

(Through the Bible) 2 Chronicles 14-18

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith's sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting God and resting in His power during challenging times, as exemplified by King Asa's leadership in Judah.

Duration: 1:07:10

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 15:2-16

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that God wants to use our lives and bless us abundantly. He highlights the importance of having a heart completely devoted to God, as He is looking for people through whom He can funnel His resources. The preacher encourages the congregation to turn away from worldly desires and ambitions and focus solely on God. He shares examples of how God has worked in their ministry, expanding their reach through radio and television, and even considering financing a Bob Dylan concert to reach more people.

Transcript

In chapter 14, we find the death of Abaib listed and the son Asa coming to the throne. And Asa's son reigned in his stead. The land was quiet for ten years.

Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. He took away the altars of the strange God, the high places. He broke down the images and cut down the groves.

And he commanded Judah to seek the Lord, God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. Now, you remember under the reign of Rehoboam, they began to... he turned away from God and the people turned away from God also. Began to worship these other gods.

Began to plant these groves as places to worship God. Build the altars under these false gods and so forth. And so now, Abaib allowed these things to exist and there was a commingling during his reign of... God was still worshipped in Jerusalem, but yet there were people who were allowed to worship these other gods in these other ways.

Now, when Asa came to the throne, he established a spiritual reform. He got rid of all of the idols and the images. He got rid of the altars that had been erected to these other gods.

He cut down the groves. However, he did not destroy all of the high places where also they gathered to worship. He took away out of all of the city of Judah, the images, the high places and the images.

The kingdom was quiet before him, but he... it was not a complete thing. He had allowed some of them to remain as we will read. He built fenced cities in Judah.

The land had rest. There was no war. And there came up against him, verse 7, or he had those... he had an army of 300,000 men from Judah plus 280,000 from Benjamin or 580,000 men all told.

There came up against them Zerah the Ethiopian with a host of a thousand thousand or a million men. 300 chariots and they came to Mereshah. Then Asa went out against him and they set in battle array in the valley of Zephanna and at Mereshah and Asa cried unto the Lord his God.

Now here you're faced... you've got a strong army. You've got 680,000 men, but you're facing an army of 1 million plus the advantage that the enemy has of 300 chariots. So having placed the men in their battle positions, then he does what is the wisest thing you can do is just cry unto God and say, Oh God, we need you.

Odds are against us. Whenever the odds are against you, it's good to have the Lord on your side. It's good to cry unto the Lord.

Whenever you know that you don't have the strength for the battle, it's good to cry unto the Lord. And he cried unto the Lord his God and he said, Lord, it is nothing for you to help. Whether with many or those who have no power.

Recognizing that God doesn't need a big army. Recognizing that it's really nothing for God to help. It doesn't take away from God at all to help.

No matter what your problem may be, God's able to handle it. It's nothing for God to help. We say, oh, this is a big problem.

Oh, this is difficult. Oh, this is so hard. Not for God.

We only look at it from our own human limitations. You can't really talk about difficulty when God is involved. Oh, Lord, it is nothing for thee to help, whether with many or those who have no power.

Just as easy for God to heal of cancer as it is an earache. The only difficulty lies in our own concepts of God because we carry over to God our own human limitations. So many times we do think of God in an anthropomorphic way.

He becomes a projection of ourself and we carry our limitations over to God. Now, this is true of all of us. I don't care how spiritual you are.

You have each one placed the limitations on what you believe God does. If a fellow should come up without an arm and say, I was in Vietnam. Grenade exploded, blew off my arm.

Would you please pray that God would give me another arm and a hand? Because it's inconvenient not having my right arm. And I want the elders to gather and pray for me that God would give me a new arm. And we say, now, brother, we know that God is able to do anything.

But we would start rationalizing why God, you know, wouldn't give you a new arm. Because I have limitations on God in my own mind. Perhaps because I've never seen God put a new arm on somebody.

Now, it doesn't mean that God can't. It doesn't mean that God wouldn't. If someone would really believe and trust him to do it.

It's not impossible for God to do. Break off a crab's leg. It'll grow a new one.

We also always just break off their legs and toss them back. So they grow new legs so we catch them again. An octopus will grow a new tentacle if it's cut off.

Even an earthworm will grow a new end if it's cut off. But God loves earthworms more than he loves man. Because God will do that for an earthworm, but he won't do it for man.

He loves starfish more than he loves you. It can grow a new extension if it's been cut off. We've got in our minds, and I confess I do in my mind.

I'm not going around praying God put a new leg or a new arm on people. And I will frankly confess I could not pray that God would in real faith. Someone came and asked me to do that, I would oblige them.

I'd pray, but I really wouldn't believe that God was going to do it. I'd rather explain to them why God wasn't going to do it. And yet, yet the bottom line is that it would be just as easy for God to do that as it would for him to heal that person of a sore toe.

If God is going to put into operation his supernatural power in taking away your headache. That same power of God that could remove your headache could also give you a new leg, a new arm or whatever else. Just as easily.

The difficulty doesn't lie with God or on God's part. The difficulty lies on our part because we carry over to God the limitations of our own selves. Lord, it is nothing for you to help.

Whether with many or those who have no power, help us, O Lord, his petition. Now, it is interesting. This is in the whole prayer.

There's only one petition and this is it. Help us. The rest is just the acknowledgement of God, the greatness of his power, the glory of God and so forth.

And and and he does all of that acknowledgement of God. But he has one petition. Help, for he said, we rest on thee.

That's a hard position to come to. But yet it is a position that many times we are forced to because there is nothing else you can do. God, if you don't do it, it's not going to be done.

Now, I don't always come to this place of beyond myself. And thus, I don't always rest on God. It seems that as long as there is a chance to do it another way, I'll try.

If another possibility turns up, another idea. Oh, well, that sounds good. Let's try it.

And I usually don't rest on God until there is nothing else that can be done. I'm convinced that there is no way out. And then I rest on God.

And I always don't rest too comfortably. Sometimes I'm still worried. Sometimes I'm still fretting.

The pastor of our Bakersfield Church called me the other day. He was going to a school board meeting. The church in Bakersfield has been growing very beautifully.

They have now about a thousand members. And they've outgrown their facility in the downtown part of Bakersfield. So they're looking at a school to purchase \$850,000.

And when you purchase schools, they want all cash. And they had the \$85,000 non-refundable down payment to submit their offer. But he was concerned that if they took their offer, what was he going to do to get the rest of the money on a 90-day escrow? Well, just trust the Lord, brother.

You know, it's nothing for God to help, whether with many or with those who have no power. And, you know, God can provide. Did he give you the \$85,000? Did he provide that? Yeah, well, then, you know, what difference, you know, with God, it makes a difference \$850,000 or \$85,000.

You think, you know, I'd hate to think about losing all this money. God's people's money and all. Oh, you know, and he was, I know exactly what he was going through.

I know exactly what he was going through. Having difficulty resting on God. I mean, after all, \$85,000 is a lot of bucks to put up.

Especially if you can't come through the whole thing and then you lose it. How are you going to tell the people, well, the Lord led us to buy this school. And then, well, the Lord led us down.

We didn't get the rest of the financing. And, you know, we lost it now. And with our \$85,000.

Tough position for a young pastor to be in. A tough position for an old pastor to be in. But why is it so tough to trust in God? Why is it so tough to rest on God? When we were going through our growing pains.

And we had entered into escrow on the first 10 acres here. Because the lady had accepted our offer of \$350,000 cash. And we had \$67,000.

And we were in escrow on this place. As I would drive up from our other chapel and park over here, waiting for the green arrow to turn left to go home. I would look over at these 10 acres and I would panic within.

I would talk to myself. I'd say, Chuck, what are you doing to these people? Things are going so great. The bills are all paid.

You're in triple services. There's enough money to cover all of the needs. You've got, you're building up funds in the bank.

But look what you're doing. You're obligating them to that 10 acres. And that's just the beginning once you get the property.

Then you've got over a million dollars worth of buildings to put up. Plus over \$100,000 in street improvements and all that. And I would look at myself and I would say, Chuck, what are you doing? What if the whole thing flops? What if it fails? And I would sit there and start to sweat.

Looking at this bare acreage over here. As Satan would start to hassle my mind. And believe me, he would.

And then the Lord would speak to me. And he would say, whose church is it? He said, then what are you worried about? I said, I don't know. And I'd have victory.

Man, I'd cruise over the San Diego freeway. Just praise the Lord. It's your church.

The whole thing goes down the tube, Lord. Your church down the tube. I mean, I just dumped the burden off of my own shoulders.

Because I couldn't handle it. He'd say, who created the problem? You created the problem. All right, then it's my responsibility.

Yes, Lord. So I said to the young pastor the other day who was so desperate. I said, whose church is it? He said, well, it's the Lord's church.

I said, who created the problem? Are you that fantastic a preacher that they're all coming to hear you? No. Well, then who created the problem of the overcrowded conditions? Well, the Lord did. Well, I said, it's his responsibility, his church.

Why are you worried? Lord, we rest on thee. That's not always easy to do. But it's always so comforting when we do.

Oh, how I love it when I get to that place of resting on the Lord. When I quit fretting about it. When I quit worrying about it.

When I dump it off on him. And say, well, sink or swim, Lord. It's your business.

And I'm just going to rest on you. Now, God often brings us to that place of the end of our own resources that we might learn to trust in God. And that we might learn to just rest on the Lord.

Where it doesn't matter now what happens. If we go under, it's the Lord's church. Doesn't make any difference.

Like Esther, if I perish, I perish. So, you know, it's the worst can happen, I guess. But it's his business, his church.

And I'm just going to rest, Lord, on you. You know, God had in mind things that I never dreamed. God had methods and ways that I never thought about.

I was consoling myself into the fact that it was a good buy on the property. We could spin off five acres, maybe. Because we would never need more than five acres.

And so we could spin off five acres. And then, you know, we would be able to build our church on the other five. But we could recover over half of what we paid by spinning off the five acres.

The board members have more faith than I do. No, we're going to need the whole thing. I thought, no, no, we'll never need ten acres after all.

My motto is think small. So they talked us into not spinning off five acres. But instead, the Lord sold the corner for half of what we paid for the whole thing.

Didn't take five acres, just a little part out of the corner. As Shell Oil called and offered us \$150,000 for the corner. Paid off one of the notes.

And God continued to supply. Each week, he'd provide enough to buy enough materials to keep the crews going. And we just kept going.

So that by the time the church was completed, the whole thing was paid for. It's exciting to see God work. But it's even more exciting to learn to rest on God.

I think that that was the greatest thing that came out of that experience in my life. I did learn at that point to rest on God. Because I knew that it was much bigger than I could ever handle.

And it's still much bigger than I can handle. But don't panic, folks. I haven't handled this thing for a long, long time.

I wouldn't dare to try to handle it. It's his church. His business.

Just a servant. I would hate to try to manage or handle this thing. I don't think I could.

I know I couldn't. But I'm just resting on him. Because he's doing such a fabulous job of building his church.

And it's just exciting to watch God work. O Lord, nothing for you to help with many or those who have no power. Help us, O Lord, for we rest on thee.

And in thy name, we're going out against this host. Lord, we're on your side. How opposite this is of so many programs today where we devise our whole program and then we say, okay, God, get on our side now and bless this program.

That we have all worked out. How many times do we find ourselves in that position of trying to get God on my side? I choose God. You're on my side, God.

Now you get behind me, God, and you support every idea and program that I have. And you follow my instructions carefully, Lord, so that we don't get this thing botched up. Now, Lord, I want you to do this and I want you to do that.

And Lord, if you'll run over here and do this for me. And then when you get through with that, if you'll come back and run over here, Lord. And we think of prayer as ordering God around the place in order that he might do my will.

But that's a totally wrong concept of prayer because God never ever intended prayer as a medium whereby you might accomplish your will on the earth. And that's a mistake that people make concerning prayer. They think that prayer is something whereby they can get everything they wish.

If they'll only believe strong enough and hard enough. That my will can be done. Oh, but doesn't Jesus say, and whatsoever you ask in my name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Again, he said, henceforth, you've asked nothing in my name. Ask, please ask that you may receive that your joy may be full. And again, he said, and if you shall ask anything in faith, believing it shall be done unto you.

Aren't those the words of Jesus? Aren't those his promises to us? Yes. Who did he make the promises to? Who was he talking to when he said, ask and you shall receive. Who was he talking to when he said, and whatsoever you ask in faith, believing you shall receive.

Who was he talking to when he said this? Was he talking to the multitudes? No. Who then was he talking to? He was talking to his own disciples when he made these glorious promises concerning prayer. Now, what does it take to be his disciple? If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.

To whom is Jesus saying, ask and if you shall ask anything, he's saying that to the man who first of all has denied himself. Thus, he's not thinking about himself or looking out for himself or really even asking for himself because he's denied himself. He's talking to the man who has submitted himself totally to the will of God.

Even as Jesus said concerning the cross, not my will, thy will be done. He's talking to the man who is fully following him. And for that man who has denied himself and submitted himself totally to the will of God and is interested only in seeing God's will accomplished, he said, just ask, please ask that you might receive that your joy may be full.

But it doesn't mean that I can ask for every little whim and fancy that I may desire, every little luxury that I might be able to live a very lavish and lustful life. It means that I am so committed to God, I'm really not looking or caring about things for myself. I'm only caring now for the work of the kingdom and thus my asking is involved with the things of the kingdom, the lost souls that are around me and that work of God to be wrought in these hearts and lives and this community in which I live.

And it's glorious to wield that kind of power for God's sake in this needy world. But we've got the wrong concept of prayer in thinking that God is going to yield Himself to my will to answer my demands that I may make upon Him in prayer. That is not the case.

The purpose of prayer is always to get the will of God done, not my will. And thus, if ye shall ask anything, according to His will, He hears you. And if He hears, then you know that you've received the petitions that you've made of Him.

But God's will is definitely involved in your prayer and your prayers cannot change the will of God. And it would be horrible if they could. Because God's will for your life is the very best that could happen to you.

God's will in this situation is the very best thing that can happen in this situation. God's will in the life of your child is the very best thing that could happen to your child. And because He loves you so much, He isn't capricious and will just change His will in order to answer your little whim because you don't know what the whole story is and what the full issue is.

And you're just looking with this narrow short-sightedness and you don't see the long-term thing that God is working out. And that's why you don't understand God. That's why sometimes you get upset with God.

That's sometimes why you feel like you're just almost destroyed. God didn't answer my prayer. I fully believed and trusted Him to work, but He didn't work.

Why? After all, I had fulfilled my part. Because it isn't the purpose of God to accomplish your will. Or it isn't the purpose of prayer.

Purpose of prayer is to get God's will done. Oh Lord, in Thy name, we go out against this enemy. Don't let man prevail against You.

That's exactly the place I came to in the church. Lord, it's Your church and I'm going to rest on You. It's Your church, Lord.

Don't, you know, don't let anything happen to Your church, Lord. Don't let Your church go bankrupt, Lord. Don't let Your church go under, Lord.

In Thy name, Lord. And, you know, don't let man prevail against You. Hey, far from going bankrupt, God has provided because we've acknowledged the Lordship of Christ.

We acknowledge the fact that it's His church. And we acknowledge that when He sends the funds, the surplus funds in, that we have the obligation before Him to spend those funds just like He wants them spent for whatever purpose and plan He has. And really, the greatest burden upon the board is the proper expenditure of the funds that God has so lavishly bestowed upon us here.

And that's why we went into the radio ministry. In order that we might have, we felt that this was an excellent way to more or less multiply across the United States what God has done here. Because what God has done here has been the result of the teaching of His Word.

And the people becoming strong in the Word, knowing God and becoming strong in the Word. God has expanded and blessed the work here because people got turned on through the Word of God as they really began to know God. They could relate to God and have these meaningful relationships where God has begun to work and change their lives.

And we see the fruit of the Word of God. And so we felt the best way to multiply this across the country is to go on the radio teaching across the country. And the interesting thing, every time we take a step and appropriate a little more money for the radio, and we expand the radio ministry, God sends in more.

We can't keep up with Him. We can't spend it all. So we're in the process of expanding the radio ministry again.

We're looking into television, outreach in television. We're looking into several different interesting outreaches to sort of invest that which God has given to reach the lives of people across the country. We're thinking in terms of financing a huge Bob Dylan concert at Anaheim Stadium.

Just to reach the people. It'll cost us some bucks, but we'll be able to reach thousands of people and have an impact on young people all over this area. And so we're looking for ways to wisely invest those funds that God has placed in our hands in order that we might expand the work of God throughout the world.

And when God guides, God provides. And when God provides, God guides in where it should be used to expand the kingdom. Lord, in thy name, we're going out against this host.

Let not man prevail against you. And so the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa. That's interesting.

The Lord smote them before Asa and before Judah and the Ethiopians fled. And Asa and the people that were with him pursued them to Gerar. And the Ethiopians were overthrown and they could not recover themselves for they were destroyed before the Lord and before his host.

And they carried away. That is Asa carried away much spoil. They smote the cities of Gerar and the fear of the Lord came upon them.

And they spoiled all the cities for there was exceeding much spoil in them. And they smote also the tents, the cattle. They carried away the sheep, the camels in abundance.

And they returned to Jerusalem. And as they were returning now with all the spoils of war, the victory of God, the Spirit of God came upon Azariah, the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa and he said unto him, 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. But if you forsake him, he will forsake you.

Now the prophet meets him, Azariah meets him and lays out just a plain statement of truth. The Lord is with you as long as you'll be with him. And if you seek him, he'll be found of you.

But if you forsake him, he will forsake you. This is God's eternal truth. This is always true of every man.

The Lord will be with you just as long as you'll be with him. And if you seek him, you will find. But if you forsake him, he will forsake you.

God's basic truth, unalterable, unchanging. Now at this point, Asa is flushed with victory. He's just seen God work in a mighty way in answer to prayer.

And in those occasions, you know, you're on spiritual highs that you can't believe when you've just seen God do a marvelous work. And I'm sure that Asa just smiled and said, All right, praise the Lord. But you didn't need to add that last part, man.

There's no way I'd ever forsake God. After all, look what God has just done. You don't need to warn me about that.

Wait a minute. Beware whenever God warns you of anything, no matter how strong you may feel that you are in that particular area. Because God doesn't waste words with you.

And if God is warning you about a particular thing, there's a reason why God is warning you about that. So listen. Because sure enough, those are the areas where the person gets tripped up.

The very area that God has warned them about. I don't think that any of you ever get tripped up in anything, but what God hasn't given you advanced warning on that issue. But you ignore it.

Oh, well, I'm very strong in that area, you know. I can handle this. And you were warned of God.

Stay away. Don't go. Oh, well, Lord, I know how to handle this.

You know, and I know when to leave. And don't go. But Lord, you don't understand.

You see, I'm going to go and witness for you. And then I know the time to leave, Lord, and I'll be all right. And then as you're weeping and saying, God, I don't know why I did it.

Lord, I'm such a miserable. Lord, help me. He said, well, then I tell you not to go.

You see, God gave you the warnings. You just weren't listening. You weren't obeying.

God doesn't warn you needlessly. And so the Lord gave the warning to the king. And he said, now, for a long time, Israel has been without the true God and without a teaching priest and without the law.

But in their trouble, they turned to Jehovah, the God of Israel. They sought him and he was found of them. And in those times, there was no peace to him that went out nor to him that came in.

But great vexations run upon the inhabitants of the countries. And the nation was destroyed of nation and city of city. For God did vex them with adversity.

Be strong, therefore, let not your hands be weak for your work shall be rewarded. And when Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Oded, the prophet, he took courage and he put away the abominable idols out of the land of Judah and Benjamin and out of the cities which he had taken from Mount Ephraim. He renewed the altar of the Lord that was before the porch of the Lord.

He gathered all Judah and Benjamin and the strangers out of Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon. For they came to him out of all of Israel in abundance when they saw that the Lord, his God was with him. So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month of the 15th year of the reign of Asa.

And they offered unto the Lord the same time the spoil, which they have brought 700 oxen of the spoil, 700 oxen, 7000 sheep. And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul. What a beautiful covenant.

Guys, let's just covenant together now. We're going to seek God with all of our heart and all of our soul. You know, that's neat when a bunch of people get together and really covenant.

Hey, God's going to be first in our lives. We're going to put the Lord above everything else. We're going to seek God with all of our hearts and with all of our souls.

What a marvelous thing when people will covenant together in the excitement of a spiritual revival or fervor in this kind of a commitment. God, I surrender everything to you. I'm yours, Lord.

I'm going to live full on for you. And you're covenant with God. You're going to seek him completely.

They also determined that whosoever would not seek the Lord would be put to death. Whether small or great man or woman. Now, this is a little bit overzealous.

You cannot legislate righteousness. If there were laws that could make men righteous, then Jesus would not have to die. But yet it's admirable.

Their zeal for the Lord was at such a high pitch. We're going to serve the Lord. And if anybody doesn't follow, you know, we'll wipe them out.

And they swear unto the Lord with a loud voice, with shouting, with trumpets, with cornets. I mean, this was just a real fanatical spiritual meeting. Shouting, praising God, sounding with trumpets.

God, we're going to serve you. God, we're going to commit ourselves. Lord, you're going to be the God over our land.

We're going to put you first. And really, it was a time of great national strength and excitement. I would like to have been there.

I would like to have shared in the excitement of that moment when the hearts of the people were all turned towards God in this religious excitement. And all of Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with their heart and they sought him with their whole desire. And he was found of them.

And the Lord gave them rest around about. And also concerning Macca, the mother of Asa, the king, he removed her from being the queen because she had made an idol in a grove. And Asa cut down her idol and stamped it and burned it at the Brook Kidron.

But the high places were not taken away out of Israel. Nevertheless, the heart of Asa was complete. And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated and that he himself had dedicated silver and gold and vessels.

And there was no more war until the 35th year of the reign of Asa. And in the 35th year of his reign. Basha, who was now the king of Israel, started to fortify the city of Ramah north of Jerusalem in order that he might cut off all of the trade that is coming into Judah or all of the trade that would go out.

They're going to cut off their supplies. And so he's going to build this fortified city so that he could begin to cut off the supplies from Judah. And Asa, he had had now a very prosperous reign.

For 25 years, they had had rest after the great victory and commitment to God. But now he had become rich. He had become strong.

And he took money out of the treasury of the house of the Lord, took gold and silver out of the treasury of the house of the Lord. And he sent it up to the king of Syria. And he said to Ben-Hadad, your father and my father had a mutual defense pact.

And I'm sending you this money in order that you might honor this mutual defense pact. And I want you to attack Israel from the north. Because they're building this fortified city, they're preparing an invasion and all.

And so I want you to attack them from the north. And so Ben-Hadad began to attack Israel from the north. Well, because Bashar had deployed the troops down towards the south in the building of this fortified city and all, Ben-Hadad began to move through the north part.

They conquered the city of Dan in the upper part of the Galilee, the Hula Valley there. They began to move down. They took the area around the Sea of Galilee, the cities of Naphtali and all.

And so Bashar, when the Syrians began to invade and take the northern part, left off the building of the fortified city, moved his army up to defend their northern borders from this attack of Syria. And when they did, of course, Asa moved out and they took all of the materials that they had brought to build the fortified city. And they built several little cities for their own defense with the materials that they had captured from that which Bashar had brought down.

So his plan was successful. He had used his own military alliances and his own wealth and all to buy himself out of his problems. And it was successful.

It was a very successful move. They were able to deploy the troops and they were able to take the materials and it was a successful move. However, the prophet of God came to him, Hanani.

And he said, because you have relied on the king of Syria and not relied on Jehovah your God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of your hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubins a huge host with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the Lord, he delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him.

But herein thou has done foolishly. Therefore, from now on, you're going to have wars. Now, he had just had, he was just no doubt gloating in his wisdom, in his diplomacy, in his success.

And a prophet comes and rebukes him. And the rebuke is this. You have relied upon Syria, the arm of man.

You're not resting in the Lord anymore. You're not going out in the name of the Lord anymore. You're not calling unto the Lord for the help that you need any longer.

You see, you don't feel that need for the help of God. God, I can manage this one myself. And because you've relied on the king of Syria and not on the Lord, your God.

Don't you remember that now the king of Syria is delivered out of your hands. But don't you remember that in the past, when you were invaded by this huge army of Ethiopians and Lubens, with their chariots and horses. How that at that time you cried to the Lord, the Lord delivered them in your hand.

For, and this is the truth, let God burn it in your heart tonight. The eyes of the Lord go to and fro throughout the entire earth to show himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are completely towards him. What is God saying? Just this.

God wants to use your life. God wants to bless your life. God wants to pour out upon you his glorious resources.

God is just looking for people that he can use, that he can funnel his resources through. Because God is wanting to reach this world around us. God needs men to reach this world.

God is looking for men whose hearts are completely towards him. That he might show himself strong on behalf of that person. That God might funnel his resources through their lives.

Oh God, cause our hearts to be turned completely towards thee. Take our hearts away from the issues of the world. From our own desires and purposes.

From our own goals and ambitions. Oh God, let my heart be completely towards thee. Don't let my heart be turned aside by my own desires, my own wishes.

God, let my heart be completely towards you. For the eyes of the Lord are looking through the whole world to find such men that God might show himself strong on behalf of those people. In other words, as we were talking earlier, God is looking for the man whose life is in line with the purposes and the will of God.

And when he finds that man, and when that man asks God for those things of the kingdom that he sees are necessary, then God is already determined to give to him those things that he is asking. Because he's not asking to consume it on his own flesh, on his own desires. James says, you ask and receive not that you might consume it on your own lusts.

And so many of our petitions that we bring before God are really our own will, our own desires that we are offering to God and wanting him to help us to fulfill our desires. And God's looking for men whose desire is totally towards the Lord and the things of God. Because God needs men in this world today.

The world is in a desperate condition. God needs men. God is looking for men.

And the eyes of the Lord go to and fro throughout the entire earth in order that he might show himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are completely towards him. Oh God, I want to be that man. Oh God, I want my desires to be fully in line with your will, with what you want.

God, I want to be usable. And this is my continual prayer. God, keep me usable.

I know it is so easy to get sidetracked, to get caught up in something other than God's purpose or plans. And end up on the shelf. I don't want to end up on the shelf.

I want to remain usable by God. That's the only reason for being in this rotten place. Living in this corrupted society, there's only one purpose and that's to be used of God for his purposes.

And when I start living for my own purposes, then I pray God takes me instantly. Because I'm wasting my life on that which really doesn't matter. There's only one real purpose now and that's to be what God wants me to be.

To be that servant of God, doing his will in order that God might work, show his power and his strength through my life. God's looking for such man. I want to be that kind of man.

I'm not completely I desire to be though. God knows the desire of my heart from the time when I committed my life fully to Jesus Christ. To be that man that God could use.

Now, Asa was angry with the prophet. The truth oftentimes creates anger, resentment. He put him in a prison for he was in a rage with him because of this thing.

Here is the king who at the beginning offered this prayer of God who created this great spiritual reform among the people. We're going to serve the Lord. He's going to be, you know, and now he's in a rage because the prophet has brought to him the truth of God.

Throws the prophet in a prison. And Asa in the 39th year of his reign was diseased in his feet. It was an exceeding great disease.

Yet in his disease, he sought not the Lord, but the aid of physicians and he died. Now, the intimation in the text is had he sought the Lord, the Lord would have healed his diseased feet. But you see, he began a pattern of relying upon man and upon the arm of flesh.

We sing that song, the arm of flesh will fail you. You dare not trust your own. It's vain to put your trust in man.

Better to put your trust in the Lord than your confidence in princes. And he started out putting his trust in God. It's a sad tragic story.

A man who started out putting his trust in God knew the power of God, the great victories of God's great spiritual revivals, but whose life he ended up trusting in the arm of flesh, the arm of man. And he died. Trusting in man.

At his death, his son Jehoshaphat took over the throne. Jehoshaphat was a very good king. And God strengthened him.

The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he walked in the first ways of his father, David, and sought not unto Balaam, the false god. But he sought to the Lord God of his fathers and walked in his commandments and not after the doings of the northern tribe of Israel. Therefore, the Lord established the kingdom in his hand and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presence.

And he had riches and honor in abundance. Seek first the kingdom of God. All these things will be added unto you.

And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord. Moreover, he took away the high places and the groves out of Judah. And in the third year of his reign, he sent to his princes, even to Ben-Hel and to Obadiah, to Zechariah, to Nethanel, and to Micaiah to teach in the cities of Judah.

And he sent with them the Levites in order that they might also instruct the people. And they taught in Judah and had the book of the law of the Lord with them. And they went about throughout the cities of Judah and taught the people.

So he sent out evangelistic teams to go to the cities of Judah that they might teach the people the ways of God, the laws of the Lord. And Eredi, again, is bringing the people back to God as the center of their national life. And the fear of the Lord fell upon all of the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they dared not to make war against Jehoshaphat.

And even the Philistines began to pay tribute to him. And he waxed great exceedingly. And he built in Judah castles and cities for their storehouses.

And he had much business in the cities of Judah. And the men of war, mighty men of valor, were in Jerusalem. And the number of the army was close to a million now that he had amassed.

And they waited on the king. Now, Jehoshaphat had these riches in honor and abundance. And for some reason, he joined affinity with Ahab, who was one of the most wicked of all the kings of the northern tribe.

Why? I don't know. But he went up to visit Ahab in Samaria. And while he was there visiting, Ahab said, look, I'm going to go out and fight against the Syrians at Ramoth-Gilead.

You want to go with me? Jehoshaphat said, why not? You know, I'm with you as one. We're one together. We're both kings over the nations.

So sure, I'll go with you. And so they went up against Syria there at Ramoth-Gilead. But Jehoshaphat, before they went, said, hey, is there a prophet of God that we can inquire of to see, you know, if God's in this thing? And so he called the prophets in, 400 of them.

And they all said, go up. The Lord be with you and prosper you and give you victory over your enemy. Now, Jehoshaphat said, isn't there any other prophet? Now, here are 400 guys agreeing together.

But Jehoshaphat somehow felt something a little funny about it. Isn't there any other prophet that we might inquire of? There's one guy, his name is Micaiah. But that man, he never has anything good to say to me.

I don't like to call him because always, you know, bad news for me from this guy. I said, don't say that. You know, maybe this will be good.

Let's call him in and see what he has to say. So they sent his servant to get this one prophet Micaiah. And he said, now, look, fella, you've got a reputation of giving bad news to the king all the time.

So, hey, say a good word. Don't give him bad news. So the king, when Micaiah came in, said, shall I go up against Syriac, Ramoth Gilead? And oh, Micaiah said, yes, go, prosper, defeat your enemies.

Sure, go ahead. And the king said, look, man, how many times have I told you not to lie to me in the name of the Lord? I said, all right, if you want to know the truth, I'll lay it on you, king. I saw a vision and the men of Israel were all scattered and they were like sheep without a shepherd, declaring that the king was going to fall in the battle.

And he said, didn't I tell you that this guy never has anything good to say about me? And so the prophet went on to tell him, I saw the Lord sitting on his throne and all of the hosts of heaven were standing at his right hand and his left. What an awesome vision the prophet had, God's throne and all of the host of heaven. And the Lord said, who shall entice Ahab, the king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? And one spake saying, you know, I can do this.

And others said, well, I can do this. But there came out a spirit and stood before the Lord and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said, how? And he said, I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all of his prophets.

And the Lord said, thou shalt entice him and thou shalt also prevail. Go out and do even so. Now, therefore, behold, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these, your prophets, and the Lord has spoken evil against thee.

So Zedekiah, one of the prophets that was there, who had made some iron horns and went running around like a nut with these iron horns and saying, thus, you know, you're going to push the king of Syria all over the place. He slapped this guy in the face. He said, tell me, what direction did the spirit go that told me to slap you? And Micaiah said to him, behold, you shall see the day when you are going to go into the inner chamber and to hide yourself.

So the king of Israel ordered him to be taken and put in jail until I come back in peace. And he said, hey, if you come back in peace, I'm a false prophet. Now, the difficulty lies in how God worked in this circumstance.

Why would God allow a lying spirit to fill the 400 prophets, to entice the king to go to battle at Ramoth Gilead? I don't want to get too involved in it. We don't have time tonight. But God has created all things for his purposes.

And even Satan is fulfilling the purposes of God. God has placed the limitations on what Satan can do. He can only do what God allows him to do.

Satan complained against certain limitations and restrictions that God had placed upon him concerning Job. But God does use Satan for his purposes. When God created man a free moral agent, gave to man the capacity of self-determination, gave to man the power of choice, it was necessary in order that man's choice be valid, that there be something to choose.

If you didn't have any choice, then what value is it to have the capacity of choice? It doesn't really make sense that God has endowed me with this glorious capacity of choice. I'm going to create man after my own image, a self-determinate being. He will be able to choose, but then there's nothing to choose.

All there is is good in the whole universe. There's nothing, there's no alternatives to choose. So take your choice, but there isn't any choice.

So God had to create the choice. He had to allow Satan to rebel in order to create the alternate choice in order that he might know that man truly loves him and serves him from a heart of love. Because God was looking for love and fellowship from man.

God could never know if that love was genuine unless the capacity of choice was there. And thus, God allowed the rebellion of Satan. God placed the tree in the garden.

He allowed Satan to exploit the tree in order that man might have the opportunity to exercise that choice in order that God might receive true fulfillment from the love that man offered unto God. So God has given to you the capacity of choice tonight. You don't have to love God.

You don't have to serve God. You don't have to express your love to God. But you have the choice.

You can do it if you want. But if you choose to do it, then God knows that you've done it by choice, that it is really in your heart to do so. Oh God, I love you.

I don't have to say that. I could choose to hate God if I desired. I could choose to rebel against God.

I could choose to live a life totally after my own flesh in complete rebellion against God. I have that choice. But by the very virtue of the fact that I've chosen to love God, to serve God, to commit myself to God, he knows that it's a genuine love, a genuine commitment, because I don't have to.

And thus he receives from it that warmth of fellowship that he was desiring from man. So God here is allowing this spirit, a lying spirit, to come into the mouths of the prophets in order that he might fulfill his purpose to get this guy up to Ramoth Gilead. You say, well, couldn't God have used something else? Of course he could.

But he chose and he has that capacity and power too. And I can't really argue with the choices that God makes. I don't know why God has chosen me.

I'm glad he did. I don't argue with it. And I made a point not to argue with the choices of God because I know that he is wiser than I am, much smarter than I am.

So I just say, well, Lord, that's what you chose. You know what's best. Now, it worked.

Ahab went up against Ben-Hadad or the forces of Syria. Now, Ben-Hadad the king had said to his captains, he said, look, there's only one guy we really want. That's Ahab the king.

So concentrate on getting him. Let that be the, you know, the concentration of the battle is to get the king. I'm not worried about the rest of the army.

If we can get the king, they'll fold. So as they were going into battle, these two fellows, Jehoshaphat and Ahab, Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, hey, I'd like to sort of get into the thick of things. Let me just put on the robes of one of my soldiers.

Here, you put on my robe and all, and you ride in my chariot. I want to get another chariot. I want to get into the battle.

So Jehoshaphat got in the king's chariot, you know, and there he was with the king's robe on. And of course, the captains of Syria were all looking for the king's chariot. When they saw him, they began to encircle him.

And he, you know, got on the horse and really got going and crying out, you know, and really trying to get out of there because they were all concentrating on him. And when they saw that it wasn't Ahab, then they turned from pursuing him. And one guy just pulled back, you know, a bunch of people are there, just pulled back and let fly with his arrow at a venture.

Wasn't really shooting at anybody, just shooting in the direction of the enemy. And God directed that arrow and it came right through, pierced through Ahab, the king. And he propped himself up in the chariot to continue the battle.

But by the end of the day, Ahab had died. The prophecies of God were fulfilled. The purposes of God were fulfilled.

And Jehoshaphat, of course, returned back to Jerusalem.

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