

Discipleship Series for New Believers

Lesson 14: The Importance of Seeking God and Dependence on God

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"Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord" (NIV). This passage from Jeremiah 17:5 shows the plight of a man who depends on himself, his own ways, or other people to accomplish tasks or deliverances instead of trusting God. Man can do nothing by himself. Only with God will a man's ways prosper and works of an eternal magnitude come to pass.

King Asa is a perfect example of a man who desired God but was not willing to completely surrender his own will and ways to God. Therefore, the power of God which otherwise would have been manifested in his life was quenched. Asa had a genuine heart to love and serve God; however, he relied on his own understanding or the soulish realm to fulfill the will of God in his life.

The story of Asa begins with his father, Abijam. The Bible shows that Abijam's heart was not perfect before the Lord and he walked in the sins of his father (I Kings 3:1). Even so, God is merciful, and He raised up Asa with a specific calling and purpose for his life. I Kings 15:4 states, "Nevertheless, for David's sake did the Lord his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem." Before Asa was even born God had specific tasks He wanted to accomplish through Asa's life.

Asa began his reign by doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. He took away the altars of strange gods and commanded Judah to seek the Lord, obey the law, and obey the commandments. He also built up the fortified cities in Judah while the land was at rest (2 Chronicles 14:2-6). When Asa battled against the Ethiopians, he completely trusted in God. Asa cried out to God saying, "Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, O Lord our God for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army (2 Chronicles 14:11). He came to God admitting his weakness and inability to deliver the people, and he fully relied on God. The Lord blessed this dependent heart by crushing the Ethiopians before Judah.

After this great victory, the Word of the Lord came to Asa through Azariah. He spoke to Asa saying that if Asa sought God, God would be found by him, but if he forsook the Lord, then God would forsake him. Asa was encouraged to seek the Lord because God would bless him with Himself. Asa was exhorted to be strong and to not grow weak because his work would be rewarded. This word from the Lord was received with joy! Asa was dependent upon God, and therefore, God's Word brought great encouragement and life to his heart.

He obeyed God's Word by removing all the idols of Judah and Benjamin out of the land (2 Chronicles 15:8). God was trying to teach a principle and warn Asa in all of this. In His mercy, He was confronting Asa with a truth he did not end up victorious over later in life. God cautioned Asa of the perils of not seeking God and forsaking Him. He also set before Asa the blessing that would come if he would seek God. There was no more war in the land until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign (2 Chronicles 15:19).

In Asa's thirty-sixth year as king over Judah, Baasha, King of Israel, came up near Judah and built Ramah. His intention behind this was to cause no one to enter or leave the territory of Judah. Baasha was blocking people's passage to Jerusalem after an abundance from Israel had been defecting to Judah because they could tell God was with Asa (2 Corinthians 15:9). The Hebrew word for Ramah is ramah and its meaning is a height (as a seat of idolatry) or a high place. By building this town, Baasha was creating a place of idolatry to bar the people from approaching God. Asa desired to cease this ungodly plan from prospering. He sent silver and gold from the treasuries in the house of the Lord to form a league between Judah and Ben-Hadad of Syria. Asa declared if Ben-Hadad would break his league with Baasha, and Baasha departed from vexing Judah, then there would be an alliance between Syria and Judah (2 Chronicles 16:2-3). Asa's plan succeeded. Ben-Hadad joined with Asa and destroyed the cities of Ijon, Dan, Abel-Maim, and all the cities of Naphtali. When the news reached Baasha, he retreated from his work at Ramah.

Although Asa ended up carrying out the will of God in this situation, it was not performed in the way which God intended. Asa had lost his dependency on God, and he ended up relying on his own methods and wisdom to see God's plan come to pass. The result of this was that God was not able to destroy the Syrians. If Asa had relied upon God, then Syria also would have been defeated (2 Chronicles 16:8). God reminded Asa of His past faithfulness to deliver Asa from the larger host of Ethiopians by faith in God alone. Whereas, Asa used to love the Word of God and received it with joy when he was dependent on God, now he was angry and placed the prophet in prison. By yielding his will to his own understanding or the soulish realm, instead of God's Spirit, his flesh had been strengthened. Asa's flesh did not desire to be brought into subjection to the Word of God, and so it rose up and resisted the Word of God.

By attempting to perform the will of God through the soulish realm (the destruction of Ramah by a league with Ben-Hadad), he accomplished his goal. However, by completing the task with his own methods and strength instead of by dependency on God, the Syrians escaped. When we depend on the Spirit of God, His victory is perfect. Not only does He destroy the idolatry, He also destroys our flesh (the Syrians). If we use our own understanding and do not humble ourselves and yield to the Spirit, a victory may be wrought, but the flesh is not crucified. Instead, the flesh within us becomes stronger even though we may have outwardly carried out a work of God.

Asa also oppressed some of the people because he was robbing them of the life and liberty of God. By trying to perform the will of God in his own strength, he blocked the life of God from being manifested and reaching the people. The people had to settle for an imitation of the life and liberty God brings, and the true victory brought by God was withheld.

God spoke this powerful truth to Asa by the seer Hanani. "...the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2 Chronicles 16:9).

The Hebrew word for perfect is shalem which means complete, friendly, or full. One whose heart is perfect towards the Lord completely surrenders their will. There is no reliance on the soulish realm for deliverance, but there is full and complete trust in God. He was letting Asa know that when our complete trust is in God, He does not disappoint us, but He manifests His

power mightily. On behalf of a completely and fully dependent person, the Lord wants to show Himself strong.

By the thirty-ninth year of Asa's reign his flesh had strengthened to the point where he could not come to God to save his life. His feet became infected to the point of death, but he relied on his own methods (physicians) instead of humbling himself before God (2 Chronicles 16:12-13). The more the flesh is strengthened, the fewer areas one will be able to yield to God. Eventually, it can come to the point where the flesh and lack of dependency costs your life.

As Christians, we have the same choice. We can settle for shallow Christianity where the spirit is repressed and overpowered by the soul. The other option goes beyond a form of obedience to yielding the soul completely to God and being completely Spirit led. If we want to have spiritual depth, then we have to let go of our own ways and methods and learn to seek the Lord. We have to become completely dependent upon God instead of relying on our own strength and others. A true deliverance will be wrought in our lives and the lives of those we lead when we allow this work to be accomplished in our lives.