

# 2 Chronicles 15

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Preacher: Billy Joe Calvert

[0:00] It is good to see you this evening and thankful to be together with you. Take your Bibles and go with me to the book of 2 Chronicles chapter 15. 2 Chronicles chapter 15.

2 Chronicles 15 is where we're at as we just continue to make our way through Scripture. We're in 2 Chronicles 15.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer and then we'll get right into it with one another. Father, we thank you so much for this day. We're so thankful to have the opportunity to gather together.

Thankful for the fellowship we've been able to enjoy already. Thankful for the encouragement of just being with one another. Father, we ask that you lead us now as we open up the Word of God together.

That you would speak to us through your Word. We pray that as we study it and we seek to know it and know you in a greater way, that it would speak to our hearts and minds, that it would conform us and mold us and shape us more and more to your image.

[1:09] We pray in all things and all ways that Christ be magnified. We pray that throughout this place tonight, in each and every age group, with each and every teacher, that Christ be exalted.

We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. 2 Chronicles 15. You know, it has been a challenge, just as a personal note, as a pastor to preach through the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles.

And the reason it is so challenging is not necessarily the repetition that you find there. We can cover that. We have covered multiple chapters at a time.

We find repetitious things and we address it. It's most challenging on my side because the study resources for 1 and 2 Chronicles are very limited.

I don't know if you've ever really dove into studying that. If you have a study Bible, I know which most of you do, just peruse through the notes at some of those, and most of them you'll see C, 1 Kings, or C, 2 Kings, and it's referencing you back.

[2:19] Most commentaries are the same way. I don't really depend upon commentaries very often. I don't really depend upon, I don't say this in definitely not in a bragging way, I use them as checks and balances to kind of make sure that I'm not off track in the way I see things, and that's a challenge when not many commentaries are written for these books.

They just want you to go back and read what is in 1 and 2 Kings. But there's danger in that, and the reason that we, and I'm thankful that we are just going through Scripture, and therefore I force myself to address it, is because passages like the one before us tonight are not found in 1 Kings.

The parallel passage to 2 Chronicles 15 would be 1 Kings 15. And so when we were making our way through the book of 1 Kings, and we read the 15th chapter, and we saw the reforms that Asa was doing, and we saw a number of things because he was one of those good kings who did what was right in the sight of the Lord his God, who did as his father David had done.

We got part of the story. We didn't get the fullness of the story until we turned the page here, and we're reading it in 2 Chronicles 15. Because while it's easy to read of the military accomplishments of Asa, and even the social reforms and the restoration of the temple, and the restocking of the storehouses of the temple, and bringing in all the riches and things like that, we get that in this chapter.

We get it also in 1 Kings. There's one crucial element that is missing. And if we try to just kind of put everything together, and we try to fit everything into one little neat box, I think at times we don't fully grasp everything that the Word is teaching us.

[4:04] So it is with that goal and that aim that we look at 2 Chronicles 15 tonight. If you were to go to 1 Kings 15, you will see there that Asa removes all the high places in Judah.

He doesn't remove them in Israel because that's outside of his realm. He removes all the high places. He even, and we'll see it in our text this evening, removes his mother from being queen mother.

So it's not like he played favorites because she did what was wicked. And so he restores really the temple and he repairs the temple. We are about 60 years after the coronation of the temple, of Solomon's temple, so there were probably some repairs that needed to be done by this time. And he does it, and he really calls the nation back. But the question would be why? Was it just because he did what was right? But if every heart is wicked, there are none who are righteous, no, not one, then we need to know why he did it.

And we find the answer to that question in 2 Chronicles 15. It says, Now the Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded. And this is immediately following a military battle in which Asa fought against the king of Egypt, who happened to be from Ethiopia, who approached him with a million men.

[ 5 : 26 ] Remember that? He had 580,000 facing a million. The Lord delivered him. He plundered greatly the region that they fought that battled him. And as he's on his way back, these events happen.

Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you when you are with him. And if you seek him, he will let you find him. But if you forsake him, he will forsake you. For many days Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.

But in their distress they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and they sought him, and he let them find him. In those times there was no peace to him who went out, or to him who came in. For many disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the land.

Nation was crushed by nation, and city by city. For God troubled them with every kind of distress. But you, be strong, and do not lose courage, for there is reward for your work.

[ 6 : 28 ] Now when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy which Azariah the son of Oded, the prophet, spoke, he took courage, and removed the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and from the cities which he had captured in the hill country of Ephraim.

He then restored the altar of the Lord, which was in front of the porch of the Lord. He gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, who resided with them. For many defected to him from Israel, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him.

So they assembled at Jerusalem, in the third month of the fifteenth year in Asa's reign. They sacrificed to the Lord that day, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep, from the spoil they had brought.

They entered into the covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart and soul. And whoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman.

Moreover, they made an oath to the Lord with a loud voice, with shouting, with trumpets, and with horns. All Judah rejoiced concerning the oath, for they had sworn with their whole heart, and had sought him earnestly, and he let them find him.

[ 7 : 35 ] So the Lord gave them rest on every side. He also removed Maki, the mother of King Asa, from the position of Queen Mother, because she had made a horrid image as an Asherah.

And Asa cut down her horrid image, crushed it, and burned it at the Brook Kidron. But the high places were not removed from Israel. Nevertheless, Asa's heart was blameless all his days. He brought into the house of God the dedicated things of his father, and his own dedicated things, silver and gold utensils. And there was no more war until the 35th year of Asa's reign.

I want you to see this evening, The Hope of the Covenant. Now, historically, we can look and see what is going on. As Asa comes back with Judah and his men, he has just fought a really large army, and won in a supernatural way, because the Lord stood true to his word, and the Lord delivered him.

As he called out, Asa cried out and said, We are not able, we are not worthy, we are not strong enough to defeat this vast army. And he cast all of his hope and all his desires and all of his future, really, upon the word of God.

[ 8 : 43 ] And God responded, and God defeated from before him this million-man army. Not only did they win the battle, they plundered the region, and they came back with great spoil.

And on their way back, a prophet meets him through the spirit of the Lord God, spoke a word to him, encouraging him, strengthening him.

As I believe it was Warren Wearsby, it says, There are so many kings who win the battle on the battlefield, but lose it in the spoils of victory at home. But so Asa gets the warning, he gets the encouragement to continue to be strong, to be steadfast, to abound.

And he does something amazing after that. He cleans up the land as far as it's under his control. He cleans up Judah and Benjamin and even the regions which he has just conquered. He restores and repairs the temple and the porch in front of the temple and the altar.

He removes his mother from being queen mother. He cuts down all the high places, and he sets his heart upon the Lord. That's historically what's going on. And he enjoys peace.

[ 9 : 46 ] He enjoys a peace that lasts for a number of years until he ends up fighting another battle, which we read about in the next chapter, which really he falters under, because even in spite of all these victories and in spite of seeing the Lord's faithfulness, he begins to trust in alliances with other nations as opposed to trusting in the Lord God against an inferior foe.

But there's more to this chapter than just that. We can look at the facts and say, Well, this is what happens. Because scripture also has application. And there's some very unique things to this text before us, really that is unique to biblical Christianity.

It is the thing, honestly, if we were to look at it in its simplicity, it is the thing that sets us apart from every other world religion. It is the thing that makes us so much different than every other faith, every other faith tribe, every other people.

It was the very thing that would set the nation of Israel apart from the world around them. It was the distinguishing mark of the nation of Israel or was to be the distinguishing mark of the nation of Israel.

And it was for the neglect of that distinguishing mark that led them to God's discipline and judgment. And it is that same distinguishing mark to which we have been grafted in, according to the book of Romans, into the promises of Israel.

[ 11 : 07 ] Why do we read the Old Testament? So that we can see the promises. We see what God is offering his people. Because through our covenant with Christ, we have become his people.

It is the thing that makes us stand apart. And it is the thing that is unique that at times I believe we overlook. And at times I believe we underappreciate.

Because it's so natural. And it's so evident through all of scripture. And it is the hope of the covenant.

What is the hope of the covenant? What is the hope that is set before Asa, which leads him to do the things he does? We'll get to that in just a minute. What is the thing that is set before us?

What hope do we rest in, in this covenant of Christ? What really, the question really would be, what is it that we enjoy in Christ, under the covenant relationship, in Christ, that offers us the greatest hope?

[ 12 : 15 ] You say, well, it's forgiveness. And it's mercy. Those are great. It is having our sins cast as far as the east is from the west. That's awesome.

To know that we have a God who has the ability to forget sins. He has cast our sins into the sea of forgetfulness. Which to me is a wondrous thing.

That only God has the power to forget. Those sins which you cannot let go of, he's already forgotten about in Christ. And that is amazing. But what is it that sets Christianity apart?

What is it that sets biblical faith, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, apart? And it is this one thing that is laid out in this chapter.

I want you to see, number one, the opportunity of man. The great and grand opportunity which is offered us through the word of God.

[ 13 : 11 ] Look at what it says. Now the spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Odette. So now, we have this very common introduction that we find in the Old Testament. It is commonly used to describe the word that is coming out of the mouth of the prophet.

It is the spirit of the Lord or the spirit of God overcoming the individual. Now, what we understand here, we'll speak to this in Trinitarian terms or in New Testament terminology. The Holy Spirit is speaking through an individual.

Right? So what we have is the authoritative word of God. Now, we're not going to try to define the Trinity. We're not even going to try to explain or understand the Trinity.



Again, I said it's so simple, but we discount it so many times. The aim and the goal of this is that man may walk in a relationship with him.

Here's the opportunity set before man. You can know God. It's not that you hope that in the end, your good outweighs your bad, or you've given enough, or you've offered enough.

It's not a maybe. It is God says, you can find me. So if it's that simple, then what problem do we have?

[ 19 : 30 ] Secondly, we see the opposition. Any truth so simple, but yet so deep, comes with very great and grand opposition.

We notice the opposition he gets to us. He says, for many days Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law. So we understand here that the prophet, this unknown prophet other than this time, is looking back, and more than likely, and I agree with him, he is looking back to the period of Judges.

The period of the Judges, when there was so much confusion, and there was no priest or anything of that nature. But we notice here, and again, we'll see this again Sunday morning. I'm kind of excited when our passages always fit together.

But as we continue through the book of Mark, we'll see it Sunday morning. So I won't preach that message unless I really get off on a tangent, but we'll stay within this text. And we notice here what the text says. They did not know God.

They were without the true God. But why were they without the true God? They were missing, what does it say, teaching priest. And see, we thought all priesthood was offer sacrifices.

[ 20 : 34 ] One of the principal and primary roles of the priest was to teach the people how to seek God so that he may be found by them.

The office of the priest was not just to offer sacrifices. The sacrificial system was the how. It was the mechanics. It was the desire of the individual to seek after God and to bring this sacrifice, to bring this perfect offering, to bring what was required.

It was the desire that I want to know the Lord God. And if they were taught how to do it, then God is saying, then you will come. My people perish for lack of knowledge, right? They don't perish because of a lack of sacrifices.

We find it over and over again. Even in the book of Malachi, God says, I'm tired of your sacrifices. I don't want your sacrifices. Don't bring them to me. Just go ahead and close the gates of the temple. I don't want them anymore because we can go through the motions.

But if we don't know what we're shooting for, what we're aiming at by going through the motions, then we're losing the desire. If all we want to do is go lay an animal on the altar and hope the animal on the altar pays off our debt.

[ 21 : 41 ] And if the animal on the altar suffices for all the wrong we've done and we walk away and we're like, okay, that was good. But if on the other hand, we have priests saying that God wants to be in a relationship with you.

And if you want to know the Lord your God, then if you bring this sacrifice, then your restored relationship will let you and the Lord God walk in holy fellowship with one another. And you may know him and you can cling to him and he will be able to cling to you.

That's a whole lot different than just paying off a debt you owe. See, so many people believe that if I just read the Bible or if I do this or I attend church or if I give to church, then maybe everything will be okay.

But if we're not doing this and Father, I want to hear from you, I want to know you, I want to walk with you. See, if we're not seeking to know him, then we're definitely not finding him. I don't care what we do.

The opposition at times is a lack of knowledge. The reason, and I believe Billy Graham was right when he stated it, and I believe it's even much more so today.

[ 22 : 38 ] Billy Graham said the largest evangelistic field you will ever find sits in the pews of your churches on Sundays. And he talked about around the world. And the reason I think that's true is because we don't have many teaching priests, to use the Old Testament terminology.

And you'll see a little bit more of that this Sunday morning, so I won't go into it any further. That we don't, we have too much commotion, not enough instruction.

But that's not the only opposition. We go a little further because we need to understand. It says in those times there was no peace to him who went out or who came in for there were many

disturbances. So we need to understand this, that there is no true peace without a true relationship. This is a refrain that is repeated throughout this. If we don't know God, then we don't really know peace. And the scripture tells us why.

Because nation was crushed by nation and city by city. For God troubled them with every kind of distress. We said this before. When God is your trouble, you have trouble. They weren't seeking to know him.

[ 23 : 50 ] He wasn't allowing them to find him. So then they stood in direct opposition to him. But we have this encouragement. But you, he says, be strong and do not lose courage.

For there is reward for your work. While it is a simple truth. If you seek him, he will let you find him. It is not an easy truth. He says, don't lose heart.

But be encouraged. For there is reward for your work. Now, I'm not talking about working out or working for your salvation. I'm talking about the effort that's put forward for the people of God to know the Lord God.

Right? This is something that has to be, has to be a commitment. Because it is not a passive activity. It is, even if, when we read scripture, it says, we say, well, pastor says, be still and know that I am God.

Right? Do you know how hard it is to be still? Be still and know that I am God. Stillness is a discipline that too often is easily missed.

[ 24 : 52 ] It's a very difficult thing. But don't be discouraged. For there is reward for your work. We see the opposition faced. Third, we see the obedience to the word.

Asa, here's this command. Here's this promise, right? This promise is that if you go with him, he goes with you. That if you seek him, he will let you find him. We know that what happened is when there was no teaching priests, when the people were doing whatever they wanted to, whatever was right in their own eyes, there was no peace for them.

For God was their problem. So he said, okay, here's the word. It says, now when Asa heard these words, when he heard the prophecy, which Azariah, the son of Oded, the prophet, spoke. So when he heard the word of God, we don't know if Asa knew who this man was.

But we know that he met Asa when he was coming back from a great victory. And he hears it, and now he responds. If we want to see why he did what he did in 1 Kings 15, now we have the why.

We have the why because the word of God interrupted him between the battlefield and city hall. So when he gets back to Jerusalem, he's going to do something, and he's going to do something about and in response to the word which he's just heard. So when he heard that, he took courage. The first thing is we have to take courage.

[ 26 : 00 ] We have to say this is a battle worth fighting. This is a commitment worth making. This is something that I must devote my energy and even devote my time to. He took courage, and there is something he needs to do.

He removed the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had captured, and from the hill country. So he began to rid himself of these things. Obedience always implies action.

You cannot be obedient and not do anything. Because obedience always implies doing something. When we have a command, the word of God is very clear.

When you read the word of God, and when you honestly read the word of God, and you're going through it, even if you're not doing an in-depth study of the word of God, that if you are a child of the king, if Jesus Christ is coming to your heart, and he has given you eyes to see and ears to hear, and a mind to know, you cannot, in all fairness, there is no way you can read the word of God and close the book and say, well, I don't have anything to do now.

Because every time you open up scripture, it is God speaking to you, and there is, the word of God is moving it. It's sharper than any two-edged sword, right? It pushes into the joints and divisions of our hearts.

[ 27 : 12 ] If you ever close the word, and you say, well, I don't know any response that I should make to the word, then maybe we need to open up the word again and say, let me read that again, because the problem's not with the word. The problem's with the recipient of the word.

So if we ever open up and say, well, I can't find anything that I need to do in response to that, maybe we just need to be encouraged, maybe we just need to remain faithful, maybe there's something we need to change, or maybe there's something we need to add.

But there's always a response to our reading. There is something that we ought to do. And so we see this here, now Asa's going to obey that, and it means there are things he has to take care of. He begins to rid himself of all these things. But not only does he do that, he doesn't just clean things up. Now he restores the worship. He gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, who resided with them.

So he called them and he assembled them at Jerusalem in the third month in the 15th year of Asa's reign. You know what festival that is? It's the Feast of Pentecost. Okay? Or the Feast of Ingathering.

[ 28 : 12 ] So they're going to have them a Pentecostal movement. And they renew the covenant, which is something that the people of God do. So what do they do?

He comes in, he responds, he takes courage. He rids not only his personal life, but the nation, those around him under his influence, of anything that would hinder their seeking after God.

He calls the people together. They restore the temple. And then it says, and they enter into a covenant with one another. In verse 12, they entered into the covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and soul.

Why? Because the word just said, if you seek him, you will find him. So they entered into a covenant with that hope in mind. And the covenant was, we will seek him with all of our heart, with all of our soul.

And whoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death. Now, we're not here to do that. Right? We're not under that system. But it is that, it is really that clear. This is something that we need to do.

[ 29 : 12 ] And it says, and they all rejoiced. Moreover, they made an oath to the Lord with a loud voice, with shouting and trumpets and with horns. So when they made this oath, it wasn't just like, well, that's just me and my personal oath.

You know, that's between me and the Lord God. That's just between me and my God. No, they made their things public. And they did it audibly. They did it loudly. Why? Because they knew that the relationship of the individual affected the entirety of the corporate body.

Right? So your devotion to seek after God affects me. My devotion to seek after God affects you. And so they entered into this covenant very audibly with trumpets and cymbals and loud.

They made, they caused a scene because they were doing something. And it says, and then they rejoiced. That's obedience. They rejoiced. I remember several years ago.

This is several, several years ago. I was still one of those young fire and brimstone pastors back in my younger days. And we, back in those days, we had watch night services on New Year's Eve night where we would stay at church all night until New Year's.

[ 30 : 20 ] And we'd pray in the New Year's together. And so that year, I mean, again, I was, I was very young in the ministry. I thought, well, I'm going to be ambitious and do this. So that night, I cleared the table in front of us and I had two covenants up there.

One was a covenant to read through the Bible in a year. And the other one was a covenant to the church for that year. And I put the two covenants up on the table. And I invited whoever was present at night to come and sign that covenant.

Not many people signed that covenant. Do you know why? Because it was a public spectacle. They knew that I would see their name. They said, well, I mean, yeah, pastor, I promise I'll read.

That's not what I asked. I said, let's try to do it. And again, let's make it public. Let's sign it. Because when you sign your name to it, all of a sudden you're like, wow, I really, I really committed to that. Right? Just like when you blow a trumpet.

Maybe we're not all as good as Brother Jamie. But when I sound a trumpet, like, hey, over here, I'm making this oath. I'm making this covenant. I want everybody to know what I'm promising. We don't like that because somebody's going to hold us accountable.

[ 31 : 27 ] That's exactly what they did. So then you're going to judge me. No, it's not a matter of judgment. Even then when I was putting that before the people, it wasn't a matter of judgment. I wasn't going to judge anyone.

Actually, I wanted it to be an encouragement to people. My name was first on both of those. Well, yeah, you're a pastor. Well, yeah. Those are covenants I had made early before I became a pastor. That's why church covenants aren't as popular anymore. It's because it's hard. But it's the obedience of the word. It's the obedience of the word.

Fourth and finally, what's the overflow of these actions? What's the overflow of these actions? The first thing we notice very clearly is there is the overflow of worship.

But more than that, we go back and we read just a little bit that when he gathered Judah and Benjamin from the cities, which he had captured in Ephraim and all these other places. In verse 9, it says he gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim.

[ 32 : 34 ] Now, we'd expect to find them there because we're looking at the southern kingdom, right? Asa rules over the southern kingdom, which is Judah and Benjamin, and they just defeated and won the battle on Ephraim. So we expect to find them there.

So he gathered together, in verse 9, Judah, Benjamin, and those from Ephraim, from Manasseh and Simeon, who resided with them. Look at this. For many defected to him from Israel when they saw that the Lord his God was with him.

Here's one of the overflows. What is going on in the southern kingdom really is an entire kingdom matter. Because within the realm of Judah, many people from the northern kingdom have come down.

They have defected from Israel to come there. So the representation of the entirety of Israel is there. That's why the chronicler always refers to Israel as a whole, not as a divided nation.

There is a representation, and the chronicler wanted everyone to know that, that was there. But what drew them there? What drew them was that they knew the Lord his God was with him.

[ 33 : 50 ] The thing that drew them was the manifested presence of the Lord his God with him. Do you want to know what draws people?

To the church and what draws people? To the kingdom? Is when God manifests his presence among his people, God draws people to that.

The Lord our God is a jealous God. He is a consuming fire. Some of you know Deuteronomy 4.24 is my favorite verse in all of Scripture. It says multitude of times that God is a consuming fire throughout Scripture.

It says it again in the book of Hebrews. And what does that mean? Not that God is jealous like bad jealous, but that God wants people to worship. God longs for people to know him. God has went to great lengths so that people know how to seek him and that they may find him.

Again, very unique thing to Christianity. God puts his billboard up for a watching world. Mainly his church or his people. In the Old Testament it's the nation of Israel. Today it's the church. And God is using that to draw people to himself.

[ 34 : 59 ] It is not that we are drawing them. He is drawing them through us. Well, how does he draw them through us? Through his manifested presence. There are people who want to know the truth. There are people in our world who are hungry for the truth.

And the only way they'll find that truth is if it is manifested among the people of God. And all of a sudden they are attracted to that. They're drawn to that. And they say, well, it's not working.

They have something I don't have. One of the overflows of obedience is that God adds to that obedience. Now, it may take longer and it may be slower.

But it's the one thing that I've always said in the past. However you draw them will be how you keep them. Right? Whatever you attract them with is what you keep them with. If you put on a great show and you have a lot of people there, then you better put on a great show every week.

Or they'll go somewhere else and find a better show. If you say, well, we're just going to hold up the truth. And we're just going to hold up the truth. And we're just going to hold up the truth. And we're just going to hold up the truth. All of a sudden you find people that are hungry for the truth.

[ 36 : 03 ] And then all of a sudden people just want, I just want the truth. I just want the truth. I just want the truth. And it's much easier to do that, right? Than to hold up a personality. And this is exactly what happens in the southern kingdom.

Is that people are defecting to them because they see the presence of God. That's an overflow. Another overflow is that he gets radical in his obedience. He takes his own mother off the throne.

He says, Mama, you got to go. There's no partiality there.

Why? Why? Because she's raised up a horrid image, it says, and made an Asherah out of it. I don't even want to define to you what that is. It has to do with a fertility God, right?

So he made an Asherah out of that. And so he cuts that down. He chops it up. He burns it and puts it in the Kidron. And it says he had a pure heart. It says that he did all these things so that he may cleanse it.

Not that he was perfect. But his heart was blameless all his days as it concerned this word.

[ 37 : 07 ] The overflow was looking back. He kept the word of God. Because of the hope of the covenant that said, if you seek him, he will let you find him.

The hope is in the relationship. The hope of Christianity. The hope of biblical faith. Is that we can know holy God.

The forgiveness. The mercy. The grace. And I know I'm a little long-winded tonight, but stay with me.

You are forgiven in Christ. Our debt is paid. And our sins are forgiven. So that the relationship can be restored.

It's all pointing to the relationship. The mercy is extended. The grace is poured out. So that we can live in fellowship with holy God.

[ 38 : 16 ] See, the restored relationship is the goal. The forgiveness of our sins is what gets us to the goal.

Because in our filth, in our wickedness, we have no right being in his presence. We don't just need to tip the scales to the good.

We need to know that we can walk with him in sweet fellowship. And only biblical Christianity can offer that to us.

That's the hope before us. A hope that no other has. But it's a hope that's set before us in all of scripture. And we see it in 2 Chronicles 15. Thank you, my brothers.

Thank you, my brothers.