and to go and attack him.
- HISTORY LESSON—Relating this scenario to WWI:
 - Comparison:
 - ◆ Israel = Germany
 - ◆ Judah = Russia
 - ◆ Aram = England
 - ⊗ The Germans declared war on Russia
 - ⊗ All the people were excited and pumped up to go and get them
 - ⊗ Until a little while later when the British (England) declared war on Germany
 - Ω If the Germans only had to worry about Russia, they figured they'd kick butt
 - Ω But, when they also had to deal with POWERFUL England—that changed EVERYTHING!
- So, back to our story... When Asa bribed the king of Aram, Aram then attacked Israel.
 - This was totally unexpected, and it worked BRILLIANTLY!
 - ◆ Israel had to retreat from Ramah, meaning they no longer had Judah boxed in.
 - ⊗ Judah took the materials that Israel had used to fortify Ramah and used them to fortify two cities of their own—Geba and Mizpah.
- So, all seems well, right?!?
 - ◇ Didn't Asa wisely devise a way to secure his people?
 - Well, the only problem was that God wanted them to actually OVERTAKE Aram rather than BECOME ALLIES with Aram.
 - They became allies with the enemy whom God had wanted to destroy.
- 2 Chronicles 16:7-10 (NLT)
 - 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. **8** Don't you remember what happened to the Ethiopians and Libyans and their vast army, with all of their chariots and horsemen? At that time you relied on the LORD, and he handed them all over to

you. **9** The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. What a fool you have been! From now on, you will be at war." **10** Asa became so angry with Hanani for saying this that he threw him into prison. At that time, Asa also began to oppress some of his people.

- God wanted Asa's plan to include God in it—if it would have, then they would have been even more successful than they had already proven to be.
 - ◇ Unfortunately, Asa did not take to correction well, imprisoning the Prophet Hanani and even oppressing some of his people.
 - For 35 years he had done so much right, but then he started to act not on faith, but with man-made power.
 - **Acting on your own power rather than by faith in God may get you somewhere in life, but it's usually never where God wants you to be, even if it looks successful by human standards!**
- In his 39th year of reign, Asa developed a serious and life threatening foot disease.
 - ◇ Even in this moment, he chose to only seek physicians' help rather than call on God for help.
 - He had become hard-hearted towards God's help in life
 - Somewhere along the way, it's as though he got to the point where he thought he could push his way to success by his own intelligence and craftiness.
 - BUT HE COULDN'T
 - ◆ The Bible still says that Asa remained fully COMMITTED to the Lord throughout his life...
 - ⊗ But he wasn't always DEPENDENT upon God
- It's one thing to be committed to God—to following his rules for morals and such—but it's another thing to be daily DEPENDENT upon God for every decision and problem that comes your way!
 - ◇ If I don't go to God and depend on his guidance in every decision and situation in my life, even though I'm committed to him, I may not realize that I'm going about life in a way that He doesn't want me to go.
- Even though everything in your life may seem awesome, and that

- your on a track to success, if you're not doing it God's way—if you're not obeying Him and following His track for your life—then you are off course and you need to become obedient to what God is telling you!
- ◇ Have you ever found yourself RATIONALIZING your failures, saying, “Well, it wasn't that bad,” or, “Well, it turned out just fine—no big deal”?
 - That's a sign that you are figuring that “the ends justify the means”
 - Well, God doesn't work that way.
 - He has a plan for us to live life a certain way—AND THINGS ALWAYS WORK OUT BETTER THAN WE COULD IMAGINE IF WE FOLLOW GOD'S PLAN THAN IF WE FOLLOW OUR OWN PLAN
 - ◆ The WAY we get something done is often JUST AS IMPORTANT as getting the task done!
- So, how can I make sure that what I'm doing in life has God's approval?
- Go to God in Prayer (“Where do you want me to be, God” & “Am I where you want me to be, God”)
 - ◇ It should be the first thing that we do in all situations
 - Bible says, “In all situations, pray to God without ceasing.”
 - When Asa did this, God led him
 - When Asa didn't do this, Asa led himself
 - Don't only ask yourself, “Is what I'm doing successful?”
 - ◇ Ask, “Is what I'm doing maximizing my witness for God in my world?”
 - THAT is real success!
 - When Asa was worrying most about pleasing God—his witness to the world was AMAZING
 - When Asa only worried about succeeding, he still did—by his own standards—but his witness took a MAJOR dive
 - ◆ Example: He jailed Hanani and oppressed some of his people
 - Are you COMMITTED to God?
 - ◇ Do you want to live your life for him?
 - Even more—Are you DEPENDENT upon God?
 - ◇ Do you include him in every decision and situation in your life?
 - If not, even though you may be committed to following him,

without depending on him, you may not even know that you're not where he wants you to be.

- If you're not dependent on God, you are dependent on yourself—and you may try to take you where God doesn't want you to be.

➤ PRAY

- 1) I want to commit myself 100% to Jesus
- 2) I not only want to commit myself to Jesus—I want to be totally dependent on him and trust Him with where I'm going rather than trusting myself and trying to fit my commitment to Him wherever I can.